

EZEKIEL'S TWO STICKS AND ESCHATOLOGICAL VIOLENCE IN THE  
PENTECOSTAL TRADITION: AN INTERTEXTUAL LITERARY ANALYSIS

BY

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the topic of eschatological violence in the Pentecostal tradition through an intertextual literary analysis of Ezekiel 36:16—39:29 and Revelation 19:11—21 and 20:7—10 by investigating primarily how the intentional literary placement of the ‘Two Sticks’ oracle (Ezek 37:15—28) between the ‘Dry Bones’ vision (Ezek 37:1—14) and the ‘Gog of Magog’ war (Ezek 38:1—39:29) informs the reader’s theological understanding of the message of Ezekiel 36:16—39:29 as a whole. Secondarily, this thesis considers how the allusion to Ezek 38—39 in Rev 19:11—21 and 20:7—10 enhances the reader’s theological understanding of Ezek 36:16—39:29, yielding an intertextual reading that challenges the way these texts have long been understood in popular Pentecostal contexts. By reviewing historical Pentecostal interpretations of these texts, specifically considering how dispensationalism has influenced Pentecostal eschatology and ensuing textual interpretations, this thesis offers a fresh perspective that aligns with the eschatology of early Pentecostals and contemporary Pentecostal scholars—both of whom generally depart from dispensationalism. This intertextual literary analysis builds a case for envisioning a hopeful and proleptic eschatology that promotes peace and reconciliation, potentially transforming Pentecostal ethics, politics and mission.

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and “big picture” perspective on the overall flow of the project. His ingenious ideas, timely feedback, organizational suggestions and theological insight shaped the direction of the thesis. In addition, he helped me to mature in my academic writing abilities, teaching me to assert my own voice and defend my positions. And yet the most profound insight he offered along the way had little to do with writing. Once after expressing my frustrations of wanting to finish the thesis more quickly, he said, “Instead of asking, ‘When will I *finish* this PhD?’ ask, ‘What is this PhD *doing* to me?’” He helped me to realize that the personal transformation involved in completing a PhD—intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually—was every bit as valuable as the degree itself. For that wisdom and guidance, I am tremendously grateful.

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and so it is to Paul that I dedicate this thesis, with all my love. Most of all, I am grateful to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, for whose sake I pursue biblical scholarship, desiring above all else to glorify the Lamb who is worthy.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by D.N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York, 1992.
AF	<i>The Apostolic Faith</i>
AJPS	<i>Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies</i>
AThR	<i>Anglican Theological Review</i>
BSac	<i>Bibliotheca sacra</i>
BCC	<i>The Bridal Call Crusader</i>
BCCF	<i>Bridal Call Crusader Foursquare</i>
BCF	<i>Bridal Call Foursquare</i>
BETL	<i>Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium</i>
BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> . Edited by K. Elliger and W. Rudolph. Stuttgart, 1983.
BibInt	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
BJRL	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester</i>
BWA(N)T	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten (und Neuen) Testament
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CAH	<i>C.A. Herald</i>
CBC	Cambridge Bible Commentary
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CE	<i>The Christian Evangel</i>
CH	<i>Church History</i>
COGE	<i>The Church of God Evangel</i>
CurBS	<i>Currents in Research: Biblical Studies</i>

<i>DPCM</i>	<i>Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements</i> . Edited by Stanley M. Burgess, et al (eds.). Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988.
<i>EPCC</i>	<i>Encyclopedia of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity</i> . Edited by Stanley M. Burgess, et al (eds.). New York: Routledge, 2006.
<i>ESV</i>	English Standard Version
<i>FAT</i>	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
<i>HAT</i>	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>IB</i>	<i>Interpreter's Bible</i> . Edited by G.A. Buttrick et al. 12 vols. New York, 1951—1957
<i>IBC</i>	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
<i>ICC</i>	International Critical Commentary
<i>IESBS</i>	<i>International Encyclopedia of the Social &amp; Behavioral Sciences</i>
<i>IVP</i>	InterVarsity Press
<i>IVPNTC</i>	IVP New Testament Commentary Series
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JEPTA</i>	<i>Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association</i>
<i>JPT</i>	<i>Journal of Pentecostal Theology</i>
<i>JPTSup</i>	Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JSOTSup</i>	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
<i>LRE</i>	<i>The Latter Rain Evangel</i>
<i>LXX</i>	Septuagint
<i>MT</i>	Masoretic Text
<i>NAC</i>	New American Commentary
<i>NCB</i>	New Century Bible

NIBCOT	New International Bible Commentary on the Old Testament
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
<i>NIDPMC</i>	<i>The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal/Charismatic Movements.</i> Edited by Stanley M. Burgess and E.M. van der Maas (eds.). Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003.
NIV	New International Version
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NT	New Testament
OBO	Orbis biblicus et orientalis
OT	Old Testament
OTG	Old Testament Guides
OTL	Old Testament Library
<i>PE</i>	<i>The Pentecostal Evangel</i>
<i>PH</i>	<i>The Pentecostal Herald</i>
<i>PHA</i>	<i>The Pentecostal Holiness Advocate</i>
<i>PNEUMA</i>	<i>Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies</i>
<i>RevExp</i>	<i>Review and Expositor</i>
<i>RelSRev</i>	<i>Religious Studies Review</i>
SBLMS	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series</i>
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
<i>Sib. Or.</i>	<i>Sibylline Oracles</i>
Syr.	Syriac
<i>TBM</i>	<i>The Bridegroom's Messenger</i>
<i>TFC</i>	<i>The Foursquare Crusader</i>

<i>TFM</i>	<i>The Foursquare Magazine</i>
<i>TFS</i>	<i>The Faithful Standard</i>
<i>THNTC</i>	<i>The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary</i>
<i>UBS<sup>4</sup></i>	The Greek New Testament, United Bible Societies, 4 <sup>th</sup> ed.
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
<i>Vul.</i>	Vulgate
<i>WBC</i>	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Wesleyan Theological Journal</i>
<i>WWM</i>	<i>The White Winged Messenger</i>
<i>WUNT</i>	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The Task

#### 1.1.1 Personal Introduction

From the days of my early childhood, I have possessed a deep love for the biblical text, instilled in me by my loving parents and my strong church community. Growing up in a Pentecostal<sup>1</sup> environment, I vividly remember sermons concerning prophecy, especially regarding the “end times” preceding Jesus’ return as particularly thrilling. I wanted to understand all the mysteries of “end times” prophecies to be sure that I was “ready” and would not be “left behind.” (Terrifying screenings of *A Thief in the Night* at Jr. High all-nighters may have contributed to this growing obsession). It wasn’t until my four years at a Baptist university that I learned about dispensationalism and dispensational pre-tribulational premillennial eschatology, giving a name and a structure (complete with charts) to my “end times” beliefs. I thought it strange that dispensationalists believed the same things about the “end times” as we Pentecostals do, yet they rejected most other theological distinctives that Pentecostals hold dear. As

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<sup>1</sup> The term “Pentecostal” in this thesis will be used broadly to designate those individuals and denominations identifying with the “first wave” or “Classical Pentecostalism” (such as the Assemblies of God, the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, the Church of God, the Church of God in Christ, International Pentecostal Holiness Church, etc.), those identifying with the “second wave” or charismatic and neo-Pentecostal movements (such as Calvary Chapel, The Vineyard Movement, Catholic and mainline Protestant charismatics, etc.), and also those identifying with the “third wave” (such as Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship [Catch the Fire], The International House of Prayer Kansas City, Bethel Church of Redding, California, etc.). While some scholars refer to all of these groups broadly as “the renewal movement,” I have chosen to simplify the classifications by using the term “Pentecostal” more broadly, providing theological specificity and nuance when necessary. For a more thorough explanation of the various waves of Pentecostalism and the “renewal movement,” see Kevin L. Spawn and Archie T. Wright, eds., *Spirit and Scripture: Exploring a Pneumatic Hermeneutic* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2011), xvii—xviii; Stanley M. Burgess, “Neocharismatic Movements” in *EPCC* (ed. Stanley M. Burgess; New York: Routledge, 2006), 329; and J. Rodman Williams, *Renewal Theology* (3 vols.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988—1992).

my education progressed to a second bachelor's degree in theology and a master's degree in biblical studies, my eschatological horizon broadened and I realized that dispensational eschatology (particularly pre-tribulational premillennialism) was not consistently accepted by all Pentecostals.<sup>2</sup> Yet the rhetoric that perpetually assaulted my senses in Pentecostal environments—whether in churches, on Christian radio stations, or in popular Pentecostal publications—still rung of rigidly pessimistic dispensationalism. Only in the comparatively secluded ivory tower of academia did I experience any reprieve from this narrative. I began to wonder why Pentecostals would borrow their eschatology from the group that popularized cessationism.<sup>3</sup> I also began to grow increasingly uneasy with those who made absolute connections between specific current events and biblical prophecies, especially when those current events involved horrific violence and loss of human life, which seemed to pass without critical, ethical reflection. I was deeply troubled by what felt to me like the calloused dismissal of global tragedies by Pentecostals as merely unavoidable “birth pains” (Matt 24:8) or

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<sup>2</sup> For example, Steven J. Land articulates an eschatology that includes concern for justice, care for the environment, and promotion of pacifism. Peter Althouse critiques the marriage of Pentecostals to dispensationalism, proposing instead an eschatology of “proleptic anticipation” as a middle ground to the extremes of despairing resignation and future activism. Instead of dispensationalism, Amos Yong proposes “... a pneumatological eschatology that emphasizes the apocalyptic revelation of the Spirit rather than the demolition of the world.” See Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom*, (JPTSup 1; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993; Cleveland: CPT Press, 2010): 222—223; Peter Althouse, “Left Behind—Fact or Fiction: Ecumenical Dilemmas of the Fundamentalist Millenarian Tensions within Pentecostalism,” *JPT* 13.2 (2005):187—207; Amos Yong, *In the Days of Caesar: Pentecostalism and Political Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 347; and Larry R. McQueen, “Early Pentecostal Eschatology in the Light of *The Apostolic Faith*, 1906—1908,” in *Perspectives in Pentecostal Eschatologies: World Without End* (ed. Peter Althouse and Robby Waddell; Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2010), 47, 53—54, 139, 152—153.

<sup>3</sup> Cessationism is the belief that certain gifts of the Spirit attested in the NT, such as prophecy, healing, miracles and speaking in tongues ceased with the death of the apostles. Cessationism contradicts continuationism, the belief that all gifts of the Spirit as described in the NT are still operating in the church today. Since Pentecostals embrace continuationism, it seems odd to me that they would adopt the eschatology of dispensationalists, who advocate cessationism. For examples of those who ardently defend cessationism, see Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism* (rev. ed.; Chicago: Moody Press, 2007), and John MacArthur, *Charismatic Chaos* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992).

even worse—as events orchestrated by God to fulfill specific biblical prophecies.<sup>4</sup>

This unease grew into dismay for what I saw as an increasing trend among Pentecostals, particularly in U.S. churches, toward fatalistic escapism and a seemingly insatiable appetite for sensationalized violent apocalypticism.<sup>5</sup> I was also disturbed by the seeming contradictions I observed between Pentecostal eschatology and Pentecostal missiology. In other words, how could Pentecostals rejoice in then-current news headlines of “wars and rumors of wars” (indicating “signs of the times” and therefore the soon return of Jesus), while simultaneously claiming to love and care for the individuals from various nations anguishing from such violence? As I have posited this question in various settings over the years, the reply I receive is usually something along the lines of, “Well it’s sad for those people of course, but we *know* from the Bible that these things *have* to happen before Jesus returns, so they *have* to be God’s will.” I started pondering how such glaring incongruities and bizarre biblical interpretations

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<sup>4</sup> For specific examples of this type of biblical interpretation throughout Pentecostal history, particularly regarding the biblical texts examined in this thesis, see chapter two.

<sup>5</sup> The popularity of the *Left Behind* series of books and movies by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins illustrates this phenomenon. I recognize that numerous Pentecostal scholars publish pieces on eschatology that do not reflect dispensationalism or violent apocalypticism. However, the gap between the academy and the church must be bridged more effectively for these voices to transform the theology and culture of the average Pentecostal congregation in the U.S.. Pentecostal scholars who soundly reject dispensationalism include Peter Althouse, Robby Waddell, Amos Yong, Frank Macchia, and John Christopher Thomas, among others. Their work will be expounded upon in chapter three of this thesis. See Althouse, “‘Left Behind’—Fact or Fiction,” 187—207; Peter Althouse, *Spirit of the Last Days: Pentecostal Eschatology in Conversation with Jürgen Moltmann* (JPTSup 25; London: T&T Clark International, 2003); Robby Waddell, “What Time Is It? Half-Past Three: How to Calculate Eschatological Time,” *JEPTA* 31, no. 2 (2011): 141—152; Robby Waddell, *The Spirit of the Book of Revelation* (JPTSup 30; eds. John Christopher Thomas, Ricki Moore, and Steven J. Land; Dorset: Deo Publishing, 2013); Yong, *In The Days of Caesar*, 316—358; John Christopher Thomas and Frank D. Macchia, *Revelation* (THNTC; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016); Larry R. McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology: Discerning the Way Forward* (JPTSup 39; ed. John Christopher Thomas; Dorset: Deo Publishing, 2012); and McQueen, “Early Pentecostal Eschatology,” 139—154.

could have infiltrated so many Pentecostal congregations, and what biblical and theological roots contributed to the construction of such alarming eschatology.

As a biblical scholar with a particular interest in the prophetic tradition, the obvious place to start my research is with one of the most popular dispensational “proof texts” for violent “end times” conflict: Ezek 36—39. A typical dispensational (and therefore often Pentecostal) interpretation of these texts is that in the “end times” the nation of Israel will repent and embrace Jesus as Messiah (Ezek 36:16), will be reconstituted into a nation (aka the modern state of Israel) as a mighty army (Ezek 37:1—14), and then finally will destroy the enemies of God identified as “Gog of Magog” (Ezek 38—39), along with other allies empowered by modern military might, before Jesus returns.<sup>6</sup> As I pored over those chapters repeatedly, it struck me that I had never heard much about the second half of Ezek 37. I have listened to numerous sermons and lectures on the “new heart and new spirit” of Ezek 36, the “valley of dry bones” in Ezek 37:1—14, and the “Gog of Magog” war in Ezek 38—39. Why the seeming neglect of Ezek 37:15—28, and how might this small portion of text inform the reader’s understanding of the rest of the section? These are the questions that led me to see things in the text that I had never seen or heard before, and to discover a textual basis for shaping and reworking my own eschatology as a Pentecostal interpreter. Before I progress to explaining details of the specific methodology I will

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<sup>6</sup> For a clear articulation of a dispensational interpretation of these texts, see C.I. Scofield, *Study Notes in The Scofield Study Bible, New International Version*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1097—1103, 1668—1672; and Tim LaHaye and Ed Hindson, *Bible Prophecy From Genesis to Revelation*, (ed. Wayne A. Brindel, Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 2006), 190—195, 540—545. A more thorough explanation of dispensational interpretation of these texts will be performed in chapter two of this thesis.

employ in this study, I will begin by articulating my primary research question and explaining what I hope to accomplish.

### 1.1.2 Thesis Statement

My primary research question in this thesis is, “How does the intentional literary placement of the ‘Two Sticks’ oracle (Ezek 37:15—28) between the ‘Dry Bones’ vision (Ezek 37:1—14) and the ‘Gog of Magog’ war (Ezek 38:1—39:29) inform the reader’s understanding of the theological message of Ezekiel 36:16—39:29 as a whole?” In other words, I want to explore how Ezek 37:15—28 functions rhetorically and theologically in the broader context of Ezek 36:16—39:29, and how a careful analysis of Ezek 37:15—28 may cause the reader to interpret the rest of Ezek 36:16—39:29 differently. Of secondary interest in my textual study is how the allusion to and reinterpretation of Ezek 38—39 in Rev 19:11—21 and Rev 20:7—10 may shed light on some of the unresolved questions introduced by my literary analysis of the Ezekiel texts. By this, I mean that I hope to discover how putting the Ezekiel and Revelation texts together transforms the meaning of the texts. My literary analysis of the Revelation texts will be intertextual, in that I will be interpreting them in light of my analysis of the Ezekiel texts. With various thematic and linguistic allusions, these specific texts have long been interpreted intertextually in popular contexts, particularly by Pentecostals.

Before undertaking my textual analysis, I will provide the historical, exegetical and theological context for my interpretation of these texts. Since the interpretation of these Ezekiel and Revelation texts together has shaped aspects of Pentecostal eschatology profoundly, I will begin with an overview of Pentecostal interpretations of

these texts throughout history, which will necessarily involve consideration of how dispensational eschatology has influenced Pentecostal eschatology and therefore shaped Pentecostal interpretations. Then I will establish a theological context for my reading of these texts by analyzing the eschatology of contemporary Pentecostal scholars who articulate viable alternatives to dispensationalism.

Having identified the historical, exegetical and theological context for my reading, I will then undertake a thorough literary and intertextual analysis of these texts, focusing on their theological interpretation. I will conclude by examining how my interpretation of these texts may contribute to the field of Pentecostal eschatology. To my knowledge, there has not yet been an academic Pentecostal intertextual analysis of these texts presented as an alternative to the standard dispensational interpretation, nor has there been the formulation of a Pentecostal eschatology based upon these texts. I hope that in some small way this study may fill that gap and encourage future researchers to formulate Pentecostal eschatologies based upon exegesis of biblical texts springing from pneumatic hermeneutics.

## **1.2 Methodological Approaches**

Having acknowledged my distinctive preconceptions as a Pentecostal fascinated with eschatology and biblical studies, yet disturbed by what I see as a celebration of violence in the convergence of those fields, I willingly acknowledge from the start that these preconceptions are inseparable from my interpretive task as a biblical exegete and theologian; there is no such thing as an “objective reading.” Andrew Davies writes,

We need to reassert our confidence in an ideological approach to reading the biblical text, and acknowledge without shame the plain fact that our

distinctive preconceptions invite us to a distinctive appropriation of the text—and that our readings are worth hearing by others.<sup>7</sup>

Rather than seeking to suppress my personal proclivities and inclinations, I approach biblical interpretation by embracing all of my preconceptions, in the hope that my distinctive appropriation of the text may yield a reading that is worth hearing. It is to this end that I now proceed to explain my methodological approach for this study, involving Pentecostal hermeneutics, literary analysis, and intertextuality.

### 1.2.1 Pentecostal Hermeneutics: Development and Distinctives

As a Pentecostal scholar interpreting biblical texts, I am necessarily operating within the broader field of Pentecostal hermeneutics.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, it is necessary to briefly explore the topic of Pentecostal hermeneutics to evaluate how it relates to the methodologies employed in this thesis (literary analysis and intertextuality). I will begin with a brief overview of Pentecostalism, and then I will summarize the development of early Pentecostal hermeneutics and offer a description of Pentecostal hermeneutical distinctives.<sup>9</sup> I will conclude with a summation of my own

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<sup>7</sup> See Andrew Davies, “What Does It Mean to Read the Bible as a Pentecostal?” *JPT* 18 (2009): 222.

<sup>8</sup> The topic of Pentecostal hermeneutics is a vast one; a thorough analysis remains outside the scope of this study. However, it is necessary for me to briefly explain and explore the topic of Pentecostal hermeneutics to evaluate how it relates to the methodologies employed in this thesis (literary analysis and intertextuality).

<sup>9</sup> The following summation of Pentecostal hermeneutics is by no means exhaustive, since a more thorough review of Pentecostal hermeneutics remains outside the scope of this study. I have sought to highlight those authors whose contributions, in my view, most effectively highlight the significant issues facing contemporary Pentecostal hermeneutics. In addition to the contemporary Pentecostal scholars referenced in this chapter, Jacqueline Grey, L. William Oliverio, Jr., Harlyn Graydon Purdy, Amos Yong, Mark J. Boda, Mark J. Cartledge, Ronald Herms, Cheryl Bridges Johns, Jackie David Johns, John W. McKay, Clark H. Pinnock, Richard D. Israel, Daniel E. Albrecht, and Randall G. McNally are among those who have made significant contributions to the field of Pentecostal

hermeneutical and methodological approach, after which I will more clearly elucidate my forthcoming appropriation and application of both literary analysis (specifically rhetorical analysis) and intertextuality.

Pentecostalism emerged during the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, strongly influenced by the Wesleyan/Keswickian Holiness movements.<sup>10</sup> As theologian Roger Stronstad explains, Pentecostalism was “the synthesis of late nineteenth century fundamentalist, dispensationalist and holiness theology.”<sup>11</sup> However, early Pentecostals distinguished themselves among other movements by their belief in the restoration of the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit to the church, as well as by their expectation for the imminent return of Christ—placing them outside the purview of both modernity and mainline Protestantism.<sup>12</sup> Unique to Pentecostalism was the belief in the baptism of the Holy Spirit as an experience subsequent to salvation accompanied by the initial evidence of speaking in other tongues.<sup>13</sup> Wacker argues effectively that “speaking in tongues” should be viewed through the framework of Pentecostalism’s “thoroughly

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hermeneutics. See Jacqueline Grey, *Three's a Crowd: Pentecostalism, Hermeneutics and the Old Testament*, (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2011), Lee Roy Martin, ed., *Pentecostal Hermeneutics: A Reader*, (Leiden: Brill, 2013), L. William Oliverio, Jr., *Theological Hermeneutics in the Classical Pentecostal Tradition: A Typological Account, Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, Book 12*, (Leiden: Brill, 2014), Harlyn Graydon Purdy, *A Distinct Twenty-First Century Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2015), Spawn and Wright, eds., *Spirit and Scripture*, and Richard D. Israel, Daniel E. Albrecht, and Randal G. McNally, “Pentecostals and Hermeneutics Texts, Rituals, Rituals and Community,” *PNEUMA* 15 no. 2 (1993): 137—161.

<sup>10</sup> This brief summary of the history of Pentecostalism and Pentecostal hermeneutics closely follows Kenneth Archer's concluding chapter in his monograph, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic: Spirit, Scripture, and Community* (Cleveland: CPT Press, 2009), 261—267.

<sup>11</sup> Roger Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke: Trajectories from the Old Testament to Luke-Acts* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984, 2012), 1.

<sup>12</sup> Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 9—34.

<sup>13</sup> Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 174.

experiential supernaturalistic conceptual horizon.”<sup>14</sup> In other words, Pentecostals expected their spiritual experiences to mirror the supernatural phenomenon found among members of the NT church as described in book of Acts. Pentecostals believed this dramatic and experiential outpouring of the Holy Spirit, signified by speaking in other tongues, was confirmation of the soon impending return of Christ. For early Pentecostals, the Spirit was speaking directly to them through the Bible, confirming their experiences as a continuation of the Spirit’s work in the early church. They heralded Peter’s quotation of Joel’s prophecy, “This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel, ‘In the last days I will pour out my Spirit on all people...’” (Acts 2:16—17). They recognized that their experience with the outpouring of the Spirit was the same experience of the early church and the fulfillment of that which Joel prophesied. Therefore, they expected to transform their world with the supernatural power of the Spirit just as the early church had done. This passion to influence society globally, along with a deep conviction of the soon return of Jesus, motivated their sense of urgency for evangelism and worldwide mission work. Davies explains:

Perhaps more than any other Christian tradition, we have sought to identify our own experiences with those of the earliest church ... ‘This is that which was spoken by the prophet’ has become our rallying cry as we have sought to see the biblical text reworked and re-enacted in our lives and churches today.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Grant Wacker, “The Functions of Faith in Primitive Pentecostalism,” *HTR* 77.3—4 (1984): 360; and Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 175.

<sup>15</sup> Davies, “What Does It Mean to Read the Bible as a Pentecostal,” 218. Dempster explains that Pentecostals distinguished themselves as “marked by living in and from the eschatological presence of God.” See Murray Dempster, “The Search for Pentecostal Identity,” *PNEUMA* 15:1 (1993), 1; and Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 175.

As Davies highlights, foundational to Pentecostal fervor was a deep love for reading the Bible. Early Pentecostals developed a hermeneutical approach that Archer calls the “Bible Reading Method,” involving both inductive and deductive reasoning.<sup>16</sup> They emphasized a synchronic reading of Scripture, seeking to harmonize and synthesize various biblical texts cohesively—thereby unknowingly performing what is now called “intertextuality” ahead of their time. Another unique aspect of the Pentecostal “Bible Reading Method” was the emphasis on community and story. As Pentecostals shared their personal faith stories, they developed a corporate “community story,” from which interpretations of Scripture emerged. While Pentecostals appropriated some elements of the “Bible Reading Method” from evangelicals, they distinguished themselves from both the fundamentalist/evangelical movement, which used solely rational historical-grammatical hermeneutical principles, and from practitioners of higher criticism, who employed methodologies that Pentecostals found alienating to the Christian laity—effectively removing biblical interpretation from the hands of the local congregations and reserving it for the elite academically trained

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<sup>16</sup> Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 262.

few.<sup>17</sup> Early Pentecostals sought to forge a third path of biblical interpretation that was neither fundamentalist nor liberal.<sup>18</sup>

Likewise, contemporary Pentecostals read the Bible in a distinctively different way than do fundamentalists, evangelicals, liberal scholars or secularists. In my view, the primary key distinctive that marked early Pentecostals and continues to mark contemporary Pentecostals is the priority of seeking to hear the voice of the Spirit in the text.<sup>19</sup> Pentecostals believe that the Holy Spirit, as the author of Scripture, should have a primary role in speaking to the community about the interpretation of Scripture.<sup>20</sup> Although admittedly this concept can be difficult to describe or demonstrate practically, Pentecostals understand the task of biblical interpretation distinctively as

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<sup>17</sup> Archer quotes Mark McLean in explaining how evangelical hermeneutics alone are insufficient and potentially damaging for Pentecostal beliefs and practices. McClean writes, “A strict adherence to traditional evangelical/fundamentalist hermeneutic principles leads to a position which, in its most positive forms, suggests the distinctives of the twentieth century Pentecostal movement are perhaps nice but not necessary; important but not vital to the life of the Church in the twentieth century. In its more negative forms, it leads to a total rejection of Pentecostal phenomena.” See Mark McLean, “Toward a Pentecostal Hermeneutic,” *PNEUMA* 6.2 (1984): 37; and Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 192. Archer explains how historical critical methodology can be alienating to Pentecostals, “...some Pentecostals find the historical critical methodology to be oppressive and alienating to the common laity. The danger is that the historical critical methodology takes the Bible out of the hands of the Christian community, out of the hands of the ordinary person, and puts it in the laboratory of the expert who alone has the proper tools and training to interpret Scripture.” See Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 196—197.

<sup>18</sup> Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 210—211.

<sup>19</sup> Mark Cartledge rightly warns Pentecostals of the dangers of elitism in wrongly assuming that Pentecostals are the only group of biblical interpreters seeking to hear the voice of the Spirit. Just because this pursuit is distinctively Pentecostal does not mean that it is exclusively Pentecostal. See Spawn and Wright, *Spirit and Scripture*, 11; and Mark Cartledge, “Text—Community—Spirit: The Challenges Posed by Pentecostal Theological Method to Evangelical Theology,” in *Spirit and Scripture: Exploring a Pneumatic Hermeneutic* (eds. Kevin L. Spawn and Archie T. Wright; London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2011), 130—142.

<sup>20</sup> Archer explains further, “The role of the Holy Spirit is continually referred to by Pentecostals as an important element in hermeneutics. ... The Holy Spirit is viewed as both the one who inspires Scripture as well as the one who illuminates Scripture; therefore, the Holy Spirit plays a vital part in elucidating the contemporary meaning of the Scripture.” Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 195. See also French L. Arrington, “The Use of the Bible by Pentecostals,” *PNEUMA* 16 no. 1 (1994): 104.

one in which they are empowered by the Spirit to hear the Spirit's voice in the text.<sup>21</sup> One might ask, "How then does a Pentecostal reading of Scripture look different practically than an evangelical or a non-confessional reading?" In my estimation, Lee Roy Martin's approach to the book of Judges—exploring the idea of hearing the voice of God in the book of Judges, as opposed to the more frequently employed method of reading a historiography—may serve as a helpful example of a distinctly Pentecostal reading that seeks to address this question.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, Rickie Moore offers a helpful example of a distinctly Pentecostal reading in his work on the book of Deuteronomy, in which he defines Pentecostal hermeneutics as the "interplay between word and Spirit," the goal of which is a "theophanic encounter."<sup>23</sup> Moore highlights the key hermeneutical pursuit for Pentecostals—they read the Bible not to attain knowledge, but rather to encounter God in the text. I believe this idea Moore articulates is the primary distinctive that sets a Pentecostal reading of the Bible apart from other frameworks for Bible reading: Pentecostals believe the Spirit is still speaking, and they expect to encounter the Spirit supernaturally while reading the text. Further, they believe this encounter transforms how they interpret the text. Andrew Davies eloquently affirms this idea, "Pentecostals instinctively read the Bible to meet God in the text, interpreting Scripture by encounter more than exegesis. ... We read the Bible

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<sup>21</sup> Archer argues, "The Holy Spirit was affirmed as a real participant in the hermeneutical conversation. The Holy Spirit speaks in, to and through the community, and also speaks through Scripture." See Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 264.

<sup>22</sup> See Lee Roy Martin, *The Unheard Voice of God: A Pentecostal Hearing of the Book of Judges* (JPTSup 32; Blandford Forum, UK: Deo Publishers, 2008), 52—79, 230. See also also Spawn and Wright, *Spirit and Scripture*, 11.

<sup>23</sup> Moore also writes, "....the hermeneut needs to be addressed by the voice of the Lord from outside of herself." See Rickie D. Moore, "Canon and Charisma in the Book of Deuteronomy," *JPT* 1 (1992): 91. See also Spawn and Wright, *Spirit and Scripture*, 10—11.

not, as I have emphasized, to grasp it; but so that God might grasp us through it.”<sup>24</sup> In other words, the goal for Pentecostals in Bible reading is meeting with God and expecting God to meet with them. As a Pentecostal interpreter, I view Bible reading as a means for divine encounter; not as an end in and of itself. It is my conviction that Pentecostal biblical interpretation ensues predominantly from encounters with the Spirit, rather than solely from intellectually focused methodological pursuits of textual interpretation. This does not mean Pentecostals despise intellectualism or the use of various methodological approaches. On the contrary, Pentecostals actively participate intellectually with the Spirit, expecting this divine encounter to shape their hermeneutical and methodological approaches as well as their theological conclusions. As they read the Bible to encounter the Holy Spirit, Pentecostals seek to know and to be known by God intimately and personally.<sup>25</sup>

If the primary distinctive of Pentecostal hermeneutics, as I have argued, is seeking to hear the Spirit’s voice in the text, then the secondary distinctive is interpreting the text in the context of community. Pentecostals believe that the Spirit mediates the truth of Scripture not only to individuals studying in seclusion, but primarily to and through communities gathering to encounter God. For Pentecostals, these communal encounters with the Spirit usually involve praise and worship, the sharing of testimonies, and the reading, preaching and study of the Bible. Undoubtedly the Pentecostal scholar who has contributed most significantly to emphasizing the significance of community for Pentecostal biblical interpretation is John Christopher

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<sup>24</sup> See Davies, “What Does It Mean to Read the Bible as a Pentecostal,” 216, 223.

<sup>25</sup> Autry affirms this priority for Pentecostals, as he explains, “Understanding of the text, then is not an end in itself but an essential means to the end which is knowledge of God.” See Arden C. Autry, “Dimensions of Hermeneutics in Pentecostal Focus,” *JPT* 3 (1993): 42.

Thomas, who bases his hermeneutical model on the Jerusalem Council as described in Acts 15. Thomas explains how the Spirit first leads the church to select specific texts that are most relevant to them, and then illuminates how these scriptures should be interpreted. He also argues that the experience of worshipping God in the context of community deeply influences the affections of the interpreter, which then orients the entire hermeneutical endeavor and opens the interpreter to possibilities otherwise not discovered.<sup>26</sup> In other words, as Pentecostals gather together in worship, the Spirit encounters them communally and speaks to them directly, transforming their understanding of the biblical text. According to Thomas, the voice of the text “is allowed to shape and form the interpreter and interpretive community.”<sup>27</sup> I believe the mediation of the Spirit’s voice among Pentecostal interpreters is not limited to a particular temporal or geographical locale; the Spirit speaks through the text to the community as Pentecostals testify to what they perceive the Spirit is saying—whether through a prophetic word, a sermon, a personal testimony, or an academic paper. Pentecostals reject what they see as being a false dichotomy of the intellectual and the spiritual; rather, the Spirit empowers the intellect—in the context of community—to interpret the Bible.

Building upon Thomas’s work, Kenneth J. Archer argues that meaning is created by Pentecostals interpreting the text together in community while listening to

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<sup>26</sup> See John Christopher Thomas, “‘What the Spirit is Saying to the Church’—The Testimony of a Pentecostal in New Testament Studies,” in *Spirit and Scripture: Exploring a Pneumatic Hermeneutic*, (eds. Kevin L. Spaw and Archie T. Wright, London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2011), 115—129, 195.

<sup>27</sup> Therefore as the readers hear the text and allow it to shape them in the context of community, Thomas explains, it follows that they must obey the text as well. See Thomas, “‘What the Spirit is Saying to the Church,’” 121.

the voice of the Holy Spirit.<sup>28</sup> Archer believes that the Pentecostal hermeneut must negotiate two horizons in biblical interpretation: the horizon of the text and the horizon of the community.<sup>29</sup> It is only as interpreters engage with both the text and the community that they can discern the voice of the Spirit. I agree with both Thomas and Archer in the sense that Pentecostals have never been isolationist or monastic in their pietism. Historically, early Pentecostals famously “tarried” together for hours, awaiting the outpouring of the Spirit on the community. It was predominantly in this context that Pentecostals discerned the Spirit’s voice regarding the interpretation and immediate application of the biblical text. Therefore, I contend that contemporary Pentecostal interpreters must prioritize both hearing the Spirit’s voice and interpreting the biblical text in the context of community to offer a reading that is distinctively Pentecostal.

For this thesis, I have selected the methodologies of literary analysis (specifically rhetorical analysis) and intertextuality because I believe these approaches best equip me to perform a distinctively (if not exclusively) Pentecostal reading of these texts, yielding what I hope will be a helpful contribution toward the field of Pentecostal biblical studies. I endeavor to employ these methodologies—not merely to discern literary patterns and devices, or to identify intertextual connections—but primarily and most importantly, to hear in the text what the Spirit is *saying*. In keeping

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<sup>28</sup> See Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 212—260. See also Kenneth J. Archer, “Pentecostal Hermeneutics: Retrospect and Prospect,” *JPT* 4, no. 8 (April, 1996): 63—81.

<sup>29</sup> In addition to the work of Thomas and Archer, Waddell, McQueen and Autry are among others who emphasize the significance of community. Community participation with the Spirit in the hermeneutical process is what Waddell refers to as “the prophethood of all believers,” in that all members of the community contribute to the reading and interpretation of Scripture as the Holy Spirit leads them. Similarly, McQueen understands community as the context in which believers can hear the voice of God. See Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 209—210; Waddell, *The Spirit of the Book of Revelation*, 130; Autry, “Dimensions of Hermeneutics in Pentecostal Focus,” 44—47, and Spawn and Wright, *Spirit and Scripture*, 14.

with Pentecostal hermeneutics, following my own analysis and interpretation of the selected texts, I will listen to other Pentecostal voices in the historical and contemporary community as I examine their intertextual readings of these texts, hoping to understand how my interpretation fits into the broader Pentecostal story, and how it may contribute to the ongoing conversation and construction of Pentecostal biblical theology. I will now explain in greater depth the ways in which I will define and appropriate literary analysis and intertextuality in this thesis.

### 1.2.2 Literary Analysis

The primary methodology employed in this thesis is literary analysis (also called literary criticism), and even more specifically, rhetorical analysis of the biblical text. The methodology of literary criticism has evolved; in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century it involved performing a historical analysis of the text's formation, in a similar fashion to what is now known as source criticism. By the early and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, it also encompassed the attempt to discover authorial intent by analyzing the text's structure and rhetoric.<sup>30</sup> Modern use of the term may denote association with contemporary literary theorists, such as I.A. Richards, T.S. Eliot, Jacques Derrida, and M.M. Bakhtin, proponents of the “new literary criticism.” However, it can also more broadly refer to the examination of the literary structure and devices of a text in the context of its various forms and genres. This contemporary approach to literary criticism does not

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<sup>30</sup> For a more thorough explanation of literary critical methodology, see Richard N. Soulen and Kendall R. Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism* (3d ed.; Louisville: Westminster, 2001): 105; Edgar V. McKnight, *The Bible and the Reader: An Introduction to Literary Criticism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985); and Rolf Knierim, “Criticism of Literary Features, Form, Tradition and Redaction,” in *The Hebrew Bible and Its Modern Interpreters* (eds. Douglas A. Knight and Gene M. Tucker; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 128—134.

concern itself with traditional historical pursuits related to such higher critical methodologies as source criticism, form criticism, tradition history, or redaction criticism. Instead of seeking to uncover various layers of textual tradition or influences of historical *Sitz im Leben*, contemporary literary criticism prioritizes the final form of the text by scrutinizing both structural and rhetorical elements.

I concur with Clines and Exum in their description of “new literary criticism” in relation to the field of biblical studies as both eclectic and resistant to tidy classification. They argue persuasively, “What biblical studies needs at this moment is not so much systemization as a spirit of exploration and methodological adventurousness, where every new way of looking at our familiar texts is to be eagerly seized upon and tested for all it is worth.”<sup>31</sup> For example, the strategy that I employ in this thesis combines literary criticism and intertextuality, with the goal of exploring the meaning of these texts in light of one another and perhaps deconstructing other interpretations. While this pursuit may resist “tidy classification,” I hope that it will yield a reading that is both fresh and compelling. New literary criticism may include such sub-categories as rhetorical criticism, feminist criticism, reader-response criticism, deconstruction, ideological criticism, political criticism, and psychoanalytic criticism. Yet the performance of literary criticism by one author may not fall neatly into the tidy classification of any one approach.<sup>32</sup> For example, in this thesis, while I endeavor to

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<sup>31</sup> David J.A. Clines and J. Cheryl Exum, “The New Literary Criticism,” in *The New Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible* (eds. David J.A. Clines and J. Cheryl Exum; Valley Forge: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 13.

<sup>32</sup> Clines and Exum, “The New Literary Criticism,” 12—13. For another explanation of the relationship between new literary criticism and biblical studies, see Tremper Longman III, *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation* (Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation 3; ed. Moises Silva; Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987).

employ rhetorical criticism as my primary methodology (resulting in deconstruction of some dominant traditional textual interpretations), my literary analysis could also be viewed as containing elements of reader-response criticism and deconstruction, in addition to feminist and Pentecostal ideological perspectives (since I write as a Pentecostal woman). Longman confirms this growing trend, observing, “The cutting edge of the field [of biblical studies] … is not only varied in its approach to the study of the Bible, it is eclectic. That is, it utilizes not one, but a variety of approaches at the same time.”<sup>33</sup> This thesis will certainly rely upon such a multi-disciplinary attitude.

While understanding both the complexity of definitions and approaches, as well as the multiplicity of inter-related sub-categories inherent in new literary criticism, I will now describe my particular methodological approach: rhetorical criticism.

Rhetorical criticism, a specific type of literary criticism, focuses on discovering how literary patterns and devices enhance and illuminate the meaning of the text. In the context of biblical studies, this involves both an overall structural analysis and a careful verse-by-verse interpretive analysis.<sup>34</sup> In 1968, James Muilenburg popularized the term “rhetorical criticism,” seeking to discover the text’s distinctive components of content, style and structure that may illuminate text’s meaning. While Muilenburg’s original pursuit involved examination of authorial intent, contemporary rhetorical criticism as a biblical discipline encompasses varied approaches, such as the distinction between an emphasis upon literary artistry and upon literary persuasion. When literary artistry is

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<sup>33</sup> Longman, *Literary Approaches and Interpretation*, 113; and V. Philips Long, “Reading the Old Testament as Literature,” in *Interpreting the Old Testament: A Guide for Exegesis* (ed. Craig C. Broyles; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 88.

<sup>34</sup> Soulen and Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*, 164.

the focus, as it was for Muilenburg, discovering the author's intent becomes the primary end.<sup>35</sup> However when literary persuasion is emphasized, the focus shifts to the audience and the response of the reader.<sup>36</sup> Phyllis K. Trible, a student of Muilenburg, acknowledges that these different approaches in rhetorical criticism are influenced by different traditions (German, French, British, American, etc.). She also discusses the historical development of rhetorical traditions, noting that the Hebrew Bible predates Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, which is typically seen as the foundation of rhetorical analysis.<sup>37</sup>

Therefore, the “terminology of classical rhetoric” only applies partially to Hebrew

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<sup>35</sup> Muilenburg emphasized what he called “stylistics,” including analysis of literary structural devices such as chiasms, inclusios, repetition, and rhetorical questions. Muilenburg saw rhetorical criticism as part of the field of form criticism. Muilenburg’s work in biblical studies was analogous to the “new criticism” introduced by 20<sup>th</sup> century literary critics in the sense that both rejected historical critical approaches to the text. See James Muilenburg, “Form Criticism and Beyond,” *JBL* 88 (1969): 1—18; Knierim, “Criticism of Literary Features, Form, Tradition and Redaction,” 134—146; and Patricia K. Tull, “Rhetorical Criticism and Intertextuality,” in *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticism and Their Application* (eds. Steven L. McKenzie and Stephen R. Haynes, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999): 158—160.

<sup>36</sup> The emphasis on rhetoric as a form of persuasion goes all the way back to Aristotle and reflects the emphasis of the classical period’s definition of rhetoric. Contemporary biblical scholars who maintain this emphasis include George Kennedy, Yehoshua Gitay, and Meir Sternberg. Kennedy examines the rhetorical situation, or the contexts in which the texts arose, as well as the content and literary devices of the text, in order to address the text’s rhetorical problem and purpose. Gitay emphasizes what he calls “pragmatic persuasion,” the idea that the text seeks to persuade the reader with a specific pragmatic goal. He investigates both structural and stylistic elements of the text to define this pragmatic persuasive goal. Sternberg views the biblical text as governed by three principles: ideology, historiography, and aesthetics, which complement rather than contrast one another in their rhetorical goal—to reveal a “divine system of norms.” Sternberg argues that the reader lays aside his or her own interpretive opinions and becomes drawn into the biblical narrator’s intent. See Tull, “Rhetorical Criticism and Intertextuality,” 160—164; George Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 4, Yehoshua Gitay, *Prophecy and Persuasion: A Study of Isaiah 40—48* (Bonn: Liguistica Biblica, 1981); and Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1985).

<sup>37</sup> Rhetoric, from the classical period through the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, primarily addressed persuasive public speech. During the Enlightenment, scientific inquiry displaced rhetoric as the foundation for construction of meaning. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, theorists such as Chaim Perelman, Kenneth Burke, I.A. Richards and Richard Weaver helped swing the pendulum back toward the study of rhetoric. They developed “new rhetoric,” encompassing broader topics such as theories of epistemology and discourse as well as the interrelations among persuasion and social control. For a more thorough explanation, see Tull, “Rhetorical Criticism and Intertextuality,” 157—158.

Bible analysis.<sup>38</sup> I concur with Trible's conclusion that the priority is the "intrinsic reading" of the text, with attention to "details of textual construction."<sup>39</sup> Trible's view aligns with my approach in this thesis to prioritize the "world of the text" in order to engage deeply with the text's theological meaning, and not necessarily with peripheral issues such as the history of the text's construction. Patricia K. Tull expands upon Trible's work by explaining, "The birth of interest in rhetorical criticism in biblical studies arose not from a revival of classical rhetoric or interaction with the 'new rhetoric,' but from dissatisfaction with historical criticism of the Bible."<sup>40</sup>

My personal interest in rhetorical criticism arose from this same discontent with historical critical methods.<sup>41</sup> Much of the emphasis of source criticism, form criticism, tradition history, and redaction criticism seems to me an unsatisfying attempt at uncovering hidden layers of the text, such as the origin of its composition and compilation, the motives of the original author, or the precise sociological environment

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<sup>38</sup> See Tull, "Rhetorical Criticism and Intertextuality," 156—164, Phyllis Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism: Context, Method, and the Book of Jonah* (Guides to Biblical Scholarship: Old Testament Series; ed. Gene M. Tucker; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994); and Soulen and Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*, 164.

<sup>39</sup> For a more thorough explanation of Trible's perspective, see Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 94—99; and Tull, "Rhetorical Criticism and Intertextuality," 159.

<sup>40</sup> Tull, "Rhetorical Criticism and Intertextuality," 158.

<sup>41</sup> I resonate with Alan Cooper's personal opinions of historical critical methodology, reflecting the increasing move of many scholars away from historical criticism and toward literary criticism. Cooper writes, "I am troubled by virtually all the historical-critical presuppositions about what the Bible is and about how and why it ought to be read. At the very least, I do not find them interesting. I also object to the historical-critical distancing of scholarly reading from so-called 'pre-critical' interpretation, and from the general Bible-reading public, which is rightly baffled by most biblical scholarship. The burgeoning 'literary-critical' reaction against historical criticism provides a good opportunity for hermeneutical reflection, and for some speculation about the future of biblical studies." See Alan Cooper, "On Reading the Bible Critically and Otherwise," in *The Future of Biblical Studies: Hebrew Scriptures* (eds. Richard Elliott Friedman and H.G.M. Williamson; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 61.

of the text's creation or initial reception.<sup>42</sup> While such pursuits may allow the interpreter to spin interesting hypotheses, theories resulting from such methodological approaches seem to me tenuous at best—most often yielding conclusions based upon conjecture and circular reasoning. Therefore, following Trible and Muilenburg, my methodological approach in this thesis is appropriating rhetorical criticism to interpret the intrinsic details of the final form of the text.<sup>43</sup> Specifically, I am interested in how the structure, organization and arrangement of the text reveals its meaning; whether the original author or a redactor arranged the material in its final form is immaterial to me. My precise goal, employing the methodology of rhetorical criticism, is to investigate the theological implications of the intentional literary placement of my primary pericope (Ezek 37:15—28) within its immediate textual context (Ezek 39:16—39:29). My rhetorical analysis of the biblical text will encompass the establishment and translation of the text, delimitation of the primary pericope to be analyzed, a structural analysis of the text, and a rhetorical verse-by-verse analysis of the text.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Cooper rightly states, “Authorial intention, even if it were recoverable—which it is not—would be trivial for literary interpretation.” See Cooper, “Reading the Bible Critically and Otherwise,” 65.

<sup>43</sup> I have intentionally narrowed the scope of my employment of rhetorical criticism for this precise purpose, following the parameters of Muilenburg and Trible. While scholars such as Clines and Exum use the term “rhetorical criticism” to emphasize deconstructing the text to determine its ideology and methods of persuasion, Muilenburg and Trible focus primarily on a detailed analysis of the text’s intrinsic details in its final form. See Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 94—99; Tull, “Rhetorical Criticism and Intertextuality,” 159; Clines and Exum, “The New Literary Criticism,” and Muilenburg, “Form Criticism and Beyond.”

<sup>44</sup> As stated previously, this methodology will be applied specifically to my primary pericope, Ezek 37:15—28, in the broader textual context of Ezek 36:16—39:29. Since my primary focus is rhetorical analysis of the final form of the text, I have chosen to omit the traditional historical critical methodologies from my textual analysis. However, I will briefly address some of the major historical critical perspectives of Ezekielian scholars in my literature review in chapter four of this thesis.

### 1.2.3 Intertextuality

I selected intertextuality as my secondary methodology for two primary reasons. First, intertextuality is intrinsically related to rhetorical criticism. I agree with Tull's conclusion that "relationships among texts are so central to many forms of rhetorical criticism," because in order to perform a thorough literary and rhetorical analysis of my primary text, I must explore the closely related inner-biblical texts that contain verbal quotations of and thematic allusions to my primary text.<sup>45</sup> In the process of performing my rhetorical analysis, some of my questions seemed inadequately addressed in the Ezekiel texts alone. I realized that an intertextual study of the inner-biblically related texts, Rev 19:11—21 and Rev 20:7—10, may help to answer these questions and to introduce a potential critique of some of the dominant interpretations of both the Ezekiel and the Revelation texts. My methodological approach in this thesis closely reflects Tull's summation of the inter-relatedness between rhetorical criticism and intertextuality:

By reframing questions asked of the texts, they [rhetorical critics] may suggest that the text itself offers critique of some dominant interpretive tradition. In one way or another, such rhetorical critics examine the nature of the text's complex intertextual relationships.<sup>46</sup>

Second, intertextuality is a methodology commonly employed by Pentecostals, particularly in regard to the texts I have selected for this thesis. My intertextual interpretation of these Ezekiel and Revelation texts is part of a broader historical Pentecostal tradition of understanding these specific texts in light of one another.<sup>47</sup> I see

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<sup>45</sup> Tull, "Rhetorical Criticism and Intertextuality," 156.

<sup>46</sup> Tull, "Rhetorical Criticism and Intertextuality," 156.

<sup>47</sup> For a detailed history of how Pentecostals have interpreted the specific texts addressed in this thesis intertextually, see chapter two of this thesis.

two primary connections between Pentecostal hermeneutics and intertextuality methodologically. First, both Pentecostal interpreters and practitioners of biblical intertextuality place a high emphasis on synchronic (as opposed to diachronic) readings of the text. Biblical scholars employing intertextuality seek meaning between texts within the biblical canon, and similarly, Pentecostal interpreters synchronize or harmonize theological meaning between various texts. Therefore, intertextuality, though not always recognized as such among Pentecostals, is implicitly inherent in Pentecostal hermeneutics. Second, both Pentecostal hermeneuts and intertextuality enthusiasts view community as indispensable for interpretation.<sup>48</sup> Robby Waddell, the Pentecostal scholar who has explored the topic of intertextuality most thoroughly as it relates to Pentecostal hermeneutics asserts, “All (con)texts, whether they are literary, religious or social, remain constructs of an interpretive community.”<sup>49</sup> Waddell argues that all texts are both constructed and comprehended only in the context of community, and that members of the community can only apprehend intertextual meaning as they interpret texts together. I believe that this is particularly true of biblical texts, which were created in the context of religious communities over the centuries, and throughout history have been interpreted among religious, academic and social communities.

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<sup>48</sup> Cartledge elaborates this concept for Pentecostals, “Pneumatology provides the link between text and community, since the Spirit has both inspired the original text and inspires the reading of the text today. Thus, the authority of the text is interpreted within the community giving the contemporary church an important role hermeneutically.” See Cartledge, “Text—Community—Spirit,” 140—141.

<sup>49</sup> Waddell, *The Spirit of the Book of Revelation*, 58. Waddell leans heavily on Stanley Fish in articulating his concepts of both intertextuality and community. In addition to Waddell’s book and for further explanation of Fishian theory, see Stanley Fish, *Doing What Comes Naturally: Change, Rhetoric, and the Practice of Theory in Literary and Legal Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); and Stanley Fish, *Is There A Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980).

In order to define intertextuality and elucidate the specific way in which I am appropriating the methodology for this thesis, it is important to review its broader historical development and various facets of meaning. While the term “intertextuality” was originally articulated and popularized by Julia Kristeva in 1967, she acknowledges Mikhail Bakhtin for bringing the idea into literary theory.<sup>50</sup> Bakhtin believed that meaning can only be derived from interaction between the text, the reader and other texts. For Bakhtin, the convergence of the interdependence between text, reader reception and other texts can be understood as “intertextuality.”<sup>51</sup> Bakhtin argues that the voice of the new text seeks to persuade and interact with the voices of previous texts and the ideas generated from their interpretation, as well as to convince the listeners of the author’s perspective.<sup>52</sup> Bakhtin’s elucidation of the process of intertextuality is extremely helpful for and descriptive of the methodology I will employ in this thesis. As the reader and interpreter of these texts, I seek to listen to the voice of the “new text” (in this case, Rev 19:17—21 and Rev 20:7—10) as it interacts with the voice of previous texts (Ezek 36:16—39:29) and the ideas generated from their

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<sup>50</sup> See Tull, “Rhetorical Criticism and Intertextuality,” 166; and Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (ed. Michael Holquist; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981, Russian original, 1975), 273—274; and Gary A. Phillips, “‘What is Written? How Are You Reading?’ Gospel, Intertextuality, and Doing Lukewise: Reading Lk 10:25—42 Otherwise,” in *Intertextuality and the Bible* (Semeia 69/70; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 115—125.

<sup>51</sup> Another factor must be taken into consideration, and that is the “rhetorical environment” of the text. Tull summarizes George Kennedy’s definition of “rhetorical environment” as the “situation that calls forth the text; it is the question seeking an answer.” See Tull, “Rhetorical Criticism and Intertextuality,” 167; and George Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 4.

<sup>52</sup> Bakhtin also emphasizes the importance of anticipated response of the audience: “All rhetorical forms, monologic in their compositional structure, are oriented toward the listener and his answer. This orientation toward the listener is usually considered the basic constitutive feature of rhetorical discourse.” See Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 273—276; and Tull, “Rhetorical Criticism and Intertextuality,” 173.

interpretation. Ultimately, I as “the author” of this thesis will seek to persuade the reader of my interpretation of these texts (employing rhetorical analysis) in light of their historical intertextual interpretations, particularly among Pentecostals.

The term “intertextuality,” like “literary criticism,” denotes numerous definitions and methodological approaches. For the sake of clarity, I will appropriate Tull’s simple and concise definition of intertextuality as “the interconnections among texts,” and more specifically as “their inseparability from associations with other texts.”<sup>53</sup> I also concur with Tull’s idea that texts are never independent, because they “have a past to which they are related but also, of equal interest, a future in whose creation they take part.”<sup>54</sup> In this case, the Ezekiel texts have a historical past to which they are related, as well as a future of taking part in both the creation and interpretation of the Revelation texts. For the purpose of this thesis, intertextuality as it relates to NT appropriation of OT texts can include both direct textual quotation and ideological allusion.<sup>55</sup> Intertextuality also encompasses examining how the author appropriates or uses other texts “for a new rhetorical purpose.”<sup>56</sup> In analyzing why intertextuality has

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<sup>53</sup> Intertextuality, Tull explains, should be understood as a perspective or framework for biblical interpretation, rather than a methodology indicating step-by-step instructions. A thorough exploration of various definitions and applications of intertextuality as a literary method remains outside the scope of this study. My purpose in this introductory chapter is to define it as it relates to my employment of the method in the context of this thesis. See Tull, “Rhetorical Criticism and Intertextuality,” 165—166.

<sup>54</sup> Soulen and Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*, 87.

<sup>55</sup> Craig C. Broyles explains that “a passage’s intertextual context includes any quotations, allusions or echoes it may contain to other biblical passages.” He refers to quotations as explicit references, and to allusions and echoes as implicit references. Both are signals or flags that direct the reader to another biblical text. Broyles writes, “These intertextual connections thus add new layers of meaning to a given passage because elements of another passage are imported. In addition, the use that later passages make of earlier passages can provide windows into the earliest interpretations of biblical passages (sometimes called ‘inner-biblical exegesis’).” See Craig C. Broyles, “Tradition, Intertextuality, and Canon,” in *Interpreting the Old Testament: A Guide for Exegesis* (ed. Craig C. Broyles; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 167; and Tull, “Rhetorical Criticism and Intertextuality,” 165.

<sup>56</sup> Tull, “Rhetorical Criticism and Intertextuality,” 169.

become so *en vogue* among biblical scholars in recent years, Thomas Hatina proposes that as a term it best “captures the study of the relationship between the OT and the NT.”<sup>57</sup> Hatina is right—numerous scholars, myself included, remain intrigued by how NT authors intertextually reinterpret the OT, and how such reinterpretations may affect the interpreter’s understanding of the meaning of the OT texts. Of particular interest in my study is how allusion to and reinterpretation of Ezek 38—39 in Rev 19:11—21 and Rev 20:7—10 may shed light on some of the unresolved questions introduced by my rhetorical analysis of the Ezekiel texts. I have selected these Revelation texts based upon two criteria: suggestions of textual dependency upon portions of Ezek 38—39, particularly with regard to the mention of Gog and Magog; and theological continuity to the theme of the role of eschatological violence perpetrated by Yahweh or by humans. While these NT texts both echo and allude to portions of Ezek 38—39, they also may help to elucidate this particularly challenging part of this complex book. In addition, it will be interesting to see if such an intertextual reading could provide theological insight into the broader issue of understanding divine violence and eschatological judgment.

Before undertaking this ambitious task, a clear intertextual methodological approach must be articulated. I will begin by locating my approach within the context of the broader scholarly community, particularly among the scholars who explore intertextuality in the book of Revelation. After surveying numerous NT scholars who

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<sup>57</sup> Moyise advances the discussion by explaining, “Intertextuality suggests that the meaning of a text is not fixed but open to revision as new texts come along and reposition it.” See Thomas R. Hatina, “Intertextuality and Historical Criticism in New Testament Studies: Is There a Relationship?” *Biblical Interpretation* 7, no. 1 (January 1999): 42; and Steve Moyise, “Models for Intertextual Interpretation of Revelation,” in *Revelation and the Politics of Apocalyptic Interpretation* (eds. Richard B. Hays and Stephan Alkier; Waco: Baylor University Press, 2012), 32.

have written on the apocalypse, Moyise outlines three primary intertextual approaches to the book of Revelation. The first approach prioritizes the voice of the author of Revelation, seeking to understand how he utilizes OT texts for his rhetorical purposes.<sup>58</sup> The second approach views the author of Revelation as seeking to clarify the meaning of the OT text by offering his commentary upon it. This approach differs from the first one in that the author of Revelation is not using the OT text to advance his new idea, but rather he is contributing his own *midrash*, seeking to uncover the true original meaning of the OT text. Therefore, prioritizing the original context of the OT text is of utmost importance.<sup>59</sup> The third approach outlined by Moyise includes the interpretation of various other texts, in addition to biblical texts, as well as historical events and cultural perspectives that may impact the modern interpreter. The emphasis of this approach is on the intertexts and theological positions of the interpreter. This approach seeks to harmonize other biblical texts canonically, as well as to relate the theological interpretation of these texts to the world and situation of the modern interpreter.<sup>60</sup> This approach does not necessarily reject historical reconstruction; rather historical reconstruction can be viewed as one of many intertexts that the interpreter may find helpful. This third perspective begins narrowly with the most prominent

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<sup>58</sup> Scholars who employ this approach include George Caird, Jeffrey Vogelgesang, Alison Jack, and Robert Royalty. See Moyise, “Models for Intertextual Interpretation of Revelation,” 32—33.

<sup>59</sup> Moyise identifies Greg Beal and Richard Bauckham among those who use this strategy for interpretation. See Moyise, “Models for Intertextual Interpretation of Revelation,” 32—33.

<sup>60</sup> For example, such an interpreter may seek to reconcile apparent portrayals of divine violence in Revelation with the command of Jesus in his “Sermon on the Mount” to “love your enemies,” even though there is no direct textual quotation or even allusion between the book of Revelation and the Sermon on the Mount. See Moyise, “Models for Intertextual Interpretation of Revelation,” 43.

intertextual allusions, and then expands the intertextual study to include canonical intertexts, extrabiblical literature, and historical events.<sup>61</sup>

While all these approaches have their strengths and weaknesses, my own approach to intertextuality in this study aligns most closely with the third approach Moyise identified. I will begin by identifying possible verbal and thematic allusions to portions of Ezek 38—39 in Rev 19:11—21 and 20:7—10, referencing the work of Sverre Bøe who argues effectively that Ezek 38—39 functions as a pre-text to Rev 19:11—21 and Rev 20:7—10.<sup>62</sup> Then I will employ rhetorical analysis to study the Revelation texts in a verse-by-verse fashion, followed by a theological summation of my interpretation of these texts. Finally, I will consider how my interpretation of the Revelation texts may address the unanswered questions from my rhetorical analysis of Ezek 36:16—39:29. Following the third approach Moyise explained, I will also expand my study of these texts to consider Pentecostal intertextual readings of Ezek 36:16—39:29 and Rev 19:11—21 and 20:7—10 throughout history, locating my reading of these texts first in the broader conversation of these Pentecostal intertextual readings, and second in the even larger context of Pentecostal eschatology.

To clarify the progression of my approach and to understand the structure of this thesis, the following section provides a chapter by chapter overview.

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<sup>61</sup> Moyise, “Models for Intertextual Interpretation of Revelation,” 33, 42—44.

<sup>62</sup> See Sverre Bøe, *Gog and Magog: Ezekiel 38—39 as Pre-text for Revelation 19:17-21 and 20:7-10* (WUNT 2, Reihe 135; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001).

### **1.3 Summary of the Argument of this Thesis**

This study will begin in earnest in chapter two with a brief overview of the historical emergence of dispensationalism, the historical and theological connections between Pentecostalism and dispensationalism, and a synopsis of the classical dispensational interpretation of the primary texts under consideration in this thesis. I will then offer a literary analysis of a variety of significant popular Pentecostal readings of the Ezekiel and Revelation texts chronologically from 1906 to the present, highlighting in particular the Pentecostal intertextual readings that connect Ezek 36:16—39:29 to Rev 19:11—21 and 20:7—10. To conclude chapter two, I will synthesize and summarize theological conclusions of these Pentecostal intertextual readings.

While this thesis falls primarily under the purview of the field of biblical studies, my theological interpretation of the Ezekiel and Revelation texts fits under the broader theological umbrella of eschatology. Therefore, in chapter three I will provide a brief overview of Pentecostal eschatology, followed by a synopsis of the work of contemporary scholars who construct Pentecostal eschatologies that depart from dispensationalism. I will conclude chapter three by summarizing several key theological themes that emerge from these eschatologies.

In chapter four, I will transition from the historical, exegetical and theological context of this study to my analysis of the texts, beginning with Ezekiel. First, I will provide an overview of the book of Ezekiel to orient the reader to the biblical context for the primary text to be analyzed. I will begin with a history of Ezekiel scholarship, selecting scholars who have contributed most significantly in my estimation to the field

of biblical criticism of Ezekiel.<sup>63</sup> I will then briefly summarize the historical background and setting of the book of Ezekiel, followed by a look at the key theological themes of the book. Next, I will offer a structural arrangement of the book, proposing evidence that Ezek 36:16—39:29 should be read as a coherent unit. I will conclude this chapter by highlighting the key theological themes addressed in this unit, providing a thematic theological context for the primary pericope of this thesis.

In chapter five, I will present my literary analysis of Ezek 37:15—28, beginning with a translation of the text followed by a justification of delimitating the pericope. I will then offer a structural analysis of the pericope and a careful verse-by-verse rhetorical analysis.

By revisiting the theological themes introduced at the end of chapter four, in chapter six I will examine the ways in which the “two sticks” pericope transforms the key theological themes of the unit, paying particular attention to the violent imagery. The focus of chapter six is to evaluate conclusions to my primary research question: how does the intentional literary placement of the “Two Sticks” oracle (Ezek 37:15—28) between the “Dry Bones” vision (Ezek 37:1—14) and the “Gog of Magog” war (Ezek 38:1—39:29) inform the reader’s understanding of the theological message of Ezekiel 36:16—39:29 as a whole? In the process of seeking answers to this question, new theological questions emerged which I felt could not be adequately addressed in the Ezekiel texts alone.

Therefore, in keeping with the tradition of Pentecostal hermeneutics, I chose to employ my secondary methodology of intertextuality in chapter seven by examining

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<sup>63</sup> While I am not personally employing the critical methodologies used by most of these scholars, it is still helpful to begin with a look at what has been done broadly in Ezekiel scholarship thus far to provide a context for my rhetorical analysis.

Rev 19:11—21 and 20:7—10. Chapter seven will begin with a brief review of intertextuality and my justification for the selection of these two Revelation texts. Using as a foundation the research of Sverre Bøe, who argues that Ezek 38—39 functions as a pre-text to Rev 19:17—21 and 20:7—10, I will summarize some key intertextual connections. Then I will offer an intertextual and literary analysis of the two Revelation texts, focusing on how my theological interpretation of the Revelation texts connects to my reading of the Ezekiel texts. I will conclude the chapter by considering ways in which this intertextual study has helped me to address the new theological questions unearthed in chapter seven. I will close chapter seven by summarizing my theological understanding of both the Ezekiel and Revelation texts in light of one another.

In chapter eight I will present my conclusions from this study, considering ways in which the prominent eschatological themes presented by contemporary Pentecostal scholars may align with my reading of the texts. I will conclude by indicating contributions to the field and suggestions for future research.

## 2. PENTECOSTAL INTERPRETATIONS OF EZEKIEL 36:16—39:29; REVELATION 19:11—21, 20:7—10

### 2.1 A Tale of Two Movements: Dispensationalism’s Influence on Pentecostalism

In this chapter, I will offer a literary analysis of U.S. Pentecostal readings of the Ezekiel and Revelation texts from 1906—2006, emphasizing intertextual readings that connect Ezek 36:16—39:29 to Rev 19:11—21 and 20:7—10. To lay the necessary historical and theological groundwork for the earliest Pentecostal readings, I will begin by investigating the significance of dispensationalism’s concurrent emergence with Pentecostalism, paying particular attention to how dispensationalism influenced Pentecostal eschatology. First, I will explain how dispensationalism fits into the broader contexts of both eschatology and millennialism, and then I will define classical dispensationalism, emphasizing dispensational eschatology. I will also summarize classical dispensational intertextual readings of the Ezekiel and Revelation texts, to determine how they may have influenced Pentecostal interpretations of these texts throughout history. To conclude chapter two, I will synthesize and summarize the theological findings of these Pentecostal intertextual readings.

#### 2.1.1 Emergence of Dispensationalism

Concurrent with the emergence of Pentecostalism in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was the popular rise of dispensationalism, a theological framework for biblical interpretation that would come to be associated with fundamentalism and later with numerous conservative evangelical churches in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Developed by

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<sup>1</sup> William W. Menzies, “The Influence of Fundamentalism,” *AJPS* 14, no. 2 (July 2011): 199—211; Ernest R. Sandeen, “Toward a Historical Interpretation of the Origins of Fundamentalism,” *CH* 36,

British theologian John Nelson Darby (1800—1882), who joined the influential Plymouth Brethren movement in the late 1820s, dispensationalism rapidly spread like wildfire throughout the United Kingdom and “across the pond” to the United States.<sup>2</sup> In summation, dispensationalism divides history into a series of epochs or dispensations, arguing that in each, God engages with humanity on different terms to pursue his agenda for human history.<sup>3</sup> Although I will discuss dispensationalism later in greater detail, it is important at this stage of my argument to frame this concept theologically within the context of both eschatology and premillennialism.

Eschatology is the study of the “last things” or “end times,” which focuses on God’s redemptive plan in the culmination of human history and encompasses such topics as the kingdom of God, the afterlife, and the future of the universe. Conservative Christians generally believe that human history is moving toward a redemptive end, in which God completes his plan of salvation. The “end times” will climax in the second coming of Jesus, when he will return and establish his kingdom on earth. In evangelical

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no. 1 (March 1967): 70—71; and Brad Harper, “Apocalypse Soon? Premillennialism and Popular Responses to Zionism: A Brief History,” *Cultural Encounters* 7, no. 1 (2011): 70—71.

<sup>2</sup> See LeAnn Snow Flesher, “The Historical Development of Premillennial Dispensationalism,” *RevExp* 106 (Winter 2009): 35—36. I am using the term “dispensationalism” to refer to classical dispensationalism as articulated by John Nelson Darby and C.I. Scofield. I am aware that contemporary dispensationalists view dispensationalism as a progressive movement, often distancing themselves from some of the key ideas of the movement’s founders. However, such a discussion is outside the scope of this study. For more information on various theological views within dispensationalism, especially progressive dispensationalism, see James Callahan, “Reforming Dispensationalism,” *Fides et historia* 28, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 1996): 68—83; Craig A. Blaising and Darrel L. Bock, eds., *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church: The Search for Definition* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992); Craig A. Blaising and Darrel L. Bock, eds., *Progressive Dispensationalism: An Up-To-Date Handbook of Contemporary Dispensational Thought* (Wheaton: Victor, 1994); and Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism: The Interface Between Dispensational and Non-Dispensational Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993).

<sup>3</sup> For a thorough summation of Darby’s dispensationalism, see John Nelson Darby, *Collected Works of J. N. Darby* (Wincschen: H. L. Heijkoop, 1972); and John Nelson Darby, *The Hopes of the Church of God: In Connection with the Destiny of the Jews and the Nations as Revealed in Prophecy* (Addison: Bible Truth Publishers, [1889] 1991).

eschatology, the “messianic” or “millennial” figures significantly, due to Rev 20:1—10, in which there are six references to the thousand-year reign of Christ upon the earth.<sup>4</sup> Just preceding this description of the millennium is the passage depicting the return of Christ (Rev 19:11—21), a text dealt with extensively in this study. Prior to the thousand-year reign of Christ, Satan is sealed in a pit so that he cannot deceive the nations. Those who were martyred for their faith and those who resisted the worship of the beast were resurrected to rule with Christ on thrones for a thousand years (Rev 20:1—6).<sup>5</sup> In Rev 20:7—10, Satan is released to deceive the nations, Gog and Magog, to attack God’s people in a climactic final battle in which the forces of evil suffer destruction.

Throughout church history, three primary interpretive frameworks for understanding this thousand-year reign have emerged: postmillennialism, amillennialism, and premillennialism. Postmillennialism remained the dominant eschatological view among Protestants of the nineteenth century, popular among such diverse groups as Unitarians, Arminians, and Calvinists, until premillennialism re-emerged and grew in popularity among evangelicals, fundamentalists and Pentecostals.<sup>6</sup> Postmillennialists generally believe that Jesus will return after the

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<sup>4</sup> Robert G. Clouse, Robert N. Hosack, and Richard V. Pierard, *The New Millennium Manual: The Once and Future Guide* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 44—46.

<sup>5</sup> From a dispensationalist understanding, the term “antichrist” may be used to describe the “beast” of the book of Revelation.

<sup>6</sup> According to James H. Moorhead, postmillennialism gave way to premillennialism around the turn of the century, and since that has ceased to be a prominent eschatological perspective. Moorhead explains, “In 1859 an influential theological quarterly asserted without fear of contradiction that postmillennialism was the ‘commonly received doctrine’ among American Protestants; but by the early twentieth century, it had largely vanished, and Lewis Sperry Chafer, with only slight partisan exaggeration, could claim in 1936 that it was without ‘living voice.’ In part, this change resulted from the defection of conservatives like Chafer to the expanding premillennial ranks, and several historians have told their story in detail. The disappearance of postmillennialism outside of premillennial quarters,

millennium, which may be much longer than a literal thousand-year period. They believe the kingdom of God is extended currently through the preaching of the gospel throughout the world, and that Jesus now reigns in heaven and on earth with all authority, establishing his kingdom through the body of Christ.<sup>7</sup> In postmillennial thinking, the kingdom of God is here presently, and gradually the gospel will influence the world exponentially, until peace reigns on earth and conflict between nations and peoples is removed, ushering in a “golden age” of humanity.<sup>8</sup> While they tend to anticipate that evil will be reduced during the millennium, postmillennialists do not necessarily expect it to be completely removed until the return of Christ.<sup>9</sup> However, most postmillennialists have a generally positive expectation for the power of the gospel to transform society, and therefore the church must spread the gospel and usher in the millennium.<sup>10</sup> At least in many postmillennial models, while every individual

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however, has received scant attention. There—especially among the moderate to liberal Protestants with whom this article is chiefly concerned—the once dominant eschatology appears not to have suffered outright rejection but to have ebbed away. Although its remnants endured as faith in progress, it gradually ceased to be a distinct biblically grounded eschatology.” See James H. Moorhead, “The Erosion of Postmillennialism in American Religious Thought, 1865—1925,” *CH* 53, no. 1 (March 1984): 61—77; Timothy Weber, “Millennialism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology* (ed. Jerry L. Walls; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 378; and John F. Walvoord, “Postmillennialism,” *BSac* 106, no. 422 (April 1949): 149.

<sup>7</sup> See Michael W. Ashcroft, “Progressive Millennialism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Millennialism* (ed. Catherine Wessinger; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 44—45; Randall Balmer and Lauren F. Winner, *Protestantism in America*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 57—58; Weber, “Millennialism,” 367—368; and Walvoord, “Postmillennialism,” 149—168.

<sup>8</sup> See Jon R. Stone, “Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century American Millennialisms” in *The Oxford Handbook of Millennialism* (ed. Catherine Wessinger; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011): 493; Weber, “Millennialism,” 367—368; Balmer and Winner, *Protestantism in America*, 57—58; and Walvoord, “Postmillennialism,” 154.

<sup>9</sup> Weber, “Millennialism,” 368.

<sup>10</sup> See Brian R. Wilson, “Millennialism,” *IESBS* 1:529—530. 2nd edition, Volume 15, (ed. James D. Wright; Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2015): 529—530; and Walvoord, “Postmillennialism,” 155—163.

will not necessarily become a Christian, God will redeem humanity as a whole, and the vast majority of the earth will be Christianized.<sup>11</sup> Among some postmillennialists of the mid to late nineteenth century, the concept of a future heaven gave way to the view that this present life will gradually merge into a heavenly state upon the earth.<sup>12</sup> Due to the gradual nature of the kingdom's expansion across the earth, postmillennialists have a difficult time determining when the millennium will begin precisely, because the world will gradually become increasingly Christian until Jesus returns.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, since it is impossible to identify definitively when the millennium begins, the church may even now be in the millennium. For postmillennialists, eschatology holds great significance, because as human history progressively approaches the "end times," anticipation for the continual expansion of God's kingdom accelerates.

Amillennialism is the view that the thousand-year time frame is not a literal but rather a figurative way of expressing the reign of Christ and his kingdom from the time of the resurrection to the moment of his second coming, at which time the dead will rise and experience the final judgment.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, amillennialists generally believe there is "no millennium," in terms of a literal one-thousand-year reign of Christ upon the earth.<sup>15</sup> Most amillennialists view the book of Revelation as highly allegorical and

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<sup>11</sup> Loraine Boettner, *The Millennium* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1957), 4.

<sup>12</sup> See Moorhead, "The Erosion of Postmillennialism in American Religious Thought," 71—72.

<sup>13</sup> See Clouse, Hosack, and Pierard, *The New Millennium Manual*, 48—52; and Millard J. Erickson, *A Basic Guide to Eschatology: Making Sense of the Millennium* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1977), 55—72.

<sup>14</sup> Stone, "Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century American Millennialisms," 493.

<sup>15</sup> See Weber, "Millennialism," 368—369.

symbolic, representing historical events instead of predicting future events. Therefore, for some amillennialists, the number “one thousand” may symbolize the final victory of Christ over Satan and the forces of evil. The emphasis of amillennialism is that the kingdom of God is both present and future, in the sense that believers anticipate the future eternal reign of Christ following his second coming.<sup>16</sup> However, generally speaking, amillennialists tend to place the emphasis on Christ’s first coming, rather than his second, generally attaching less importance to the “end times,” since the most significant eschatological event was the death and resurrection of Christ.<sup>17</sup> Most amillennialists lean toward prioritizing and focusing upon the present reign of Jesus Christ in heaven, and therefore on the current millennial age of the church on earth.<sup>18</sup> Some amillennialists believe that Satan is presently bound, meaning that while evil still permeates the world, Satan is not able to stop the spread of the gospel.<sup>19</sup> Both postmillennialists and amillennialists tend to view the second coming of Christ and the resurrection of all humanity as single events, and unlike postmillennialists, most amillennialists expect that Christ could return at any time. Those amillennialists who hold the view that all of the OT prophecies were fulfilled in Christ and the church are not necessarily waiting for any future prophetic events to transpire before Christ’s second coming, and therefore they may not emphasize eschatology as highly as most

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<sup>16</sup> For an interesting discussion of historical and political reasons for the popularity of amillennialism, see Steven H. Webb, “Eschatology and Politics” in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology* (ed. Jerry L. Walls; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 502—503.

<sup>17</sup> See John F. Walvoord, “Amillennialism as a System of Theology,” *BSac* 106, no. 424 (April/June 1950): 158—159; and Clouse, Hosack, and Pierard, *The New Millennium Manual*, 52—56.

<sup>18</sup> See Kim Riddlebarger, *A Case for Amillennialism: Understanding the End Times* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2013), 37—39.

<sup>19</sup> Clouse, Hosack, and Pierard, *The New Millennium Manual*, 52—56.

postmillennialists and premillennialists do.<sup>20</sup> Contrary to most postmillennialists, some amillennialists anticipate a final apostacy preceding Christ's return instead of worldwide evangelization, while expecting the growth of both good and evil alongside one another simultaneously until the second coming of Christ.<sup>21</sup> While this expectation for the future may serve as an accurate description of the amillennial position historically, some twentieth century and contemporary amillennialists more closely resemble postmillennialists in their optimistic expectations for the victorious church to continue expanding globally until Christ's return. For example, Vern Poythress, although he calls himself an amillennialist, also identifies as a “non-quantitative postmillennialist.”<sup>22</sup> He embraces the postmillennial optimism for the power of the gospel to transform this world, but he is “non-quantitative” regarding the timing of Christ’s Second Coming; in other words, he holds an expectation for the imminent return of Jesus while expecting the victorious church to spread the gospel widely before he comes.<sup>23</sup> This type of amillennial view also remains prominent among British Pentecostal and charismatic churches, due largely to the influence of the charismatic movement of the 1960s, which caused numerous churches to shift from a pessimistic

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<sup>20</sup> See Weber, “Millennialism,” 368—369.

<sup>21</sup> See Clouse, Hosack, and Pierard, *The New Millennium Manual*, 52—56; and Boettner, *The Millennium*, 4; and Erickson, *A Basic Guide to Eschatology*, 73—90.

<sup>22</sup> See Vern Sheridan Poythress, “Currents within Amillennialism,” *Presbyterion* 26, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 21—25.

<sup>23</sup> Poythress explains, “I therefore call myself a ‘nonquantitative postmillennialist.’ ‘Postmillennialist’ indicates my appreciation for optimism about the gospel. ‘Nonquantitative’ indicates that I do not find grounds for postponing the Second Coming.” See Poythress, “Currents within Amillennialism,” 25.

premillennial to an optimistic amillennial eschatological framework.<sup>24</sup> In summation, while some amillennialists do not share the unwavering optimism of most postmillennialists regarding the global spread of the gospel, they generally tend to remain more optimistic about this present age than the vast majority of premillennialists.<sup>25</sup>

Finally, premillennialism is the belief in a literal thousand-year reign of Christ upon the earth following his second coming.<sup>26</sup> While some view the thousand-years as symbolically representative of a long period of time, most premillennialists believe that it is a literal timeframe for the messianic kingdom.<sup>27</sup> Generally speaking, premillennialists interpret the book of Revelation literally and futuristically, awaiting the fulfillment of the future events predicted. Therefore, a series of dramatic “end times” events, which have been prophesied in both OT and NT texts, will precede the return of Christ, an event which will usher in the thousand-year millennial reign.<sup>28</sup> While the living conditions upon earth throughout the millennium will be characterized by peace, happiness, and abundance, a final rebellion will occur after the millennium when Satan is loosed (Rev 20:7—10), after which Satan and the forces of evil will be

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<sup>24</sup> See W.K. Kay, *Pentecostals in Britain* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2000), 129—133; J.J. Glass, “Eschatology: A Clear and Present Danger—A Sure and Certain Hope,” in *Pentecostal Perspectives*, (ed. K. Warrington; Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1998), 120—146; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 15—16.

<sup>25</sup> See Weber, “Millennialism,” 368—369.

<sup>26</sup> Timothy P. Weber, “Dispensationalist and Historic Premillennialism as Popular Millennialist Movements,” in *A Case for Historic Premillennialism: An Alternative to “Left Behind” Eschatology* (ed. Craig L. Blomberg and Sung Wook Chung; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009): 3.

<sup>27</sup> Weber, “Millennialism,” 367; and Stone, “Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century American Millennialisms,” 493.

<sup>28</sup> Weber, “Millennialism,” 367; and Stone, “Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century American Millennialisms,” 493.

cast into the lake of fire for eternity.<sup>29</sup> In contradiction to most postmillennialists and amillennialists, premillennialists tend to see two resurrections instead of one single event. The first resurrection of the saints occurs after the second coming at the start of the millennium, enabling the risen saints to rule with Christ during the millennium. After the millennium, the remaining dead will rise and suffer eternal judgment for rejecting Christ.<sup>30</sup> For most premillennialists, eschatology remains a high priority in their theological framework, and often current events may be viewed in light of their relation to awaited prophesied “end times” events.<sup>31</sup>

It is crucial to note the distinction between historic premillennialism and dispensational premillennialism. Historic or classic premillennialism, as articulated by the early church fathers and perpetuated throughout church history, is also called post-tribulational premillennialism, in that adherents do not believe in a pre-tribulational rapture of the church as a separate event preceding the Second Coming of Christ.<sup>32</sup> Another significant distinctive feature of historic premillennialism is a sense of continuity in God’s purposes for Israel and the church; there is no distinction between God’s plans for Jewish and Gentile believers, nor is there a delineation between which

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<sup>29</sup> See Jack S. Deere, “Premillennialism in Revelation 20:4—6,” *BSac* 135, no. 537 (January—March 1978): 61—63.

<sup>30</sup> See Deere, “Premillennialism in Revelation 20:4—6,” 58—73; Weber, “Millennialism,” 367.

<sup>31</sup> However, this trend of Bible interpretation is more typical of dispensational premillennialists than of historic premillennialists.

<sup>32</sup> See Donald Fairbairn, “Contemporary Millennial/Tribulational Debates: Whose Side Was the Early Church On?” in *A Case for Historic Premillennialism: An Alternative to “Left Behind” Eschatology*, (ed. Craig L. Blomberg and Sung Wook Chung; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009): 119, 122—128; and Erickson, *A Basic Guide to Eschatology*, 94—97.

Scriptures are written for Israel and which are for the church.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, historic premillennialists hold a mediating position between the supersessionism of both postmillennialists and amillennialists, and the strict distinction between Israel and the church held by dispensational premillennialists.<sup>34</sup> In addition, although most historic premillennialists hold to the view that believers will endure the Great Tribulation, historic premillennialism allows for an optimistic expectation of the future in terms of the effectiveness of the gospel globally despite the context of an increasingly wicked world. For many historic premillennialists, the focus of the Great Tribulation is not the retributive judgment of the wicked, but rather the spiritual purification of the church.<sup>35</sup>

In contrast to historic premillennialism, dispensational premillennialism originated with the teaching of John Nelson Darby in the late nineteenth century. Born in London in 1800, Darby spent his formative years in Ireland and began to practice law in 1822.<sup>36</sup> However one year later, he quit and pursued his interest in theology, being ordained as a deacon in the Church of England in 1825.<sup>37</sup> After serving as the curate of a parish, he became involved with the Plymouth Brethren movement.<sup>38</sup> Darby

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<sup>33</sup> In dispensational premillennialism, much of the OT and all of the gospels are not intended for the church, but only for Israel. See Sandeen, “Toward a Historical Interpretation of the Origins of Fundamentalism,” 70; and Frank D. Macchia, “Pentecostal and Charismatic Theology,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology* (ed. Jerry L. Walls; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 284.

<sup>34</sup> Fairbairn, “Contemporary Millennial/Tribulational Debates: Whose Side Was the Early Church On?” 127.

<sup>35</sup> Fairbairn, “Contemporary Millennial/Tribulational Debates: Whose Side Was the Early Church On?” 127.

<sup>36</sup> See Glenn W. Shuck, “Christian Dispensationalism” in *The Oxford Handbook of Millennialism* (ed. Catherine Wessinger; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011): 517; and Erickson, *A Basic Guide to Eschatology*, 112.

<sup>37</sup> Shuck, “Christian Dispensationalism,” 517.

<sup>38</sup> Erickson, *A Basic Guide to Eschatology*, 112.

soon left the Church of England and spent his time writing prolifically, taking the theological ideas of the Brethren movement and shaping them into the system of biblical theology and hermeneutics known as dispensationalism.<sup>39</sup>

While contemporary dispensationalism encompasses a greater range of theological perspectives, the dispensationalism I will focus on in this study is classical dispensationalism, as defined by Darby and C.I. Scofield.<sup>40</sup> Darby's rigid literalistic hermeneutic for biblical interpretation paved the way for this unique take on premillennialism, in stark contrast to the mainstream postmillennialism of the times embraced by Wesleyans and other mainline denominations.<sup>41</sup> The following three themes characterized Darby's dispensationalism: the authority and infallibility of the Bible, a pessimistic view of the current age, and an unwavering expectation for the

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<sup>39</sup> Shuck, "Christian Dispensationalism," 517; Matthew K. Thompson, *Kingdom Come: Revisioning Pentecostal Eschatology* (JPTSUp 37; Blandford Forum: Deo Publishing, 2010), 36—37; Larry V. Crutchfield, *The Origins of Dispensationalism: The Darby Factor* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1992), 4—6; Erickson, *A Basic Guide to Eschatology*, 112—113.

<sup>40</sup> Some refer to classical dispensationalism as "Darbyism" or "Scofieldism," but for the sake of simplicity I will call it "classical dispensationalism" throughout this study. It is important to note that the dispensationalism described in this section does not necessarily represent modern dispensationalists, some of whom identify as "progressive dispensationalists." For more on progressive dispensationalism and the theological diversity of modern dispensational voices, see Darrell L. Bock, Elliott Johnson, J. Lanier Burns, and Stanley D. Toussaint, *Three Central Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism: A Comparison of Traditional & Progressive Views* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 1999); Blaising and Bock, eds., *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*; and Thompson, *Kingdom Come*, 25—26.

<sup>41</sup> For Darby and other millenarians, allegorical or spiritualized interpretations of prophetic literature were viewed as evidence of unbelief and diminishing the authority of Scripture. Therefore, Darby dismissed the interpretations of the early church fathers. See Darby, *The Collected Writings of J. N. Darby*, vol. 2, 1—30, 371; vol. 5, 28; vol. 9, 55; Thompson, *Kingdom Come*, 27—28; David Yoon, *The Restored Jewish State And the Revived Roman Empire: The Transmutation of John Nelson Darby's Dispensationalism into Modern Christian Zionism* (ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, 2010), 149—151; Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800—1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 13; and Menzies, "The Influence of Fundamentalism," 207—208; and Erickson, *A Basic Guide to Eschatology*, 114—115.

imminent rapture of the church.<sup>42</sup> Pessimism about the current world order, accompanied by a sense of hopelessness for the future with a focus on “wars and rumors of wars” (Matt 24:6), likely had origins in the proliferation of violence and ensuing global panic surrounding the French Revolution.<sup>43</sup> For example, Darby wrote, “Instead of permitting ourselves to hope for a continued progress of good, we must expect a progress of evil.”<sup>44</sup> Yet Darby’s pessimism extended beyond the current world order; it seems to require a negative view of the effectiveness of the gospel itself, because dispensationalism allowed no hope for the conversion of the world in the present age.<sup>45</sup> The gospel was relegated as nearly impotent and ineffectual in light of the world’s great evil and the increasing apostacy of the church. Darby’s unique brand of theology also emphasized the imminent sudden event called “the rapture,” in which believers would be rescued from an increasingly evil world, to spare them from the coming judgment of the tribulation.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, in my view, dispensationalism causes the church to be cast in a negative light as largely apostate, with a tiny remnant clinging

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<sup>42</sup> These three themes would soon permeate and define fundamentalism as well. See Menzies, “The Influence of Fundamentalism,” 207.

<sup>43</sup> According to Darby, the chaos and violence of the French Revolution found its origins in the absence of Scripture’s restraining power. See Darby, *The Collected Writing of J. N. Darby*, vol. 6, 14; Yoon, *The Restored Jewish State and The Revived Roman Empire*, 127; and Harper, “Apocalypse Soon,” 68—69.

<sup>44</sup> John Nelson Darby, *The Collected Writing of J. N. Darby*, vol. 1, (Winschoten/Netherlands: H. L. Heijkoop, Reprint 1971), 310, quoted in Yoon, *The Restored Jewish State and The Revived Roman Empire*, 124.

<sup>45</sup> Boettner, *The Millennium*, 350—352.

<sup>46</sup> There does not appear to be any historical evidence of belief in a “secret rapture” of the church as a separate event prior to Christ’s second coming before the year 1830. See Thompson, *Kingdom Come*, 41—43; Clarence B. Bass, *Backgrounds to Dispensationalism: Its Historical Genesis and Ecclesiastical Implications*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1960), 38—39; Dennis E. Engleman, *Ultimate Things: An Orthodox Christian Perspective on the End Times* (Ben Lomond: Conciliar Press, 1995); George Eldon Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 19—34; and Crutchfield, *The Origins of Dispensationalism*, 133.

to the true gospel and waiting desperately to be rescued from the evil age through the rapture.

In contrast to positive postmillennialism which was *en vogue* in Darby's day, in which believers anticipated the rapid expansion of God's kingdom on earth through the spread of the gospel, Darby's pessimistic version of premillennialism soared in popularity in the early 1900s for two primary reasons: the climate surrounding the violence and devastation of World War I, and the publication of the *Scofield Reference Bible*.<sup>47</sup> Boettner astutely observes, "Premillennialism thrives best and makes its greatest gains in times of war or national crisis when people are anxious and worried about the future,"<sup>48</sup> and I agree with regard to dispensational premillennialism in particular, which provided a framework through which to view an increasingly uncertain future, helping people to make theological sense of the world's great war and ensuing suffering.

The classical dispensationalism espoused by Darby and Scofield essentially taught that human history is divided into seven dispensations or epochs: innocence (Eden), conscience (Adam to Noah), human government (Noah to Abraham), promise (Abraham to Moses), law (Moses to Christ), grace/church age (Christ's first to second coming), and the kingdom age or the millennium.<sup>49</sup> While salvation comes by faith in

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<sup>47</sup> See Harper, "Apocalypse Soon," 70—71; Timothy P. Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming: American Premillennialism, 1875-1925* (New York: Oxford Press, 1979), 52; Clouse, Hosack, and Pierard, *The New Millennium Manual*, 93—94; and Gerald T. Sheppard, "Pentecostals and the Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism: The Anatomy of an Uneasy Relationship," *PNEUMA* 6, no. 2 (Fall 1984): 9.

<sup>48</sup> Boettner, *The Millennium*, 8.

<sup>49</sup> Darby, *The Collected Writings of J. N. Darby*, vol.1, 124—130, 378; Yoon, *The Restored Jewish State And the Revived Roman Empire*, 137—141; Blaising and Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism*, 211; Thomas, *Kingdom Come*, 32; Shuck, "Christian Dispensationalism," 519; Clouse, Hosack, and Pierard, *The New Millennium Manual*, 59.

each of these dispensations, the progressive revelation of the relationship between God and “man” increases with each dispensation. In addition, God’s moral law remains relevant in every dispensation, although the emphasis and content may vary in different dispensations.<sup>50</sup>

Another strong characteristic of Darby’s dispensationalism is emphasis upon a strict distinction between the roles of Israel and the church in God’s plan and purpose.<sup>51</sup> In Darby’s model, while Israel represents an earthly kingdom, the church represents a spiritual or heavenly kingdom, and God maintains two distinct programs: the earthly program with Israel and the heavenly program with the church.<sup>52</sup> Expectation for the future fulfillment of literal OT prophecies originally delivered to Israel and Judah remains. Dispensationalists expect the spiritual restoration of Israel, in which Jewish people worldwide will recognize Jesus as their long-awaited Messiah, preceded by the physical return of Jewish people to the land of Israel and Palestine.<sup>53</sup> In the early twentieth century, at the height of dispensationalism’s expanse and popularity,

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<sup>50</sup> Shuck, “Christian Dispensationalism,” 519—520; Clouse, Hosack, and Pierard, *The New Millennium Manual*, 59.

<sup>51</sup> Darby, *The Collected Writings of J. N. Darby*, vol.1, 93—94. For a more thorough explanation of these and other dispensational theological distinctives, see Flesher, “The Historical Development of Premillennial Dispensationalism,” 36—40; Clouse, Hosack, and Pierard, *The New Millennium Manual*, 59—60; Shuck, “Christian Dispensationalism,” 520—521; and Brock Bingaman, “Learning from *Left Behind*? A Call for Coherent Accounts of Scripture,” *AThR* 91, no. 2 (Spring 2009), 258—260.

<sup>52</sup> See Darby, *The Collected Writings of J. N. Darby*, vol. 2, (Wincschen, Netherlands: H. L. Heijkoop, 1972), 35, 122—123, 162; Yoon, *The Restored Jewish State and the Revived Roman Empire*, 151—157; Blaising and Bock, *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, 20; Thompson, *Kingdom Come*, 28—32; Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming*, 17—18; Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*, 70; Crutchfield, *The Origins of Dispensationalism*, 29—31; and Bass, *Backgrounds to Dispensationalism*, 24—27.

<sup>53</sup> John Nelson Darby, *The Collected Writings of J. N. Darby*, vol. 11, (Wincschen, Netherlands: H. L. Heijkoop, 1972), 241, 272; Yoon, *The Restored Jewish State And the Revived Roman Empire*, 157—164.

numerous Jewish people returned to the historic land of Israel, mainly because of widespread Anti-Semitic persecution and the ensuing rise of the Zionist movement. Dispensationalists viewed this as the beginning of the fulfillment of prophetic promises made to the Jewish people of the return to the land.<sup>54</sup> Jewish immigration to the land of Palestine increased exponentially after the Holocaust and World War II, culminating in the creation of the modern State of Israel in 1948. Dispensationalists viewed this as a fulfillment of the prophecies in Ezek 36—37 specifically. Continued political support for the State of Israel remains vastly fueled by conservative evangelical Christians in Western nations who view these events as OT prophecies being fulfilled before their very eyes.<sup>55</sup>

This distinction between the church and Israel, as well as between the various dispensations, provides the basis for the sequence of events outlined in dispensational eschatology, which remains perhaps the greatest theological emphasis in dispensationalism.<sup>56</sup> For dispensationalists, the church was a “parenthesis” in the plan of God that was unforeseen by OT prophets, and therefore promises made to Israel in the OT are not applicable to the church.<sup>57</sup> When the Jews rejected Jesus’ offer of the

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<sup>54</sup> See Stone, “Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century American Millennialisms,” 508—509; and Clouse, Hosack, and Pierard, *The New Millennium Manual*, 62—63.

<sup>55</sup> As a point of clarification, not all evangelical Christians who support the modern State of Israel identify as dispensationalists. See Stone, “Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century American Millennialisms,” 509—511; Webb, “Eschatology and Politics,” 511—512; Weber, “Millennialism,” 380; and Clouse, Hosack, and Pierard, *The New Millennium Manual*, 64—65.

<sup>56</sup> See Dale M. Coulter, “Pentecostal Visions of the End: Eschatology, Ecclesiology, and the Fascination of the *Left Behind* Series,” *JPT* 14.1, no. 1 (October 2005): 84; Erickson, *A Basic Guide to Eschatology*, 115—119; and Sheppard, “Pentecostals and the Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism,” 5—7.

<sup>57</sup> See Boettner, *The Millennium*, 229—236; Thompson, *Kingdom Come*, 30; Bass, *Backgrounds to Dispensationalism*, 26; C. Norman Kraus, *Dispensationalism in America: Its Rise and Development*, (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1958), 39; and Crutchfield, *The Origins of Dispensationalism*, 109—113.

Davidic Kingdom, the church was established as a substitute, therefore constituting an interruption or interlude to God's original plan for the Jews.<sup>58</sup> Specifically, this "parenthesis" of the church, which was unforeseen by the OT prophets, according to Darby and Scofield, takes place between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks of Daniel.<sup>59</sup> Therefore, the church will be removed by the rapture, at which point the remaining prophecies given to Israel can be fulfilled in Daniel's seventieth week, also known as the seven years of the Great Tribulation.<sup>60</sup> The "rapture," which dispensationalists find in 1 Thess 4:17, will be a disappearance of believers across the globe, who will be caught up to meet Christ in the air. While the rest of the world will not see this secret disappearance, they will suffer the chaotic consequences of masses of people departing suddenly. It is important to understand that dispensationalists believe the "rapture" is a separate event from the second coming of Christ, which will not occur until the end of the seven years of the Great Tribulation, a period of unparalleled suffering in which the beast, the false prophet and the antichrist will make their evil leadership known. Dispensationalists generally expect that the antichrist will make a peace treaty with the State of Israel at the beginning of the Great Tribulation following the rapture of the church, but three and a half years later, he will order the Jews to stop offering sacrifices in their rebuilt temple and then declare himself God, demanding that all people worship him. For dispensationalists, this is the "abomination

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<sup>58</sup> Boettner, *The Millennium*, 6.

<sup>59</sup> Clouse, Hosack, and Pierard, *The New Millennium Manual*, 61; Thompson, *Kingdom Come*, 30; and Weber, *Living in the Shadow*, 19.

<sup>60</sup> Boettner, *The Millennium*, 6; Thompson, *Kingdom Come*, 30; and Weber, *Living in the Shadow*, 19.

that causes desolation” predicted by the prophet Daniel (Dan 11:31, Matt 24:15).<sup>61</sup> At this point, the beast and the false prophet will require all people to receive the “mark of the beast” on their hands or foreheads to buy or sell—any believers who refuse to take this mark will be persecuted and eventually executed.

These events lead up to the climax of a great apocalyptic war when a band of allied countries including China and Arab middle eastern nations, headed by Russia, will attack Israel (Dan 11, Ezek 38—39). For dispensationalists, this is the war of Gog of Magog as prophesied by Ezekiel, the goal of which is to destroy every Jewish person. These vast armies will besiege Jerusalem and then gather in the Valley of Armageddon to wage the final battle.<sup>62</sup> In classical dispensationalism as articulated by John Nelson Darby and then codified later by C.I. Scofield in the *Scofield Reference Bible*, there seems to be a conflation or equation of the battle of “Gog and Magog” (Ezek 38—39 and Rev 20:7—10) with the battle of Armageddon (Rev 16:13—16, 19:11—21). However, many modern dispensationalists see three separate battles: first, the pre-tribulational battle against Gog of Magog (Ezek 38—39), second, the battle of Armageddon which takes place at the end of the Great Tribulation (Rev 16:13—16, 19:11—21), and third, a final battle against Gog and Magog following the thousand-year reign of Christ (Rev 20:7—10).

For premillennialists, this “dispensation of grace,” sometimes also labelled “the church age,” will culminate in the second coming of Christ at the end of the tribulation

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<sup>61</sup> Clouse, Hosack, and Pierard, *The New Millennium Manual*, 66.

<sup>62</sup> Clouse, Hosack, and Pierard, *The New Millennium Manual*, 68—69.

and usher in a literal thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth.<sup>63</sup> It is at the moment of Israel's impending doom that Jesus the Messiah will return, riding on a white horse with sword drawn, to destroy Israel's enemies (Rev 19:11—21). This great battle of Armageddon is more accurately the slaughter of all peoples who joined Gog (Russia) to fight against Israel by Jesus Himself. Following this gory scene, Jesus will stand on the Mt. of Olives, where he will initiate his thousand-year millennial reign upon the earth. Jewish people will have a special but distinct role from the church throughout the millennium and throughout eternity.<sup>64</sup> At the end of the millennium, once again Gog and Magog will gather against the holy city of Jerusalem to press their attack, but God will destroy them with fire from heaven. Satan will then be thrown into the eternal lake of fire, and the rest of the dead will be resurrected to eternal judgment. Following this judgment, the new heavens, earth and Jerusalem will appear, and the faithful saints from all ages will dwell together there with God for eternity.<sup>65</sup>

### 2.1.2 Pentecostal Connections to Dispensationalism

The Pentecostal movement of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century grew alongside the rise of dispensationalism in influence and popularity, although the historical and theological

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<sup>63</sup> See Menzies, “The Influence of Fundamentalism,” 207; Coulter, “Pentecostal Visions of the End,” 83—84; Sandeen, “Toward a Historical Interpretation of the Origins of Fundamentalism,” 67—68; Clouse, Hosack, and Pierard, *The New Millennium Manual*, 61; and Harper, “Apocalypse Soon,” 69—70.

<sup>64</sup> Boettner, *The Millennium*, 6.

<sup>65</sup> For a summation of these key events in dispensational eschatology, see Tim LaHaye and Thomas Ice, *Charting the End Times: A Visual Guide to Understanding Bible Prophecy* (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 2001), 65, 75; Yoon, *The Restored Jewish State And the Revived Roman Empire*, 142—145; Thompson, *Kingdom Come*, 33; and Clouse, Hosack, and Pierard, *The New Millennium Manual*, 69—70.

origins of the two movements remain technically unrelated.<sup>66</sup> Both early Pentecostals and dispensationalists held these two distinctive beliefs in common: a high view of the authority and infallibility of the Bible, and an expectation for the imminent return of Christ preceding the millennium.<sup>67</sup> In addition, both dispensationalism and Pentecostalism are inherently eschatological, and both hold a hermeneutic that prioritizes literal interpretation and prophetic fulfillment.

Pentecostalism—birthed in and shaped by eschatological concerns such as the imminence of Christ’s return and the urgency of fulfilling the Great Commission—remains a movement deeply affected by eschatology. Historians and theologians agree that eschatology greatly influenced the development of early Pentecostal theology.<sup>68</sup> For Pentecostals, the outpouring of the Spirit in Acts 2 as a fulfilment of Joel’s prophecy signaled the inauguration of the “last days.” A rallying cry for early Pentecostals, the phrase “this is that,” spoken originally by the apostle Peter to explain the spiritual phenomenon occurring on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16), signified for early Pentecostals not only the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy in Acts 2, but more importantly the ongoing expression of that fulfillment in the outpouring of the Spirit

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<sup>66</sup> While dispensationalism originated with the teachings of John Nelson Darby, Pentecostalism in the United States had its origins in the convergence of Wesleyan Holiness traditions and African-American spirituality. See Steven J. Land, “A Passion for the Kingdom: Revisioning Pentecostal Spirituality,” *JPT* 1, no. 1 (1992): 20–23; and Walter J. Hollenweger, “After 20 Years Research on Pentecostalism,” *International Review of Mission* 75, no. 297 (January 1986): 4–6. For an in-depth explanation of the parallel expansion of both Pentecostalism and dispensationalism, see also Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987); and Donald W. Dayton, “Theological Roots of Pentecostalism,” *PNEUMA* 2, no. 1 (Spring 1980): 3–21.

<sup>67</sup> See Allan Anderson, “Spreading Fires: The Globalization of Pentecostalism in the Twentieth Century,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 31, no. 1 (January 2007): 8–9.

<sup>68</sup> See D.W. Faupel, *The Everlasting Gospel: The Significance of Eschatology in the Development of Pentecostal Thought* (JPTSUp 10; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996; repr. Blandford Forum: Deo Publishing, 2009); and Donald W. Dayton, “Theological Roots of Pentecostalism,” 3–21.

through the Pentecostal movement. Pentecostals could point to the working of the Spirit in their own congregations and communities, and like Peter, say, “this is that” which the prophets foretold. In addition to viewing the outpouring of the Spirit as the key event signaling the beginning of the “last days,” the primacy of Christ’s imminent return, evidenced by the frequently repeated proclamation, “Jesus is coming soon,” demonstrates how early Pentecostals viewed the world eschatologically. Expectation for the soon return of Christ fueled Pentecostal fervor for global evangelism and provided a sense of urgency for the demonstration of God’s kingdom through healing, signs, and miracles. Early Pentecostals also expressed the premillennial hope of reigning with Christ on earth for a thousand years following his return.<sup>69</sup> Thus, Pentecostalism remains a movement inherently birthed with an eschatological framework for biblical interpretation.<sup>70</sup>

While Pentecostal biblical interpretation differs vastly from dispensational interpretation in many regards, both approaches do prioritize literal interpretation and prophetic fulfillment. As noted earlier, early Pentecostals relied upon what Archer calls “The Bible Reading Method,” an approach that combined an emphasis upon the literal or “plain meaning” of the text with the harmonization of OT and NT Scriptures. Although borrowed in part from the fundamentalists, many of whom were also early

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<sup>69</sup> See McQueen, “Early Pentecostal Eschatology,” 139, 152—153; and Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*.

<sup>70</sup> William Faupel argues that not only does eschatology play a central role in Pentecostalism, but that eschatology was the catalyst that brought Pentecostalism into being. See Faupel, *The Everlasting Gospel*. Grant Wacker also argues that eschatology played a crucial role in the development of Pentecostal thought, explaining the ways in which Pentecostals adapted and modified dispensational eschatology for their purposes. See Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostalism and American Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 251—265. In reference to Faupel’s work, Macchia describes eschatology as “the integrating theme of Pentecostal theology.” See Macchia, “Pentecostal and Charismatic Theology,” 281—283; and also Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 60—65.

dispensationalists, this method maintained a sharp distinction from fundamentalist, dispensationalist or liberal higher-critical approaches, in that Pentecostals expected the Spirit to speak dynamically and personally through the text, revealing not only the original meaning of the text, but more significantly how it could be appropriated and applied practically in their immediate context.<sup>71</sup> In this regard, they departed drastically from dispensationalists. However, with the Pentecostal emphasis upon the harmonization and prophetic fulfillment of Scriptures, as illustrated by the significance of the “this is that” fulfillment of Joel 2 in Acts 2, Pentecostals, like dispensationalists, expected prophesied futuristic events—particularly those predicted in the OT prophetic literature and in the book of Revelation specifically—to come to pass in their lifetimes.<sup>72</sup> This expectation, along with the shared values of emphasizing eschatology and a “plain meaning” textual interpretive approach, perhaps combined with the eventual widespread embrace of the *Scofield Reference Bible* among Pentecostals, could account for large-scale Pentecostal absorption of dispensational eschatology, despite the theological and missiological contradictions inherent in the marriage of these ideas.<sup>73</sup> Macchia contends that Pentecostals did not fully comprehend the hermeneutical implications of embracing the dispensationalist philosophy of history, resulting in the adoption of what Thompson calls “the fragmentary, jigsaw approach of

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<sup>71</sup> See Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 99—127.

<sup>72</sup> See Yong, *In the Days of Caesar*, 322—323; Thompson, *Kingdom Come*, 52; and Wacker, *Heaven Below*, 252.

<sup>73</sup> These contradictions will be explained more thoroughly in chapter three of this thesis, which will address Pentecostal eschatology. For an exposure to some of the theological contradictions between Wesleyan-Holiness theology (a root of Pentecostalism) and dispensationalism, see Jonathan Dodrill, “From Second Blessing to Second Coming: The Evolution of Dispensationalism within the Holiness Hermeneutic,” *WTJ* 47, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 150—161.

the Scofieldian dispensational inerrantists.”<sup>74</sup> Macchia also proposes that dispensationalism’s negative perspective on the religious establishment, along with its prolific use of dramatic apocalyptic language and its emphasis on the miraculous quality of the coming kingdom, may have appealed to the worldview of early Pentecostals.<sup>75</sup>

While scholars debate the extent of dispensationalism’s influence on early Pentecostalism, it is clear from the earliest periodicals that Pentecostals adopted certain aspects of dispensational eschatology.<sup>76</sup> However, not all early Pentecostals fully embraced dispensational eschatology. Originating from two primary theological streams, early Pentecostals have been identified by historical theologians as “Wesleyan Holiness” and “Finished Work” respectively.<sup>77</sup> The Wesleyan Holiness stream emerged from a combination of the nineteenth-century American Holiness movement and the Wesleyan and Reformed traditions, whereas the Finished Work stream originated from “Finished Work” soteriological theology advocated by influential Pentecostal leaders

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<sup>74</sup> See Thompson, *Kingdom Come*, 53; and Frank D. Macchia, “Pentecostal Theology,” in *NIDPCM* (eds. Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. van der Mass; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 1138.

<sup>75</sup> Macchia, “Pentecostal and Charismatic Theology,” 284.

<sup>76</sup> As an example of this phenomena, Robert Cornwall demonstrates how Pentecostal pioneer Aimee Semple MacPherson adapted dispensationalism to better fit a Pentecostal framework for understanding the Bible. See Robert Cornwall, “Primitivism and the Redefinition of Dispensationalism in the Theology of Aimee Semple MacPherson,” *PNEUMA* 14, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 23—42. For more on the extent to which Pentecostals were influenced by and adopted dispensationalism, see Peter E. Prosser, *Dispensationalist Eschatology and Its Influence on American and British Religious Movements* (Texts and Studies in Religion 82; Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1999); D.J. Wilson, “Perspectives on Pentecostal Eschatology,” in *NIDPCM* (ed. Stanley M. Burgess and E.M. van der Maas; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003): 601—605; Faupel, *The Everlasting Gospel*, 112; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 5—59.

<sup>77</sup> See Kimberly E. Alexander, *Pentecostal Healing: Models in Theology and Practice* (JPTSup 29; Blandford Forum: Deo Publishing, 2006), 195—215.

William H. Durham, Carrie Judd Montgomery, A.S. Copley, and J. Roger Flowers, among others.<sup>78</sup> McQueen concludes that the Wesleyan Holiness tradition allowed for theological diversity, but the Finished Work tradition homogeneously promoted dispensational eschatology from 1906—1923, arguing that “...the holistic and apocalyptic nature of early Pentecostal spirituality” stood in contradiction to classical dispensationalism.<sup>79</sup>

Following the same lines as McQueen’s research demonstrating that early Pentecostals were not all dispensationalists, Althouse and Sheppard also present compelling evidence proving that early Pentecostals did not hold unwaveringly to the dispensational belief in a secret pre-tribulational rapture preceding the tribulation and second coming of Christ, and therefore did not wholly adhere to dispensational eschatology.<sup>80</sup> While Althouse and Sheppard approach the topic from a narrower perspective, focusing solely on the issue of the pre-tribulational rapture, their research supports McQueen’s conclusion that theological diversity existed among early Pentecostals, departing from dispensational eschatology. Sheppard demonstrates how Pentecostal belief in the outpouring of the Spirit and inbreaking of the kingdom, also known as “latter rain” restorationism, clashes with dispensationalism’s futuristic fatalism.<sup>81</sup> In other words, Pentecostal eschatological expectations dramatically contrast

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<sup>78</sup> See McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 60—61, 144—145.

<sup>79</sup> See McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 198—199.

<sup>80</sup> Althouse argues that early Pentecostal eschatology aligned more closely with a “latter rain” restorationist theological framework than with fundamentalism or dispensationalism. See Althouse, “‘Left Behind’—Fact or Fiction,” 187—207; and Sheppard, “Pentecostals and the Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism,” 7—22.

<sup>81</sup> Sheppard explains, “For Pentecostals the emphasis on eschatology belonged more naturally to the sense of a final glorious revelation and outpouring of the Spirit in the last days, than, as with

those of dispensationalists; and yet, numerous Pentecostals throughout history have adopted dispensational eschatology uncritically. Despite the presence of theological diversity and departure from dispensationalism in the earliest years of Pentecostalism, the widespread acceptance of a dispensational eschatological framework among Pentecostals drastically affected ensuing Pentecostal biblical interpretation; particularly in the case of the primary texts involved in this study: Ezek 36:16—39:29, Rev 19:11—21, and Rev 20:7—10.

### 2.1.3 Classical Dispensational Interpretation of Ezek 36:16—39:29, Rev 19:11—21, Rev 20:7—19

Before I review historic Pentecostal interpretations of my primary biblical texts, I will first summarize the classical dispensational interpretation of these texts, to observe how dispensationalism may have influenced Pentecostal interpretations. While Darby founded dispensationalism, C.I. Scofield can be credited with popularizing and disseminating it broadly through his *Scofield Reference Bible*.<sup>82</sup> Used widely in Bible schools and churches across the United States, the *Scofield Reference Bible* soon became the definitive theological authority in fundamentalist and conservative evangelical circles.<sup>83</sup> Clouse, Hosack and Pierard accurately conclude, “Simply put,

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fundamentalists, to the dark prospect of impending destruction for those not suddenly taken out of this world.” See Sheppard, “Pentecostals and the Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism,” 9.

<sup>82</sup> The *Scofield Reference Bible* was originally published in 1909, and then was expanded and updated in 1917. See Clouse, Hosack, and Pierard, *The New Millennium Manual*, 98; Blaising and Bock, *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, 21—23; Coulter, “Pentecostal Visions of the End,” 81, Flesher, “The Historical Development of Premillennial Dispensationalism,” 35; Erickson, *A Basic Guide to Eschatology*, 113; and C. I. Scofield, *The Scofield Reference Bible* (Oxford University Press, 1917).

<sup>83</sup> Flesher explores an interesting historical reason for the popularity of the *Scofield Reference Bible*, when she writes, “Recent historians have suggested that the Scofield Bible’s popularity grew considerably during and immediately following World War I. The theory is that apocalyptic movements frequently emerge in response to, and as a means of providing explanation for, times of crisis. Thus,

*The Scofield Reference Bible* did more than any other printed work to anchor dispensational premillennialism in American evangelicalism.”<sup>84</sup>

In his reference notes, originally published in 1909, Scofield outlines the classical dispensational interpretation of these texts. In addition to the embrace of dispensationalism, likely fueled by a pessimistic view of the future in the years surrounding World War I, Pentecostals from 1909 onward most likely referred to Scofield’s work as at least one source of the dispensational eschatology they came to embrace.<sup>85</sup>

Because of the dominance in conservative Christian communities of the *Scofield Reference Bible*, Scofield’s interpretation of Ezek 36:16—39:29, Rev 19:11—21, and Rev 20:7—19 became the standard dispensational understanding of these texts, and therefore the most widespread Pentecostal interpretation of these texts, exceptions notwithstanding. Therefore, the following summation of this interpretation will set both

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much like the observed increased interest in the *Left Behind* series following 9/11 in the U.S., public interest turned to the teachings found in the Scofield Bible when confronted with the First World War.” See Flesher, “The Historical Development of Premillennial Dispensationalism,” 39; Paul Boyer, “Apocalypticism in the Modern Age,” in *The Continuum History of Apocalypticism* (New York: Continuum, 2003), 528; and Timothy P. Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon: How Evangelicals Became Israel’s Best Friend* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 78—79. Influential bible schools that promoted dispensationalism include Dallas Theological Seminary, Moody Bible Institute, and the Bible Institute of Los Angeles (BIOLA). See Harper, “Apocalypse,” 71.

<sup>84</sup> Clouse, Hosack, and Pierard, *The New Millennium Manual*, 98; and Boettner, *The Millennium*, 6—7.

<sup>85</sup> However, it should be noted that some early Pentecostals, many of whom represented society’s poorest and least advantaged, might well have remained at least functionally illiterate. While a thorough sociological analysis of literacy in the early twentieth century remains outside the scope of this study, it might be interesting in further studies to investigate the connection between literacy and the spread of Pentecostalism, as well as the relationship between literacy rates and the influence of sources like the *Scofield Reference Bible* and Pentecostal periodical publications among the masses in the first couple decades of Pentecostalism. For a brief overview of demographic information relating to literary rates in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see [https://nces.ed.gov/naal/lit\\_history.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/naal/lit_history.asp).

a historical and theological framework through which to view the Pentecostal readings of these texts following.

Scofield's comments on Ezek 36 are cursory; he briefly states that Ezek 36:24—38 describes the restoration of the nation. However, he offers a more in-depth analysis of Ezek 37. For Scofield, Ezek 37:13 describes the conversion of the nation of Israel, followed by the filling of the Spirit (Ezek 37:14). He believes the “bones” represent “the whole house of Israel who shall then be living,” and the “graves” are “the nations where they dwell.”<sup>86</sup> Furthermore, he explains that the two sticks represent Judah and the ten tribes reunifying into one nation (Ezek 37:19—21). Scofield vaguely describes Ezek 37:21—27 as “the plain declaration as to Jehovah’s purpose,” and then correlates Ezek 37:28 with Isaiah 11:10 and Acts 15:16—17, arguing that these texts “strongly indicate the time of full Gentile conversion.”<sup>87</sup>

Regarding Ezek 38—39, Scofield follows Darby in stating definitively that Gog is Russia, and that Ezekiel’s battle of Gog and Magog is premillennial.<sup>88</sup> Darby anticipated Russia and a coalition of eastern nations attacking Israel in order to

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<sup>86</sup> Scofield, Study Notes in *The Scofield Study Bible*, 1095—1096.

<sup>87</sup> Scofield, Study Notes in *The Scofield Study Bible*, 1096.

<sup>88</sup> The identification of Russia with Gog is not unique to Scofield and Darby, although Darby bases his view on the work of linguist Robert Lowthe. William Gesenius, renowned Hebrew scholar, first suggested this association in 1828, and this theory was furthered and popularized in mainstream evangelical theology by Darby, Scofield, and other dispensationalists. However, Bøe concludes that there is no connection between the modern nation of Russia and “Roxalani” referenced in ancient sources such as Ptol. III,5 and Plinius, Hist. Nat. IV,12, Tacitus, Historiae 1,79. See Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 100—101; Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel Chapters 25—48* (Hermenia; eds. Paul D. Hanson and Leonard Jay Greenspoon; trans. James D. Martin; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983): 305; Scofield, Study Notes in *The Scofield Study Bible*, 1096; Darby, *The Collected Writings of J. N. Darby*, vol. 2., 341; Yoon, *The Restored Jewish State And the Revived Roman Empire*, 200—202; and Weber, *On The Road to Armageddon*, 70—72.

“plunder and possess the land.”<sup>89</sup> Significantly, Scofield equates Ezekiel’s battle of Gog and Magog with the battle of Armageddon (Rev 16:16), but allows for the possibility of Ezek 38—39 also referring to a second postmillennial battle as described in Revelation 20:7—9.<sup>90</sup> He views Rev 19:11—21 as descriptive of the second coming of Jesus, accompanied by both saints and angels, after which Jesus destroys the “Gentile world power, headed up in the Beast,” and clearly equates the battle or judgment that follows with the battle of Armageddon (Rev 16:13—16 and Zech 12:1—9), which is a premillennial event in Scofield’s view. Finally, Rev 20:7—10 describes the postmillennial judgment of Satan, in which he will be cast into the lake of fire, where he will suffer eternal torment. According to Scofield, the battle depicted in Ezek 38—39 could be connected to both the premillennial battle of Armageddon (Rev 19:11—21), and the postmillennial battle against Satan, Gog and Magog (Rev 20:7—10).<sup>91</sup> It is the dispensational idea of locating Ezekiel’s war against Gog from the land of Magog (Ezek 38—39) before the millennium that leads interpreters to equate this battle with the battle of Armageddon (Rev 16:13—16; 19:11—21), and therefore to

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<sup>89</sup> See Darby, *The Collected Writings of J. N. Darby*, vol. 11, 275, 329; and Yoon, *The Restored Jewish State And the Revived Roman Empire*, 201.

<sup>90</sup> Scofield’s reference notes, originally published in 1909, quickly became the “industry standard” resource for dispensational biblical interpretation. On Ezek 38:2, Scofield writes, “That the primary reference is to the northern (European) powers, headed up by Russia, all agree. The whole passage should be read in connection with Zechariah 12:1-4; 14:1-9; Matthew 24:14-30; Revelation 14:14-20; 19:17-21. ‘Gog’ is the prince, ‘Magog,’ his land. The reference to Meshech and Tubal (Moscow and Tobolsk) is a clear mark of identification. Russia and the northern powers have been the latest persecutors of dispersed Israel, and it is congruous both with divine justice and with the covenants that destruction should fall at the climax of the last mad attempt to exterminate the remnant of Israel in Jerusalem. The whole prophecy belongs to the yet future ‘day of Jehovah’ (Is. 2:10-22; Revelation 19:11-21 and to the battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16:14), but includes also the final revolt of the nations at the close of the kingdom-age (Revelation 20:7-9).” See Scofield, Study Notes in *The Scofield Study Bible*, 1095—1103, 1668—1672.

<sup>91</sup> Scofield, Study Notes in *The Scofield Study Bible*, 1095—1103, 1668—1672.

identify Gog with a contemporary nation or nations (nearly always Russia), who then become the target of God's wrath.<sup>92</sup> Justification of human violence, typically in the form of military aggression, against those doomed to destruction by God, is the step that most often follows in dispensational eschatology.

In summation, the following themes in Scofield's interpretation of these texts distinctively reflect dispensational eschatology: Ezek 36 represents the restoration of Israel, Ezek 37 depicts the conversion of Israel and the time of full Gentile conversion, Ezek 38—39 is primarily and definitively equated with the premillennial battle of Armageddon against Russia and her allies (Rev 16:13—16, 19:11—21), and Ezek 38—39 is secondarily and only possibly connected to the postmillennial destruction of Gog (Russia), Magog and Satan portrayed in Rev 20:7—10.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> While some make a distinction between various battles against Gog and the final battle of Armageddon, others equate them as one climactic apocalyptic struggle against God's enemies. For more thorough explanations of this classic dispensational interpretation, see John Nelson Darby, *Notes on the Book of Revelations* (London: J. Wertheimer and Company Printers, 1839), 154—165; Scofield, Study Notes in *The Scofield Study Bible*, 1097—1103, 1668—1672; Louis T. Talbot, *Russia Mobilizes for Armageddon*, (Los Angeles: Bible Institute of Los Angeles, 1945), 5—31; Lamar Eugene Cooper, Sr., *Ezekiel: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (NAC 17; ed. E. Ray Clendenen; Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1994), 314—348; Charles Lee Feinberg, *The Prophecy of Ezekiel: The Glory of the Lord* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), 205—232; and Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events* (San Antonio: Ariel Press, 2004), 91—128.

<sup>93</sup> In addition to these prominent dispensational themes are two additional popular interpretations that arose later in dispensational history, from the 1950s onward. First is the idea that the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 fulfilled the prophecy in Ezek 37:1—14. Like the themes of the salvation and restoration of Israel, the idea is not exclusively dispensational, but it is nonetheless distinctively dispensational. For example, the popularity of this interpretation can be seen by the inscription of Ezek 37:14 upon the exit arch of Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial museum in Jerusalem, implying that the vast army of the state of Israel (Ezek 37:10, 14) arose from the graves and dry bones of the Holocaust (Ezek 37:1—14). Second is the idea that the Ezek 38—39 war is actually a separate battle preceding both the battle of Armageddon (Rev 16:13—16, 19:11—21) and the final war against Gog and Magog (Rev 20:7—10). This view gives interpreters expectation for three separate battles, providing ample justification to expect the imminence of the Ezek 38—39 war and therefore equate ancient biblical nations with modern nations.

Those ideas gained common currency in dispensational eschatology which influenced the later Pentecostal reading of these passages at least to some extent. To better understand the connection, the following literary analysis of Pentecostal interpretations of Ezek 36:16—39:29, Rev 19:11—21, and Rev 20:7—19 will follow these distinctively dispensational themes, in hope of shedding light on the question of how deeply dispensational eschatology influenced Pentecostal biblical interpretation at various stages of history.<sup>94</sup> In addition to providing a biblical studies lens through which to view the relationship of Pentecostal eschatology to dispensationalism, a literary analysis of the Pentecostal interpretations of these texts proves instructive because it may potentially reveal changing eschatological, political and missional perspectives throughout the history of the Pentecostal interpretation of these texts.

## **2.2 Pentecostal Interpretations from 1906—2006**

The purpose of this literary analysis is to conduct a thorough investigation of Pentecostal interpretations of the Ezek 36:16—39:29, Rev 19:11—21, and Rev 20:7—10 throughout history to determine when and how dispensational eschatology—particularly its violent apocalypticism—dominated Pentecostal eschatology. I will organize the following literary analysis by summarizing Pentecostal biblical

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<sup>94</sup> I conducted this research by conducting various specific word and phrase searches, including “Ezekiel 36,” “Ezekiel 37,” “Ezekiel 38,” “Ezekiel 39,” “Revelation 19,” “Revelation 20,” “Dry Bones,” “Two Sticks,” and “Gog,” in text-searchable pdfs stored in the online databases of the Flowers Pentecostal Heritage Center (<https://ifphc.org>) and the Consortium of Pentecostal Archives (<https://pentecostalarchives.org>) from 1906 to the present. I recognize that this research only reflects the articles available electronically in these two databases, and perhaps further research is warranted to thoroughly complete the study. For example, at the time I performed the research, electronic articles had only been added to the online database of the Flowers Pentecostal Heritage Center through 2006. However, the vast number of journal articles culled in the research of this thesis may still be viewed as broadly representative of the most popular and widely accepted Pentecostal interpretations of Ezek 36:16—39:29 and Rev 19:11—21 and 20:7—10.

interpretations by decade and then by biblical chapter and theological theme, evaluating whether they ever depart from dispensational interpretations.<sup>95</sup> It is important to note that certain theological themes remain, in my assessment, distinctively dispensational, but are by no means exclusively dispensational. For example, the interpretation that Ezek 36—37 describes the spiritual and perhaps physical restoration of Israel to the land has been attested by some evangelicals and Pentecostals who do not adhere to dispensationalism, as well as by numerous Jews. Therefore, the argument for connecting this interpretation of Ezek 36—37 by Pentecostals to dispensationalism will be held loosely, and I will refer to these readings as *possibly* reflective of dispensational influence. However, Scofield’s claim that Ezek 38—39 is equated with the premillennial battle of Armageddon against Russia and her allies is an *exclusively* dispensational idea. The only variation on this among later dispensationalists is that the Ezek 38—39 conflict, while still against Russia and allies, will precede the battle of Armageddon. Essentially, any expectation for a literal future battle against contemporary nations based upon Ezek 38—39, preceding the Great Tribulation and Christ’s return, remains exclusive to dispensationalism. In addition, emphasis upon the battle of “Gog and Magog” as an event following the millennium (Rev 20:7—10) is

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<sup>95</sup> In this particular literary analysis of biblical interpretation in Pentecostal periodicals, I have chosen not to separate the periodicals into “Finished Work” or “Wesleyan Holiness” streams of Pentecostalism. While the theological significance of this methodology has been demonstrated dynamically in the works of Kimberly Alexander, Larry McQueen, and Melissa Archer, I have chosen to collapse all Pentecostal readings into one group for two primary reasons. First, it gives me an overview of Pentecostalism as a whole, and second, the space required to separate the literature into two different streams of Pentecostalism would lengthen this chapter unmanageably for my purposes in this thesis. The scholars formerly noted only dealt with the first ten to fifteen years of Pentecostalism, but I am seeking to analyze 100 years of Pentecostal readings. However, for a presentation of my research on the Pentecostal biblical interpretations that is separated into two separate streams through the 1960s, see Alicia R. Jackson, “Wesleyan Holiness and Finished Work Pentecostal Interpretations of Gog and Magog Biblical Texts,” *JPT* 25, no. 2 (2016): 168—183. See also Alexander, *Pentecostal Healing*; McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*; and Archer, ‘*I Was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day.*’

typically indicative of a non-dispensational reading, since dispensationalists believe that Ezek 38—39 and Rev 20:7—10 describe two separate battles, and they tend to emphasize what they view as the premillennial conflict described in Ezek 38—39. Following the historical review of Pentecostal interpretations, I will conclude this chapter by summarizing my historical and theological observations.

### 2.2.1 1906—1919

Having commented thus far principally upon the influence of dispensational thinking on Pentecostal eschatology, it is striking to observe that from 1906—1919, several Pentecostal articles dramatically contrasted with dispensational interpretations. First, regarding readings of Ezek 36—37 and Rev 19, three articles reflect the idea of personal repentance and purification from sin, with no reference to Israel specifically.<sup>96</sup> Most significant among these is what seems to be the earliest published Pentecostal intertextual interpretation of Ezek 37 and Rev 19 by E.N. Bell, in which he brilliantly connects Ezekiel's resurrected army to the army following the rider on the white horse in Rev 19:

God's order for the building up of the army is first, dry bones (sinners), then sinews, then flesh, then breath. Later on these will be clothed in fine linen, white and clean, riding on white horses and following Him who was called Faithful and True.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> In addition to the articles on Ezek 36—37, one article by Sisson on Rev 19:11—16 emphasizes the judgment of Christ at his parousia, neither demonstrating or detracting from dispensationalism. See Elizabeth Sisson, “The Three Aspects of the Great Tribulation,” *LRE* 5, no. 9 (June 1913): 18; Sam C. Perry, “You Don't Believe in Sanctification?” *COGE* 6, no. 49 (December 1915): 3; W.J. Taylor, “My Wash-Pot,” *CE* 262—263 (November 1918): 13; and E.N. Bell, “I Will Pour Out My Spirit on All Flesh,” *CE* 280—281, (March 1919) 4.

<sup>97</sup> Bell, “I Will Pour Out My Spirit on All Flesh,” 4.

Bell's interpretation emphasizes the spiritual transformation of sinners in a general sense, without indicating the spiritual or physical restoration of Israel. While four of the articles from this period connect Ezek 36—37 to the physical and spiritual restoration of Israel, possibly revealing dispensational influence, the variety in views presented reveals an openness to various interpretations of the same texts.<sup>98</sup> Second, interpretations of the Gog and Magog texts (Ezek 38—39 and Rev 20:7—9) differed from dispensationalism in two primary ways: they described the battle of Gog and Magog as a single postmillennial conflict, and they did not attempt to identify Gog with any contemporary peoples or nations. For example, D. Wesley Myland's 1912 article in *LRE* clearly identified the war of Gog and Magog as occurring after the millennium. He did not identify Gog and Magog with geo-political nations, but rather with those among the nations who are deceived by Satan.<sup>99</sup> The only clear identification of Gog with Russia was in an article by Frank Bartleman, who clearly emphasized his belief in non-violence and departed from dispensational apocalypticism.<sup>100</sup> Rather than using the

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<sup>98</sup> Of these articles, the one to most closely resemble the dispensational tendency to connect contemporary news headlines to biblical prophecy is Langston's article, which ties the development of fifty agricultural colonies in Palestine in 1912 to Ezek 36:34—36. See E. L. Langston, "Present Condition of Palestine Indicative of the Lord's Return," *TBM* 5, no. 113 (July 1912): 4; W.H. Cossum, "Mountain Peaks of Prophecy and Sacred History of The Indestructible Jew," *LRE* 2, no. 7 (April 1910): 3—6; W. H. Cossum, "Mountain Peaks of Prophecy and Sacred History," *LRE* 2, no. 11 (August 1910): 3; and Ira E. David, "At the Coming of the Lord, What?" *PH* 1, no. 4 (July 1915): 2.

<sup>99</sup> See D. Wesley Myland, "The Book of Revelation of Jesus Christ: Eleventh Lecture—Christ Coming in Glory," *LRE* 4, no. 5 (February 1912): 11—12. However, three years later, the same periodical published a contrasting view by Ernest Marquess, who expects the imminent divine destruction of Russia. Marquess refers to Smith's Bible Dictionary as his source for the identification of Rosh as Russia, Meshech as Moscow, and Tubal as Tobolsk. He writes, "This scene is the finish of Russia and her allied armies, the European Powers, as graphically and minutely foretold 2500 years ago in the 38th and 39th chapters of Ezekiel. ... For 2500 years it has been prophecy. It will shortly be history." See Ernest Marquess, "The Latest War News," *LRE* (January 1915): 23.

<sup>100</sup> There was one other instance of identifying Russia with Gog; however, it was published in letter written from a reader in Finland. However, this reader did not offer further commentary supporting dispensational eschatology, nor did the publishers of his letter interact with his opinion. It was merely in the "reader opinions" category and was therefore not widely reflective of the theological position of that publication's denomination. See Arne Ilmoni, "Letter From Kangasala, Finland," *TBM* 5, no. 120

identification of Gog with Russia to justify military aggression against Russia, Bartleman argued that all war is carnal, and that Christians must separate themselves from it. Bartleman wrote, “The destruction of our fellow man must not enter into the principle of Christianity.”<sup>101</sup> Most other articles published during this time deal only with the Rev 20:7—9 text, in which the terms “Gog and Magog” are employed collectively as symbolic names to describe those who rebel against God after the millennium and therefore suffer divine judgment. According to these Pentecostal articles, this destruction is performed by God alone; no other human agents are involved in violence or exacting judgment upon the enemies of God.<sup>102</sup> The diversity of interpretations in the first decade of Pentecostalism is indicative of the values of Pentecostal hermeneutics, displaying a pneumatic openness to multiple understandings of the same texts, and perhaps less commitment to a dispensational mindset.

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(November 1912): 1. Ilmoni writes, “I believe that Gog and Magog, in Ezek 38 and 39, are Russia. The emperor of Russia was earlier called ‘Gog.’ A village in Siberia is called ‘Tubal.’”

<sup>101</sup> See Frank Bartelman, “The War—Separation,” *TBM* 9, no. 178 (January 1916): 3.

<sup>102</sup> See E.W. Simpson, “A Talk on the Last Nine Verses of Rev 20,” *COGE* 5, no. 41 (October 1914): 4; and E.A. Sexton, “The Glory Set Before Us,” *TBM* 9, no. 183 (June 1916): 1. In a 1918 article Sexton explains, “After our Lord shall have reigned a thousand years with His saints, Satan shall be loosed a little season and will go about to deceive the people again. There will be a rebellion, and the battle of Gog and Magog, and the final judgment of the wicked. ‘And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast in the lake of fire.’ Rev 20:16.” See E.A. Sexton, “When Jesus Comes,” *TBM* 11, no. 204 (June 1918):1. Similarly, T.S. Payne writes, “The tribulation is then over, the millennium is past. The devil has been loosed for a little season, and has gone forth to the four quarters of the earth to deceive the nations. Gog and Magog have come together in number like the sand of the sea. The camp of the saints has been compassed about, and fire falls from heaven and devours them; the devil is now bound and cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are, to be tormented day and night forever.” See T.S. Payne, “The Judgment,” *COGE* 8, no. 16 (April 1917), 2—3.

## 2.2.2 1920s

In the 1920s, Pentecostal interpretations of Ezek 36—37 departed from the distinctively (though not exclusively) dispensational understanding of the conversion of the nation of Israel to faith in Jesus as Messiah. Rather, Paul F. Beacham and Horace Smith wrote about Ezek 36:25—27 as symbolizing the transformation of human hearts by faith in Christ, and Evelyn Alice Luce emphasized the power and efficacy of prayer (Ezek 36:37).<sup>103</sup> Regarding Ezek 37, two articles by M.A. Titchenell and W.E. Moody respectively expressed the view that the “dry bones” metaphorically represented a dry version of Christianity without the baptism and gifts of the Holy Spirit.<sup>104</sup> Similarly, Uldine Mabelle Utley shared the testimony of a new believer who, like Ezekiel of old, had a vision of “dry bones” as lost souls in need of the Living Bread.<sup>105</sup> Non-dispensational interpretations of Ezek 38—39 and Rev 19:11—21 and 20:7—9 also persisted among Pentecostals in the 1920s, reflected most prominently in articles by Paul Beacham and J.P. Hughes. Beacham, for example, states, “It appears that Gog and Magog are names used in a symbolic sense in Rev 20:3, to represent the Gentile nations who will revolt against Christ after the end of the kingdom-age.”<sup>106</sup> For both authors,

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<sup>103</sup> See Horace Smith, “Born of God,” *COGE* 15, no. 42 (November 1924): 2; Paul F. Beacham, “Question Drawer,” *PHA* 11, no. 49, (April 1928): 10; and Evelyn Alice Luce, “Fire from Heaven and Abundance of Rain,” *PE*, nos. 342, 343, (May 1920): 2.

<sup>104</sup> Moody wrote, “Surely present-day Christendom is a veritable Valley of Dry Bones, and every praying Christian is longing for the supernatural ‘noise and shaking.’” See W.E. Moody, “A Sound of Rain,” *PE* No. 819 (October, 1929): 2; and M.A. Titchenell, “The Greatest Calamity of Christianity: Opposition to the Holy Ghost,” *LRE* 21, no. 1 (October 1928): 19. In addition, John Goben states that Ezek 37 refers to the second coming of Christ, although he does not explain specifically how or where it does this. See John Goben, “The Two Advents of the Lord Jesus Christ,” *PE* 579 (January 1925): 2.

<sup>105</sup> Uldine Mabelle Utley, “Hungry Hearts and Happy Hearts,” *Petals from the Rose of Sharon* 2, no. 3 (March 1926): 4.

<sup>106</sup> See Paul F. Beacham, “Question Drawer,” *PHA* 12, no. 34 (December 1928): 9, Paul F. Beacham, “Question Drawer,” *PHA* 13, no. 49 (April 1929): 9, and Paul F. Beacham, “Question Drawer,” *PHA* 13, no. 19 (September 1929): 8. Similarly, Hughes understands Gog and Magog as

the terms “Gog and Magog” were understood figuratively to designate God’s enemies, and not to describe specific geo-political nations like Russia. Understanding “Gog” in a symbolic sense completely shifts the outlook of early Pentecostals not only on the interpretation of these texts, but also in the way they would have viewed contemporary foreign nations, both politically and missionally. Additionally, in a 1924 article in *PE*, William A. Coxe expressed a non-dispensational view by placing Ezekiel’s war of Gog and Magog after the millennium, and by omitting any mention of contemporary nations in relation to Gog.<sup>107</sup> Other non-dispensational interpretations from this period include M.S. Lemons’s emphasis on the significance of thoughts and spiritual warfare (Ezek 38:10), and Elizabeth Sisson’s article on Ezek 38 describing the Jews as a “feeble flock” rescued supernaturally by God.<sup>108</sup> Regarding Rev 19:11—21, Utley uniquely emphasizes the nonviolent nature of Christ’s return by interpreting the rider’s bloodstained robe as his own, “the precious blood of Jesus” shed for humanity’s sins.<sup>109</sup>

However, echoes of dispensational eschatology began to emerge in the 1920s as well. Four articles on Ezek 36—37 reflect possible dispensational influence, claiming

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figurative names for those used by Satan to persecute the Jews. See J.P. Hughes, “Jews and Their Affliction,” *COGE* 12, no. 29 (July 1921): 3. See also T.S. Payne, “Jesus Coming Again—Many Prophecies Refer to His Coming,” *COGE* 15, no. 25 (July 1924): 1—2.

<sup>107</sup> Coxe writes, “Then at the end of the millennium Satan is let out for a little season and will gather an army together to make war with God. In the battle of Gog and Magog Satan’s armies will be killed by fire out of heaven, but Satan will be taken alive and cast into the lake of fire, where he will be tormented forever and ever.” See William A. Coxe, “That Day,” *PE* 564 (September 1924): 3; and William A. Coxe, “The Consummation of the Ages,” *PE* 761 (August 1928): 6.

<sup>108</sup> I classified Sisson’s article as non-dispensational because she provides no indication of militarism or violence perpetrated by the restored Jewish nation, as most dispensational interpreters do. See M.S. Lemons, “Thoughts,” *COGE* 19, no. 41 (October 1928): 2; and Elizabeth Sisson, “Prayer,” *PE* 525 (December 1923): 20.

<sup>109</sup> Uldine Mabelle Utley, “A Vision of His Glory on the Mount of Prayer,” *LRE* 19, no. 7 (April 1927): 18.

that the Zionist movement and the Jewish immigration to Palestine either partially fulfill these prophecies or prepare the way for their fulfillment.<sup>110</sup> F.J. Lee echoed dispensational ideas by predicting that God would entirely destroy famine-stricken Russia (Gog) by the end of the tribulation.<sup>111</sup> While he followed dispensationalism in identifying Gog as Russia, he departed from apocalyptic militarism in that he did not advocate human war against Russia.<sup>112</sup> Three other articles from the 1920s on Ezek 38—39 and Rev 20 reflect views deeply entrenched in dispensationalism. For example, Stanley H. Frodsham clearly defined “Gog” as Russia, quoting Dr. James Gray, an early dispensational leader who edited the first edition of *The Scofield Reference Bible* and later served as president of Moody Bible College<sup>113</sup> Curiously, Frodsham

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<sup>110</sup> One of these authors, R.A. Torrey, was a dispensationalist and one of the fathers of fundamentalism. Clearly, he was not personally a Pentecostal, but nonetheless *TBM* published his article as a guest author. While a number of non-dispensational interpretations of these texts were present in the 1920s literature, inclusion of Torrey’s article demonstrates the subtle gravitation among Pentecostals toward dispensational eschatology. See R.A. Torrey, “When Jesus Comes to Earth Again,” *TBM* 15, no. 239 (August and September 1922): 1; F.J. Lee, “Israel’s Return A Last Day Sign: To Palestine They Are Going By the Thousands,” *COGE* 18, no. 43 (October 1927): 1; Stanley H. Frodsham, “The Land of the Bible in the Last Days,” *PE* 761 (August 1928): 2; and Eva E. Morton, “Behold the Fig Tree,” *PE* 708 (July 1927): 2.

<sup>111</sup> However, in a July 1922 article, Lee seems to contradict this view by explaining that the Gog and Magog war will not take place until after the millennium. He explains that Gog represents Russia and all those who join Russia in persecuting the Jews. See F.J. Lee, “Satan Bound—The Millennium Begun,” *COGE* 13, no. 27 (July 1922): 3.

<sup>112</sup> Lee writes, “While the world war (nation against nation and kingdom against kingdom) is the greatest event that has ever effected this world, the famines that have followed have also been the greatest of any in the history of all the world, millions in Russia and other famine stricken districts have succumbed to this dreadful scourge permitted by God Himself. Truly ‘Gog’ has a hook in his jaw. See Ezek 38:4. Yet doubtless the hook will be removed and he will come again, but to be entirely destroyed at the final end of this age, the close of the tribulation.” See F.J. Lee, “At the End of the World,” *TFS* 1, no. 2 (May 1922): 8, 16—17; F.J. Lee, “Satan Bound—The Millennium Begun,” *COGE* 13, no. 27 (July 1922): 3; and F.J. Lee, “Satan Loosed,” *COGE* 13, no. 29 (July 1922): 3.

<sup>113</sup> Frodsham quotes Gray: “The ‘chief prince’ is translated in the revised version as prince of Rosh. Meshech is taken to be Moscow, and Tubal, Tobolosk, the capital cities of Russia. Gomer stands for Crimea; Togarmah for Turkey; Gog is the name of the highest peak of the Caucasus.” See Stanley H. Frodsham, “Fear Not,” *PE* 528 (January 1924): 2—3. See also D.M. Patton, “Moscow and Rome,” *LRE* (September 1923): 9—10.

identified Tubal as Tobolosk in his 1924 article, but in his 1925 article, Tubal became Turkey. This slight but significant change illustrates powerfully the ever-fluid identities of Gog and allies based upon the shifting tides of current political events. An even more significant shift in Frodsham's 1925 article, however, is the claim that human armies will oppose Gog and allies in battle. This is, as far as I have been able to determine, the earliest mention in any Pentecostal periodical of human armies fighting against Gog, and therefore perhaps the first genuinely Pentecostal allusion to the justification of human violence in the name of fulfilling prophecy.<sup>114</sup> Also of note in the 1920s is an article by Frodsham on the largely overlooked primary pericope of this thesis, Ezek 37:15—28, in which he interprets the reunification of the two sticks as the future reunification of the nation of Israel and the return of Jewish people to the land.<sup>115</sup>

### 2.2.3 1930s

By the 1930s, the influence of dispensational eschatology upon Pentecostal interpretations emerged more dramatically.<sup>116</sup> Perhaps the political climate of pre-

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<sup>114</sup> Frodsham writes, "These hordes [Gog and allies] will be opposed by other nations, doubtless those who are specifically interested in the reinstatement of the Jews into this land. But the Lord Himself will be the greatest factor in this war, for He declares, 'I will rain an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire and brimstone.' And he says to Gog and his allies, 'I will give thee unto ravenous birds of every sort and to the beasts of the field to be devoured.'" See Stanley H. Frodsham, "Young People's Meeting," *PE* 597 (May 1925): 8—9; and Stanley H. Frodsham, "Foreshadowings of the Future," *PE* 851 (June 1930): 4. Like Frodsham, Canadian Anglican minister Canon F.E. Howitt cites Dr. Gray's research in his identification of the nations in Ezek 38-39. According to Howitt, Dr. Gray identifies Gomer as Germany, yet in his 1924 article, Frodsham claimed that Dr. Gray identifies Gomer as Crimea—further illuminating the fickleness of such designations. Howitt also published in Moody Monthly and King's Business, consistently promoting dispensational eschatology. See F.E. Howitt, "Israel and Other Lands in Prophecy," *PE* 728 (March 1928), 2—3, 9. See also Matthew Avery Sutton, *American Apocalypse: A History of Modern Evangelicalism*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014): 224.

<sup>115</sup> Stanley H. Frodsham, ed., "Questions and Answers," *PE* 422—423, (December 1921): 8.

<sup>116</sup> A few examples of classical dispensational interpretations of Gog and Magog texts are Elizabeth Bowman, "The Re-created Earth," *TFC6*, no. 36 (June 1932): 8; Aimee Semple McPherson,

World War II Europe, combined with dispensationalism's growing popularity among nearly all evangelicals, made such interpretations more appealing to Pentecostals. Max I. Reich, a dispensationalist instructor at Moody Bible Institute, published an article in *PE* on the interpretation of Ezek 37:1—14, explaining that regeneration is the only solution to the “Jewish Problem.” In the article, he expresses the interpretation that Ezekiel’s dry bones coming to life represent the Jewish people in the millennium, who will recognize Jesus as their Messiah and spread the gospel throughout the world.<sup>117</sup> Eight other articles present the view (possibly influenced by dispensationalism) that the modern day Jewish immigration to the Holy Land fulfills prophecies of return (Ezek 36:24) and restoration pictured by the “dry bones” coming to life (Ezek 37:1—14).<sup>118</sup> Peters writes, “If more Hitlers arise in the nations of the world, we may look for even greater changes, as the ‘graves’ in Western nations are opened, and Israel returns to the

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ed., “Signs of the Times,” *BCCF1*, no. 15 (October 1934): 8; Niels P. Thomsen, “The Battle of Armageddon,” *LRE* 26, no. 6 (March 1934): 3—6; Max Isaac Reich, “The Mystery and Romance of Israel,” *PE* 952 (June 1932): 3; Stanley H. Frodsham, ed., “The Dying World and the Living Word” *PE* 1323 (September 1939): 9; Howard W. Rusthoi, “Public Enemy, no. 1 Denounced by Rusthoi,” *TFC13*, no. 10, (August 1939): 1—2; and Howard W. Rusthoi, “Prophecy Marches On,” *TFC13*, no. 13 (September 1939): 8.

<sup>117</sup> Reich wrote, “Regeneration is the only solution to the Jewish Problem. Not repatriation alone, nor any of the other methods we have named, but regeneration. It is pictured in Ezekiel’s vision of dry bones. First the dry bones came together; then flesh and sinews and skin came on the bones; and then, by another act of God, the breath of heaven came into the bones and they stood on their feet a mighty army. The Jewish people. The dry bones collected and clothed and revived will be God’s ‘Salvation Army’ in the millennium to carry the message of the Messiah to the ends of the earth.” See Max I. Reich, “The Mystery and Romance of Israel,” *PE* No. 1335 (December 1939): 10, 15.

<sup>118</sup> See S. A. Jamieson, “The Signs of the Times,” *PE*, no. 892 (April 1931): 9; Chas S. Peters, “Israel’s New Exodus to the Promised Land,” *PE* 1020 (October 1933): 9; Watson Argue, “Striking Signs of the End,” *LRE* (September 1936): 6; J.N. Hoover, “The Word of God Concerning the Jew,” *LRE* 28, no. 7 (April 1937): 18; J.W. Kelly, “Restoration of the Jews to Palestine,” *PHA* 22, no. 23 (October 1938): 4; Stanley H. Frodsham, “The Passing and the Permanent: Progress in Palestine,” *PE*, no. 1124 (November 1935): 5; Stanley H. Frodsham, “The Passing and the Permanent: The Promised Land,” *PE*, no. 1145 (April 1936): 6; and Stanley H. Frodsham, “The Sunday School Lesson,” *PE* 1188 (February 1937): 6.

Promised Land. Ezekiel 37:12.”<sup>119</sup> Stanley H. Frodsham presents a curious conundrum, perhaps demonstrating in his own writings the openness of early Pentecostals to multiple interpretations of the same texts. Although predominantly dispensationalist in his interpretations, Frodsham occasionally presents non-dispensationalist readings as well. For example, in one article, Ezek 36:37 refers to the Spirit poured out into the hearts of all believers, but then in two other articles, Ezek 36:10, 33—35 refers to the modern day Jewish return to the land and its ensuing prosperity.<sup>120</sup> Again, in one article, Ezekiel’s “dry bones” represent lost souls or Christianity without Pentecost, and in another article, the resurrection of the dry bones symbolizes the restored nation of Israel.<sup>121</sup> In a third article, Frodsham writes that Ezek 37 may foretell an alliance between Germany and Russia, although he does not explain how it does so.<sup>122</sup> Frodsham’s work serves as a microcosm of the struggle for Pentecostal identity in the 1930s, illustrating the tension inherent in seeking to maintain both Pentecostal hermeneutics and dispensational eschatology.

Dispensational interpretations of Ezek 38—39, Rev 19:11—21, and Rev 20:7—10 also dominated Pentecostal periodicals in the 1930s. Among the prominent themes was identifying Gog and her allies with modern nations; Gog nearly always being

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<sup>119</sup> Peters, “Israel’s New Exodus to the Promised Land,” 9.

<sup>120</sup> See Stanley H. Frodsham, “The Editor’s Notebook: By My Spirit,” *PE* 1030 (January 1934): 5; Stanley H. Frodsham, “The Passing and the Permanent: Progress in Palestine,” *PE* 1124 (November 1935): 5; and Stanley H. Frodsham, “The Passing and the Permanent: The Promised Land,” *PE* 1145, (April 1936): 6.

<sup>121</sup> See Stanley H. Frodsham, “The Sunday School Lesson,” *PE* 1188 (February 1937): 6; and Stanley H. Frodsham, “The Sunday School Lesson,” *PE* 1195 (April 1937): 6.

<sup>122</sup> Stanley H. Frodsham, “The Passing and the Permanent: A Review of Current Life and Thought in the Light of Scripture,” *PE* 1224 (October 1937): 7.

equated with Russia.<sup>123</sup> The writings of J.H. Ingram, J.W. Kelley, Stanley H. Frodsham, and H.A. Tomlinson, among others, provide further evidence that the names Russia and Gog were used interchangeably by this time.<sup>124</sup> Tomlinson also identifies Gomer as Germany under Hitler, and although he seemed to embrace aspects of dispensational eschatology, he later embraced postmillennialism and wrote that 1939—1945 was the

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<sup>123</sup> Bøe concludes that there is no connection between the modern nation of Russia and “Roxalani” referenced in ancient sources such as Ptol. III,5 and Plinius, Hist. Nat. IV,12, Tacitus, Historiae 1,79. See Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 100—101; and Zimmerli, *Ezekiel*, 305. For a sampling of Pentecostal sources identifying Gog as Russia and Gog’s allies as other modern nations, see Frank Bartelman, “The War—Separation,” *TBM* 9, no. 178 (January 1916): 3; F.J. Lee, “At the End of the World,” *TFS* 1, no. 2 (May, 1922): 8, 16—17; Lee, “Satan Bound—The Millennium Begun,” *COGE* 13, no. 27 (July, 1922): 3; F.J. Lee, “Satan Loosed,” *COGE* 13, no. 29 (July, 1922): 3; D.M. Patton, “Moscow and Rome,” *LRE* (September, 1923) :9—10; Stanley H. Frodsham, “Young People’s Meeting,” *PE* 597 (May 1925): 8—9; Stanley H. Frodsham, “Foreshadowings of the Future,” *PE* 851 (June 1930), 4; F.E. Howitt, “Israel and Other Lands in Prophecy,” *PE* 728 (March, 1928), 2—3, 9; H.A. Ironside, “Has the Sino-Japanese War Any Prophetic Significance? Coming Events in the Light of the Bible,” *LRE* (April, 1932): 9—11, 21; Eugene Schuyler, *H.A. Ironside: Ordained of the Lord* (Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, 1976), 203, 258; Louis S. Bauman, “When Russia’s Bear Meets Judah’s Lion,” *LRE* (May, 1932): 14—17; Max Isaac Reich, “The Mystery and Romance of Israel,” *PE* 952 (June, 1932), 3; R.H. Bell, “The Day of the Lord,” *COGE* 24, no. 1 (March, 1933): 4; J.H. Ingram, “La Iglesia Ha Muerto?” *COGE* 24, no. 41 (December, 1933): 8; Thomas M. Chalmers, “Russia and Armageddon,” *PE* 1044 (April, 1934): 1, 6—7; and Chalmers, “Russia and Armageddon (continued)” *PE* 1045 (April, 1934): 2—4.

<sup>124</sup> Ingram writes, “The recognition of Soviet Russia by the United States may have more to do with the fulfillment of prophecy than some think, for somehow I could not feel good over the fact that our president was offering the use of his good office to bring about a reconciliation with Red Russia, who is not only opposed to theocracy but to democracy. At any rate we have yoked up in some measure with ‘Gog and Magog,’ and we need to pray for those at the head of our government who themselves grope in darkness while they endeavor to lead us to the light of a new day dawning upon the horizon of the industrial world.” See J.H. Ingram, “La Iglesia Ha Muerto?” *COGE* 24, no. 41 (December 1933): 8. Similarly, J.W. Kelley states, “According to the Word of God, Germany will be with the ‘hordes of the north parts’ in the day when God shall come down like a mighty storm upon Israel. … We understand that Ezekiel, in his prophecy of Gog and Gomer in the march for a spoil, has reference to the great war that will be fought just before the kingdom of Christ is to be set up. The alliance of Russia and Germany is a forerunner of what is to be … As for Russia’s being connected with the prophecy of Ezekiel, there can be no doubt. ‘Gog’ is described as the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal. It is a historical fact that ‘Magog’ second son of Japheth, was the progenitor of the ancient Scythians or Tartars, whose descendants are the Russians of today: Russia is ancient Rosh; Gog is the prince of Rosh. Then ‘Meshech’ and ‘Tubal’ are the ancient names of Moscow and Tobolosk, chief cities of Russia.” See J.W. Kelley, “The Present War in Divine Prophecy,” *PHA* 23, no. 35 (Dec 7, 1939): 9. See also Homer A. Tomlinson, “High Points of Pastor Homer A. Tomlinson’s Prophetic Talks in New York City,” *WWM* 11, no. 2 (January 1934): 1; Stanley H. Frodsham, “The Editor’s Notebook,” *PE* 861 (August 1930): 5; Stanley H. Frodsham, “The Editor’s Notebook,” *PE* 899 (May 1931): 7; Stanley H. Frodsham, “The Editor’s Notebook,” *PE* 955 (July 1932): 5; Stanley H. Frodsham, “The Passing and the Permanent,” *PE* 1193 (March 1937): 7; Stanley H. Frodsham, “The Way of Salvation,” *PE* 1215 (August 1937): 11; and William Booth Clibborn, “The Pulse of a Dying World,” *LRE* 26, no. 4 (January 1934): 12.

Great Tribulation.<sup>125</sup> In his 1932 article, Louis Bauman quotes Scofield to argue that Gog is Russia, and that Meshech and Tubal refer to Moscow and Tobolosk.<sup>126</sup> Similarly, Aimee Semple McPherson identifies Gog as Russia, Gomer as Germany, and Togarmah as Turkey.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> In addition to his clear identification of Russia as Gog and Germany as Gomer, Tomlinson's following statements offer a window into contemporary attitudes in 1934 toward the Jewish community: "The leaders of godlessness in the world today are Spenoza, Jewish philosopher, Karl Marx, a Jew, founder of communism. None others even approach them—godless, apostate Jews. In America, so many Jews are gathered around our president, into our courts, our banks, every line of activity, all of this has started a glaring wave of anti-Jewish sentiment in the United States." During the 1960s Tomlinson believed the millennium had arrived, and he even traveled the world to proclaim global cessation of war. See Tomlinson, "High Points of Pastor Homer A. Tomlinson's Prophetic Talks in New York City," 1; and Jay Beaman, *Pentecostal Pacifism: The Origin, Development and Rejection of Pacific Belief Among the Pentecostals* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2009): 91—93.

<sup>126</sup> Bauman states, "Bible scholars are generally agreed that Gog (the prince) and Magog (the land) in the great prophecy of Ezekiel (38—39) refer to the northern part of Europe, headed up in Russia. Scofield says: 'The reference to Meshech and Tubal (Moscow and Tobolosk) is a clear mark of identification.' ... The Bear of Russia and the Lion of Judah must soon meet for final conflict. Both cannot rule." In the same article, he also writes, "The great Russian bear is literally lifting his mighty paws toward heaven, and growling his defiance of God: 'I am against thee.' The answer is returned: 'Thus saith the Lord God, 'Behold I am against thee.'(Ezek 38:3)." See Louis S. Bauman, "When Russia's Bear Meets Judah's Lion," *TBM* 26, no. 285 (June 1932): 414—517; Louis S. Bauman, "When Russia's Bear Meets Judah's Lion," *TBM* 26, no. 285 (June 1932); and Louis S. Bauman, "When Russia's Bear Meets Judah's Lion," *COGE* 24, no. 15 (June 1933). S.W. Latimer affirms Bauman's interpretation that Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal are Russia, Moscow and Tobolsk. Then he writes, "The valley of Megiddo is therefore the natural gathering place for the armies which shall engage in the battle of Rev. 16:14—16, to which the conflict of Ezekiel 38 and 39 is probably a sequel. Thus we see in our day the shaping of events which shall easily culminate in the greatest holocaust of slaughter in all history." See S.W. Latimer, "Prophecies Near Fulfillment," *COGE* 26, no. 21 (July 1935): 6.

<sup>127</sup> Aimee Semple McPherson, ed., "Signs of the Times," *BCCF* 2, no. 6 (August 1935): 8. In an earlier article, McPherson hints at the possibility that Ezek 38—39 could be fulfilled in 1934, when she cautiously writes, "These are two directions with which Russia is connected in the prophetic Scriptures, e.g., Ezekiel 38 and 39. What is in store for the nations of the earth in the year 1934? We have always refrained from date-fixing, but Dr. Grattan Guiness affirmed that he could see no later date than 1934." See McPherson, ed., "Signs of the Times," *BCC* 1, no. 9 (August 1934): 8. Regarding the relationship of the United States to Russia, McPherson writes, "November—what happened that month? Scripture again was fulfilled. The United States recognized Russia. You say, 'Sister, what shall we do?' This is a good idea. I will give you my view in the teaching of the Bible. Read Ezekiel 38: 'Set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him.' Meshech is Moscow. Tubal also a city of Russia. Today we have joined hands with Russia. What other presidents refused to do our President has done. How it will work out is something for the future to tell. Russia says her business is to overthrow the church, and gives just so many months for every place of worship to be turned back to the State and the children are not allowed to learn about God." See Aimee Semple McPherson, "God in American History in 1933," *TFC* 8, no. 12 (January 1934): 8.

While earlier articles expressed the view that Ezekiel's battle against Gog will occur after the millennium in correlation with Rev 20:7—10, a 1934 article in *LRE* argued that the battle must take place before the millennium, equating Ezekiel's battle against Gog of Magog with the battle of Armageddon.<sup>128</sup> Such an expectation for the imminence of this battle led several authors to believe that the events predicted in Ezek 38—39 were beginning to transpire on the battlefields of World War II.<sup>129</sup> Examples of this phenomena include identifying Russia's cavalry with the horses of Ezek 39, seeing the short-lived treaty between Russia and Germany as an alignment between Gog and Gomer, and connecting the attacks of Germany's *Luftwaffe* to the “cloud of armies” described in Ezek 38:9.<sup>130</sup> Similarly, R.H. Bell concluded that the growing “Red Army”

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<sup>128</sup> “The passage in Ezekiel 38:16—23 is a very definite statement that this gathering together must surely take place before the millennium; it cannot be after, because during the millennium all will know the Lord from ‘the least of them even to the greatest.’” See Niels P. Thomsen, “The Battle of Armageddon,” *LRE* 26, no. 6 (March 1934): 3—6; Clarence Edward McCartney, “Hitler and Napoleon,” *PE* 1450 (February, 1942): 16; and Stanley H. Frodsham, “Questions and Answers,” *PE* 1055, (June 1934): 7.

<sup>129</sup> See Howard Rusthoi, “The Battle of Armageddon,” *TFC* 11, no. 24 (December 1937): 4. Rusthoi writes, “We read in the Bible that Russia and the Orient will unite their forces before the Battle of Armageddon, and that is coming to pass right now. Now, on the other hand, the nations that comprise the Old Roman Empire will again be revived and come under the leadership of a Fascist dictator; and that thing is now coming to pass so rapidly, it makes us almost dizzy to behold it.”

<sup>130</sup> See Thomas M. Chalmers, “Russia and Armageddon (continued)” *PE* 1045 (April 1934): 2—4; Aimee Semple McPherson, ed., “The Signs of the Times” *TFC* 2, no. 27 (January 1936): 4, 8; Aimee Semple McPherson, “Here Comes the Bride,” *TFC* 13, no. 16 (October 1939): 3, 5; Keith L. Brooks, “Arena of Destruction,” *PE* 1227 (November 1937): 10; D.M. Panton, “On to Armageddon” *PE* 1258 (June 1938): 1—3; Stanley H. Frodsham, “The Outlook and the Uplook: Present Day Events in the Light of Scripture,” *PE* 1302, (April 1939): 5; Stanley H. Frodsham, ed., “The Dying World and the Living Word,” *PE* 1325 (September 1939): 12; Stanley H. Frodsham, ed., “The Dying World and the Living Word,” *PE* 1333 (November 1939): 11. It is interesting to note that in the April 1939 publication of *PE*, there is a full-page ad for the *Scofield Reference Bible*. See also Frank A. Cummings, “What Next in World Events: Greatest Turning Point in Universal History Is Near at Hand,” *TFC* 12, no. 31 (January 1939): 1—2, 8; Howard W. Rusthoi, “Prophecy Marches On,” *TFC* 12, no. 30 (January 1939): 8; Howard W. Rusthoi, “Sabotage! A Sign of the Last Days,” *TFC* 13, no. 12 (September 1939): 1—2; Howard W. Rusthoi, “Prophecy Marches On,” *TFC* 13, no. 15 (September 1939): 5; Howard W. Rusthoi, “Prophecy Marches On,” *TFC* 13, no. 17 (October, 1939): 4; Howard W. Rusthoi, “Prophecy Marches On,” *TFC* 13, no. 18 (November 1939): 5; Howard W. Rusthoi, “Prophecy Marches On,” *TFC* 13, no. 19 (December 1939): 7; Ian S. Bain, “Birthpains in Europe,” *LRE* 30, no. 5 (March 1939): 6—7; and Albert J. Lebeck, “Portents of This Dying World,” *LRE* 30, no. 5 (March 1939): 12.

of Russia with 250,000 soldiers was most likely preparing for the great war described in Ezekiel 38—39, which he equated with the battle of Armageddon.<sup>131</sup> One unnamed author writes, “To the Christian, every day brings a new thrill with it, the fulfillment of prophecy.” The article goes on to explain that this prophetic fulfillment is seen in the expansion of Russia’s vast army and—by implication—in the resulting tragic slaughter of thousands. Such a view demonstrates the challenging nature of dispensational eschatology, expressed in the thought that such violence and loss of human life could be celebrated as the “thrilling” fulfillment of prophecy.<sup>132</sup>

Further evidence of the increasingly unabashed embrace of dispensational eschatology among Pentecostals can be seen in the publication of an article by H.A. Ironside, a prominent dispensationalist who was known as the “Archbishop of Fundamentalism.” He predicts that in the coming conflict described in Ezek 38—39, the Western powers will side with God’s people in Jerusalem, while the Eastern powers

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<sup>131</sup> Bell states, “Connecting this prophecy with Rev 19 when Jesus comes back with His saints to destroy the powers of the beast and false prophet, when the battle of Armageddon is fought, the reading is similar to that of Ezek 39 and undoubtedly refers to the last great conflict. So if Russia is now preparing for this great war, surely the coming of Jesus is near at hand, for this is not to take place, according to prophecy, until somewhere around seven years after Christ comes in midair for His church. The world is fast ripening for the great day of God's wrath.” See R.H. Bell, “The Day of the Lord,” *COGE* 24, no. 1 (March 1933): 4.

<sup>132</sup> The author writes, “It is indeed a great privilege to live in 1934 and to, be actually witnessing the prophetic events that have been written for hundreds of years. The Books of Daniel and Revelation, to practically every dispensation, have been closed books. Yet, we are now witnessing the closing days of time in this great drama of the universe. To the Christian, every day brings a new thrill with it, the fulfillment of prophecy. … If Moscow is the Meshech of the 36th chapter of the book of Ezekiel, it is certainly living up to the reputation that the prophet Ezekiel gave it. … The predicted great ‘Red Wave’ that would sweep the world is certainly one of the great outstanding prophecies that has been fulfilled in these last days.” See Aimee Semple MacPherson, ed., “Signs of the Times,” *BCCF* 1, no. 15 (October, 1934): 8. Surprisingly, in this same periodical, one of Walkem’s articles describing the war of Gog and Magog as a postmillennial event is printed on an adjacent page. Whether the editors failed to recognize the disparity between these two views, or whether they intentionally allowed for theological diversity, remains unknown. See also Charles W. Walkem, “The Book of Revelation,” *BCCF* 1, no. 15 (October 1934): 9, 15.

will battle against them.<sup>133</sup> The trend of identifying Western powers as some of the nations allied against Gog in Ezek 38—39 gained much traction in the 1930s; typically, the “ships of Tarshish” (Ezek 38:13) are equated with the naval force of Great Britain, and the “young lions” are Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and the United States. Thoroughly convinced of this assessment, Pentecostal author Thomas Chalmers writes, “This is the one sure place where I find the United States in prophecy.”<sup>134</sup> Frank Cummings concurs with Chalmers, and then describes Gog and allied nations as “...a representative group of the colored and Mohammedan races, together with Russia and Germany,” explaining that after Armageddon, “... the battle for the supremacy of the races is over, Germany, Russia, Asia, and colored races and Mohammedan nations are crushed.” In a subsequent article, Cummings writes, “When the Battle of Gog and Magog is over and the White Race has retained its supremacy, another World Peace Conference will be in session.”<sup>135</sup> For both Chalmers and Cummings, the divine judgment of fire (Ezek 38:22) comes partially in the form of modern military attacks from allied Western nations.

Despite such fatalistic and even racist readings, dispensationalism had not yet completely penetrated Pentecostal eschatology in the 1930s, as is demonstrated by at least eleven authors, six of whom write on Ezek 36—37, and five of whom address

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<sup>133</sup> See H.A. Ironside, “Has the Sino-Japanese War Any Prophetic Significance? Coming Events in the Light of the Bible,” *LRE* (April 1932): 9—11, 21; and Schuyler, *H.A. Ironside*, 203, 258.

<sup>134</sup> See Thomas M. Chalmers, “Russia and Armageddon (continued)” *PE* 1045 (April 1934): 2—4.

<sup>135</sup> See Frank A. Cummings, “What Next in World Events: Greatest Turning Point in Universal History Is Near at Hand,” *TFC* 12, no. 31 (January 1939): 2; Frank A. Cummings, “When War Ceases,” *TFC* 10, no. 26 (December 1936): 8, 11; and Frank A. Cummings, “Nations to Abolish War: Era of World Peace Predicted Even as Nations Face New War Scares,” *TFC* 12, no. 42 (April 1939): 1—2, 6, 8.

Ezek 38—39 and Rev 20:7—10. Three interpreters of Ezek 36 address the heart transformation of believers effected by the Holy Spirit, and another writer sees in the coming together of Ezekiel’s dry bones (Ezek 37:1—14) a call to unity and love in the body of Christ.<sup>136</sup> Of the two authors who address the joining together of Ezekiel’s two sticks (Ezek 37:15—28), one sees Jesus as the stick of Ephraim joined to the stick of Israel, and the other believes the imagery depicts the unity and oneness of the Trinity, the marriage relationship, and the life believers are called to live with one another.<sup>137</sup> Concerning Ezek 38—39 and Rev 20:7—10, five authors write that the war of Gog and Magog will occur after the millennium when Satan is loosed on the earth to deceive the nations.<sup>138</sup> Two other authors cautiously offer nuanced positions. Simmons suggests the

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<sup>136</sup> See Mattie Z. Kerr, “Valleys and Mountain Peaks,” *PE* 903 (June 1931): 1; P.C. Nelson, “This is My Blood of the New Testament,” *PE* 1145 (April 1936): 3; and J.A. Bixler, “Baptism—Pouring, Sprinkling, Immersion, Which?” *COGE* 30, no. 24 (August 1939): 3. It is interesting to note that in the same journal containing Nelson’s non-dispensational interpretation of Ezek 36, was Frodsham’s dispensational interpretation of Ezek 36, further illustrating Pentecostalism’s openness to multiple interpretations and internal confusion regarding dispensational eschatology. See Stanley H. Frodsham, “The Passing and the Permanent: The Promised Land,” *PE* 1145 (April 1936): 6.

<sup>137</sup> E.L. Moore writes, “This unity and oneness in God’s love and fellowship is what the world is dying to see today, abiding in the lives of men. There is a method, a fixed plan whereby it can be so—unity of faith and spirit. Back to God’s plan outlined in the Bible will do this, is the only hope. But there is a possibility and if it never materializes here on earth, it is God’s purpose and plan just the same.” I believe Moore describes the “prophetic ideal,” the description of God’s will which remains, regardless of whether it seems realistic from a human perspective. See E.L. Moore, “Three in One: Unity in Trinity,” *COGE* 27, no. 39 (December 1936): 3; and C.W. Clark, “Found—The Church of God: We Honor God Because We Are His Children,” *WWM* 11, no. 21 (October 1934): 3.

<sup>138</sup> Latimer even claims that Gog and Magog are resurrected disobedient spirits who were cast into hell previously. S.W. Latimer writes, “These Gog and Magog forces no doubt are the goat nations and other disobedient spirits that have been cast into hell before this time. Now they are loosed for a little season.” See S.W. Latimer, “Editorials,” *COGE* 29, no. 15 (June 1938): 10; S.W. Latimer, “The Millennium,” *COGE* 28, no. 11 (May 1937): 14; Mavis Lee Oakley, “The Revelation,” *PHA* 18, no. 7 (June 1934): 10; and E.A. Sexton, “When Jesus Comes,” *The Bridegrooms Messenger* 28, no. 300 (April 1935): 1. In answer to the question, “Who is Gog and Magog in Revelation 20?” G.F. Taylor replies, “Gog and Magog are also mentioned in Ezekiel 38:2. It is generally believed that the reference is to the Northern European powers, with Russia as the leader. Magog is likely the land and Gog the prince of the land. Yet when we study Revelation 20:8, it is well to remember that many national changes will come before the fulfilment of that verse. Its application is to the end of the Millennium reign. We cannot say who Gog and Magog will be by that time. Evidently and safely we may say, the reference is to Gentile nations living far in the distance from Jerusalem.” G.F. Taylor, “Question Box,” *PHA* 18, no. 26 (October 1934): 9.

possibility that Russia's godless path could set the stage for the kingdom of the Antichrist,<sup>139</sup> and Montgomery—although he agrees with Scofield that Gog is Russia—warns his readers against “...conjectural interpretation of prophecy, the temptation being to try to find a verse of Scripture which literally bears upon every event which transpires.”<sup>140</sup> Charles W. Walkem also departed from dispensational eschatology—at least initially. He presents a compelling interpretation of Ezek 37:15—28, emphasizing the importance of the “plural unity” signified by the uniting of the two sticks, which is reminiscent of the “plural unity” of the Trinity, but does not mention anything about the spiritual or physical restoration of Israel.<sup>141</sup> In six of Walkem’s articles, while he does not cite Ezek 38—39, nor does he explain the timing of the war of Armageddon, he answers questions from readers regarding the war of Gog and Magog and consistently defines it as postmillennial—without mention of Russia.<sup>142</sup> In fact, Walkem even argues that looking for “end times” signs, such as the rebuilding of the temple or the war of Gog and Magog, actually diminishes expectation for the imminence of Christ’s return, a core Pentecostal value.<sup>143</sup> Yet strangely and in contradiction to these six

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<sup>139</sup> See E.L. Simmons, “Editorially Speaking,” *COGE* 30, no. 40 (December 1939): 4, 14.

<sup>140</sup> G.H. Montgomery, “Gomer and Meshech: Are They Germany and Moscow?” *PHA* 23, no. 26 (October 1939): 2—3.

<sup>141</sup> Charles. W. Walkem, “The Question Box,” *TFC* 12, no. 28 (January 1939): 2.

<sup>142</sup> See Charles W. Walkem, “Question Box,” *BCF* 15, no. 9 (February 1932): 23; Charles W. Walkem, “Question Box,” *BCF* 16, no. 4 (September 1932): 29; Charles W. Walkem, “The Question Box,” *TFC* 7, no. 7 (November 1932): 7; Charles W. Walkem, “The Book of Revelation,” *BCCF* 1, no. 15 (October, 1934): 9, 15; Charles W. Walkem, “Birds Eye Bible Briefs: Pre or Post-Tribulation Rapture, Installment 4,” *TFC* 2, no. 35. (February 1936): 5—8; Charles W. Walkem, “The Question Box,” *TFC* 12, no. 40 (March 1939): 4.

<sup>143</sup> Walkem argues, ‘In other words, the utterance of the evil servant must follow, ‘My Lord delays his coming,’ and that is condemned by our Lord.’ See Charles W. Walkem, “Birds Eye Bible Briefs: Pre or Post-Tribulation Rapture, Installment 4,” *TFC* 2, no. 35 (February 1936): 8.

articles that seem to deemphasize a dispensational interpretation, Walkem later wrote two articles in which he equates Ezek 38—39 with Armageddon and clearly identifies Russia as Gog and Gomer as Germany. Referring to the events of Ezek 38, Walkem goes so far as to claim, “Some of these things have surely begun to come to pass.”<sup>144</sup> It is impossible to know why he made such a dramatic interpretive shift, other than perhaps the pressures of increasing political intensity during World War II and the ensuing pervasive popularity of dispensational eschatology. In addition, as discussed previously in this chapter, the Pentecostal emphasis on the “this is that” type of prophetic fulfillment, in which Pentecostals connected the fulfillment of Joel 2 and Acts 2 to their own Pentecostal Spirit-baptism, may have made a dispensational interpretation, in which current events are viewed as a fulfillment of biblical prophecy, more appealing and in some sense more consistent with a Pentecostal way of understanding the Bible.

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<sup>144</sup>In a March 1936 article, Walkem writes, “The prophecy in Ezekiel referred to above is unmistakably clear. It applies to Russia, for Russia is called ‘the land of the north.’” See Charles W. Walkem, “Birds Eye Bible Briefs: The Red Shirts of Russia, Installment 1,” *TTFC* 2, no. 39 (March 1936): 5. In another article, Walkem writes, “Full details of the last conflict are given in Ezekiel 38—39. The very names of the countries allied in the daring adventure are mentioned. ‘Gog or Rosh (Russia) the chief prince of Meshech (Moscow) and Tubal (Tobolosk), Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya. Gomer (Germany) with all his bands. The house of Togarmah (Turkey), of the north quarters, and all his bands, and many people with thee,’ (Ezek 38:2—6), and also the ‘Kings of the East,’ for whose passage westward the great River Euphrates will be dried up (Rev 16:12). Under the leadership of Russia, the countries will gather for the great day of God Almighty … Some of these things have surely begun to come to pass. The Holy Land is being re-peopled by Israel after centuries of desolation and abounding prosperity foreshadows the great wealth that will soon make Palestine the envy of the world. Though the Northern Federation will well know of the fate of the Beasts and the King of the North at the hand of the King of Kings, yet pursuing the policy already evident in Russia and Germany of fighting against God, they will not hesitate to plan a campaign against the Lord himself in person.” See Charles W. Walkem, “Signs of the Times: The Holy Land Conflict,” *TFC* 11, no. 46 (May 1938): 4.

## 2.2.4 1940s

Moving into the 1940s, Pentecostal interpretations continued to allow for theological diversity, yet the majority reflected dispensational eschatology, increasing the tendency to connect news headlines with minute details of Ezek 36:16—39:29, and Rev 19:11—21 and 20:7—10.<sup>145</sup> The vast majority of these articles staunchly predict the divine destruction of Russia prior to the second coming of Christ.<sup>146</sup> Consistent with

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<sup>145</sup> See Stanley H. Frodsham, “The Dying World and the Living Word,” *PE* 1339 (January 1940): 4; Stanley H. Frodsham, “They Dying World and the Living Word,” *PE* 1347 (March 1940): 11; Stanley H. Frodsham, “The Dying World and the Living Word,” *PE* 1371 (August 1940): 7; Stanley H. Frodsham, “The Dying World and the Living Word,” *PE* 1380 (October, 1940): 10; Stanley H. Frodsham, “The Dying World and the Living Word,” *PE* 1387 (December 1940): 17; Stanley H. Frodsham, “The Dying World and the Living Word,” *PE* 1395 (February 1941): 10; Stanley H. Frodsham, “The Dying World and the Living Word,” *PE* 1444 (January 1942): 10; Stanley H. Frodsham, “The Passing and the Permanent,” *PE* 1516 (May 1943): 8; Stanley H. Frodsham, “The Passing and the Permanent,” *PE* 1557 (March 1944): 16; Stanley H. Frodsham, “The Passing and the Permanent,” *PE* 1580 (August 1944): 16; Stanley H. Frodsham, “The Passing and the Permanent,” *PE* 1591 (November 1944): 16; Stanley H. Frodsham, “The Passing and the Permanent,” *PE* 1658 (February 1946): 10; Stanley H. Frodsham, “The Passing and the Permanent,” *PE* 1662 (March 1946): 9; Stanley H. Frodsham, “The Passing and the Permanent,” *PE* 1720 (April 1947): 10; Stanley H. Frodsham, “The Passing and the Permanent,” *PE* 1722 (May 1947): 10; Stanley H. Frodsham, “The Passing and the Permanent,” *PE* 1731 (July 1947): 10; Stanley H. Frodsham, “The Passing and the Permanent,” *PE* 1785 (July 1948): 10; Ralph M. Riggs, “Is The Roman Empire Soon to Be Revived?” *PE* 1373 (August 1940): 2—3; Ernest S. Williams, “What of the Night?” *PE* 1340 (January 1940): 1, 6; E.L. Langston, “The Present War and Prophecy,” *PE* 1359 (May 1940): 5; Howard W. Rusthoi, “War Clouds Over Europe,” *TFC* 20 (January 1940): 4, 42; Howard W. Rusthoi, “Prophecy Marches On,” *TFC* 13, no. 22 (March 1940): 5; C.W. Burpo, “Is Hitler the Anti-Christ?” *TFC* 14, no. 1 (January 1942): 6; D.P. Holloway, “The Present World Crisis in the Light of Prophecy,” *PE* 1433 (October, 1941): 8—9; Clarence Edward McCartney, “Hitler and Napoleon,” *PE* 1450 (February 1942): 16; Harvey McAlister, “God Bombs From Below,” *PE* 1449 (February 1942): 3; E.C. Clark, “Religion and the World,” *COGE* 33, no. 42 (January 1943): 4; E.C. Clark, “The Antichrist,” *COGE* 34, no. 45 (January 1944): 14; Paul Budean, “The Second Seal Is Opened,” *COGE* 34, no. 28 (September 1943): 9, 14; H.C. McKinney, “The Day of Doom,” *The Christ’s Ambassadors Herald* 19, no. 2 (February 1946): 13—14; J.H. Walker, ed., “Bible Glints and Late Events,” *COGE* 38, no. 51 (February 1948): 4; Raymond W. Becker, ed., “Devotional Diamonds,” *TFM* 20, no. 10 (October 1948): 12, 16; Rolf K. McPherson, ed., “Devotional Diamonds,” *TFM* 20, no. 10 (October 1948): 16; Robert C. Cunningham, “The Passing and the Permanent,” *PE* 1826 (May 1949): 9; Robert C. Cunningham, “The Passing and the Permanent,” *PE* 1847 (October 1949): 10; D.P. Holloway, “Russia and Armageddon,” *PE* 1830 (June 1949): 5—6; William Cantelon, “How Near Is Armageddon?” *TFM* 21, no. 8 (August 1949): 8—10.

<sup>146</sup> For example, A 1942 article continues to affirm the connection between Gog and Russia, “The present invasion of Russia by Hitler, that Russia by which the old-time theologians used to identify the mysterious Gog and Magog of the book of Ezekiel and of the Apocalypse, may spell the overthrow of two brutal systems and two brutal dictators, Hitler and Stalin. Certainly both of these systems have been too cruel, too brutal, too arrogant, too greatly sinning against the Holy Spirit that is in humanity to long endure; especially the system of Hitler, which in addition to all its other enormities, has lifted up its hand against God’s Chosen People.” See Clarence Edward McCartney, “Hitler and Napoleon,” *PE* 1450 (February, 1942): 16.

dispensational eschatology, authors of these articles typically equate Ezekiel 38—39 with Armageddon (Rev 16:13—16, 19:11—21), but explain that the battle of Gog and Magog in Rev 20:7—9 is an entirely different battle.<sup>147</sup> E.C. Clark claims that Russia as a nation has committed the unpardonable sin, and in a different article he implies that the United States may be involved in executing God's judgment against Russia.<sup>148</sup> Perhaps one of the most disturbing quotes of the decade was from Harry Hodge, who writes,

God is against Gog and Magog, we read in Ezekiel 38 and 39th chapters. ... We know what is going to happen to Germany and Russia. Hitler is going to get an awful licking down in Palestine, and Russia, too, will do some snorting. God is using him right now to whip some of these other proud nations. God is using Hitler like he did Pharaoh to drive out the Jews.<sup>149</sup>

This quote, while deeply offensive to the modern reader, reflects the prevalent Pentecostal eschatology of the 1940s, demonstrating how dispensationalism led to the celebration of human violence, and then to potentially prejudicial and even racist attitudes.

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<sup>147</sup> E.L. Simmons, ed., "Question Box," *COGE* 32, no. 8 (April 1941): 9, 13; E.L. Simmons, ed., "Weekly Question Box," *COGE* 33, no. 1 (March 1942): 13; E.C. Clark, ed., "Religion and the World," *COGE* 33, no. 45 (Jan, 1943): 4; E.C. Clark, ed., "Religion and the World" *COGE* 34, no. 23 (August 1943): 4; E.C. Clark, ed., "Religion and the World" *COGE* 34, no. 38 (November 1943): 4; Clifton T. Umstead, "Jerusalem: The Biblical Center of the Nations" *COGE* 37, no. 6 (April 1946): 5, 14; and E.C. Clark, ed., "Religion and the World" *COGE* 37, no. 26 (August 1946): 4. For a slightly different view, Ernest S. Williams believes the Ezek 38—39 battle will occur before the battle of Armageddon. See Ernest S. Williams, "Questions and Answers," *PE* 1372 (August 1940): 13.

<sup>148</sup> See E.C. Clark, ed., "Religion and the World" *COGE* 34, no. 23 (August 1943): 4. Clark writes, "After this war Russia will be the foe of the United States politically as it has been since the origin of Communism, and possibly otherwise. Gog has to be reckoned with as an intruder and aggressor to fulfill prophecy of the inspired Word." E.C. Clark, ed., "Religion and the World" *COGE* 34, no. 38 (November 1943): 4.

<sup>149</sup> Harry Hodge, "The Coming World Disaster: Prophecy is Being Fulfilled at a Rapid Rate," *TFC* 13, no. 37 (June 1941): 9.

In the 1940s periodicals, the most passionate voice protesting such ideas was an author identified only as a “gospel worker from Russia,” who published a brief piece entitled, “A Plea for Russia.” This author wrote, “Books have been written about Russia stating that we are Gog and Magog, that we have been given over to a curse and destruction, that there is no hope for us. These books have aroused an aversion to our country, rather than sympathy for it. Bolshevism could never have established itself in Russia if the country had been evangelized, but it was shamefully neglected.”<sup>150</sup> This gospel worker profoundly articulated the incongruity between Pentecostal missiology and dispensational eschatology. Fueled by a sense of urgency based on the imminent expectation for the Lord’s return, early Pentecostals possessed a burning passion to reach the entire world with the gospel by sending missionaries to the “ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). However, when certain nations were perceived as doomed to divine destruction, as this “gospel worker from Russia” explained, that gospel burden for the nations’ salvation transformed into anticipation for the nations’ annihilation, not unlike Jonah’s desire for the destruction of the Assyrians (Jonah 4).

In addition to this “gospel worker,” several Pentecostal authors in the 1940s offered non-dispensational interpretations of Ezek 36—37 and Rev 19:11—21, but I only identified two who presented interpretations of the “Gog and Magog” texts (Ezek 38—39, Rev 20:7—10) that deviated from dispensationalism. The most prominent take on Ezek 36 was the focus on purification and transformation of hearts by the Holy Spirit, and one author—referring generally to all believers in Jesus—wrote that God

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<sup>150</sup> Stanley H. Frodsham, ed., “The Dying World and the Living Word,” *PE* 1416 (June 1941): 4.

will “bring us into our own land” (Ezek 36:24—25).<sup>151</sup> An unnamed author provides the following non-dispensational intertextual reading of Ezek 37:1—14 and Rev 19:11—16:

God’s order for the building up of the army is, first, dry bones (sinners), then sinews, then flesh (the body of Christ built up), then breath (the infilling of the blessed Holy Spirit). Later on, these will be clothed in fine linen, white and clean (the righteous acts of the saints); and they will ride on white horses and follow Him who is called Faithful and True, an exceeding great army of called, faithful and chosen, going forth conquering and to conquer.<sup>152</sup>

Another author viewed Ezekiel’s “dry bones” as the picture of believers who have died in Christ, on whom the Spirit breathes to give new life.<sup>153</sup> Given the political and theological climate at the time, it is surprising that this article on the “dry bones” was published only six months after Israel declared its independence, an event which numerous dispensationalists, evangelicals, Pentecostals, and Jews saw as the fulfillment of Ezek 37:1—14. I also found it extraordinary that three authors published non-dispensational interpretations of the “two sticks” pericope (Ezek 37:15—28)—one of whom was Stanley H. Frodsham. All of Frodsham’s other articles during the 1940s reflected dispensationalism, but curiously in this particular article, he suggests that the lack of unification among the Jews returning to Palestine indicates that the current immigration was “man’s” doing, and not the prophesied restoration of Ezek 37:15—25.<sup>154</sup> The other two articles on Ezekiel’s “two sticks” focused on the Jewish people

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<sup>151</sup> See James Daniel, “More Mighty Zeal,” *WWM* 14, no. 23 (November 1941): 1; Susie A. Duncan, “A Broken Spirit,” *PE* 1477 (August 1942): 5; and Joseph A. Synan, “Three Elements of Sanctification,” *PHA* 30, no. 1 (May 1946): 15.

<sup>152</sup> Curiously, in this particular publication, neither author nor editor are listed. See “An Exceeding Great Army,” *PE* 1623, (June 1945): 3.

<sup>153</sup> J.P.L., “Abandonment to the Holy Spirit,” *PE* 1801 (November 1948): 5.

<sup>154</sup> Stanley H. Frodsham, “The Passing and the Permanent,” *PE* 1509 (April 1943): 8.

coming under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, which they argued pointed to a future time.<sup>155</sup> In addition, three other articles describe various aspects of the second coming (Rev 19:11—21), but do not refer to Armageddon or eschatological human violence.<sup>156</sup> Regarding the “Gog and Magog” texts, E.L. Simmons argued that the battle of Gog and Magog is a postmillennial event.<sup>157</sup> Perhaps the most influential non-dispensational author of the 1940s was Paul F. Beacham, who argued consistently and repeatedly that Ezek 38—39 should be understood as a prophetic parable. Regarding Rev 20:7—9, he explained, “I think it is best to understand Gog and Magog, as used in the verse in question, in a figurative or symbolical sense, as designating the people who will be deceived by Satan after he is loosed at the close of the millennium.”<sup>158</sup> Beacham resolutely resisted identifying Gog and Magog with contemporary nations or political conflicts, which is quite remarkable considering American attitudes toward Russia during and immediately after World War II.

## 2.2.5 1950s

Toward the end of the 1950s, Pentecostal interpreters followed dispensationalists in recognizing the fulfillment of Ezek 37:1—14 in the establishment

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<sup>155</sup> See Morris Zeidman, “The Restoration of the Kingdom,” *PE* 1773 (May 1948): 2; and Paul F. Beacham, “Light on the Subject,” *PHA* 32, no. 11 (July 1948): 6.

<sup>156</sup> See Myer Pearlman, “Windows into the Future,” *The Christ’s Ambassadors Herald* 13, no. 9 (September 1940): 5, 13; Rolf K. McPherson, “At Sword’s Point,” *TFM20*, no. 6 (June 1948): 34; and Rolf K. McPherson, “The Seven Seas,” *TFM20*, no. 11 (November 1948): 18.

<sup>157</sup> See E.L. Simmons, ed., “Question Box,” *COGE* 31, no. 17 (June 1940): 9, 14.

<sup>158</sup> See Paul F. Beacham, “Question Drawer,” *PHA24*, no. 5 (May 1940) 7; Paul F. Beacham, “Question Drawer,” *PHA* 24, no. 44 (March 1941): 8; Paul F. Beacham, “Question Drawer,” *PHA* 25, no. 16 (August 1941): 8; Paul F. Beacham, “Light on the Subject,” *PHA* 33, no. 13 (August 1949): 6; and Paul F. Beacham, *PHA* 30, no. 18 (August 1946): 4.

of the state of Israel in 1948.<sup>159</sup> In a 1958 C.A. Herald column, Henry J. Steil wrote “Ezekiel 37:11—14 refers to the supernatural resurrection of the nation of Israel (as a nation) after being dead and buried for 1900 years.”<sup>160</sup> Similarly, several other Pentecostal authors in the 1950s viewed the massive numbers of Jews immigrating to the new state of Israel and causing the land to prosper as a fulfillment of Ezek 36:24—28, 35—36, and 37:1—28.<sup>161</sup>

While dispensational interpretations dominated the Pentecostal literature of the 1950s, several authors presented non-dispensational interpretations of Ezek 36—37. Paul F. Beacham interpreted Ezek 37:1—14 as primarily applying to the return of the Jews from Babylonian captivity, but also to Israel’s future restoration in connection with Christ’s second coming and the millennial kingdom.<sup>162</sup> Five other authors who wrote on Ezek 36—37 emphasized the significance of prayer and the spiritual transformation of believers receiving a new heart and a new spirit.<sup>163</sup> While three

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<sup>159</sup> As stated previously, it is important to note that while this is a distinctly dispensational interpretation, it is not exclusively dispensational, as this view is also held by some non-dispensational evangelicals and Jews. For example, in support of this view, Pentecostal author Robert C. Cunningham quotes Israel’s president David Ben Gurion as saying, “‘Ezekiel 37 has been fulfilled, and the nation of Israel is hearing the footsteps of the Messiah. There were 50,000 children born in Israel in 1951, compared with 15,000 in 1947. In the four years of the young State’s history the population doubled but the birth rate more than tripled. This is a direct fulfilment of Ezekiel 36:10, ‘And I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel. ... I will multiply upon you man and beast; and they shall increase and bring fruit.’” See Robert C. Cunningham, “Buds on the Fig Tree,” *PE* (July 1952): 5.

<sup>160</sup> See Henry J. Steil, “Strategy Board: Featuring the Last of a Series of Prophetic Questions as Answered by Henry J. Steil,” *CAH* 31, no. 1 (January, 1958): 23.

<sup>161</sup> See Billy Adams, “Israel—A Nation Reborn,” *TFM* 28, no. 9, (September 1955): 7; Louis H. Hauff, “A Sign of the Times: An Eyewitness Report,” *PE* 1728 (February 1956): 7; Raymond A. Becker, ed., “Notes From the Old Family Bible: A Trip Through God’s Word with the Editor,” *TFM* 31, no. 4 (April 1958): 21; and P.C. Nelson, “The Millennial Reign of Jesus,” *PE* 2344 (April 1959): 6.

<sup>162</sup> Paul F. Beacham, “Light on the Subject,” *PHA* 34, no. 29 (November 1950): 5.

<sup>163</sup> See Aubrey Lee, “The Inspiration of the Holy Ghost,” *TFM* 22, no. 5 (May 1950): 6; Wesley R. Steelberg, “A Divine Cure for Heart Trouble,” *PE* 1934 (June 1951): 3; Paul Brown, “Praying Down the Power of God,” *PE* 1989 (June 1952): 5; Geri Swope, “Your Heart Belongs to You,” *CAH* 28, no. 2 (February 1955): 9; and Ernest S. Williams, “Your Questions,” *PE* 2279 (January 1958): 23.

articles pertaining to Rev 19:11—21 reflected the standard dispensationalist sequence of events,<sup>164</sup> four others avoided focusing on “end times” events, and instead emphasized Christ’s sovereignty, salvation, and sacrifice.<sup>165</sup> The article by Wesley R. Steelberg even reflected the image of a nonviolent Messiah, who will return wearing a robe dipped in his own blood.<sup>166</sup> However, regarding the “Gog and Magog” texts, Paul F. Beacham raised his lone voice offering an alternative understanding of Ezek 38—39, Rev 19:11—21, and Rev 20:7—10, maintaining his position that the battle of Gog and Magog should be viewed as a prophetic parable.<sup>167</sup> Other than Beacham’s article, all other Pentecostal periodical publications on the Gog and Magog texts that I have been able to locate remain exclusively dispensational, most emphasizing Russia’s impending destruction,<sup>168</sup> and yet several present a new twist to the traditional interpretation.

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<sup>164</sup> See Ralph M. Riggs, “The Present World Situation in Light of Bible Prophecy,” *PE* 1898 (September 1950): 3; Beatrice Shelby, “The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: A Study in the Book of Revelation,” *TFM* 31, no. 5 (May 1958): 12; and Ernest S. Williams, “Your Questions Answered,” *PE* 2335 (February 1959): 5.

<sup>165</sup> See Wesley R. Steelberg, “The Speaking Blood,” *PE* 1937 (June 1951): 5; Rolf K. McPherson, “King for a Day,” *TFM* 25, no. 4 (April 1952): 13; P.C. Nelson, “The Millennial Reign of Jesus,” *PE* 2344 (April 1959): 6; and Milton W. Ellithorpe, “The Four Kings of Romans,” *TFM* 42, no. 12 (December 1959): 7.

<sup>166</sup> Steelberg writes, “The angels and seraphim and cherubim will stand around in the beautiful courts of heaven and we will sing, ‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slain,’ for through His blood we have been brought into fellowship with God. Someday our King is coming. In the symbolism of Revelation 19:13 His vesture will be dipped in blood. Oh, I would that you would accept the sacrifice that was made for you. Bow your head and ask Him to let that Blood cover your sin.” See Steelberg, “The Speaking Blood,” 5. For a similar interpretation of this text from a 1927 article, see Utley, “A Vision of His Glory on the Mount of Prayer,” 18.

<sup>167</sup> Beacham writes, “Magog is given as the name of the sons of Japheth, in Gen. 10:2, and it is thought by some that the predominating people in modern Russia descended from them. However, according to some of the details of persons and things involved in the prophecy, it does not seem consistent to interpret them altogether literally.” Paul F. Beacham, “Light on the Subject,” *PHA* 34, no. 20 (September 1950) 6.

<sup>168</sup> Frank M. Boyd, “Russia in Prophecy,” *PE* 1883 (June 1950): 5, 13; Boyd, “Russia in Prophecy: Part 2,” *PE* 1884 (June 1950): 5, 11, 13; Boyd, “Questions Answered,” *PE* 1928 (April 1951): 10—13; Ralph M. Riggs, “The Present World Situation in the Light of Biblical Prophecy,” *PE* 1898 (September 1950): 12; Ralph M. Riggs, “Watch the Near East!” *PE* 1985 (May 1952): 5; Robert C. Cunningham, “Passing and Permanent,” *PE* 1918 (February 1951): 6; Robert C. Cunningham, “Passing

While classical dispensationalists typically equated the Ezek 38—39 battle with Armageddon, a variety of Pentecostal authors of the 1950s claimed that Ezekiel’s war was a separate conflict preceding both the Great Tribulation and Armageddon.<sup>169</sup> This new interpretation allowed authors to identify nearly every significant international event as a sign of the impending war’s immediacy.<sup>170</sup> In his 1957 article, Ralph M. Riggs argued that the battle against Gog and his armies as described in Ezek 38—39 would take place not only before the millennium, but likely in the very near future,

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and Permanent,” *PE* 1932 (May 1951): 7; Robert C. Cunningham, “This Present World: News and Notes on Our Times,” *PE* 2225 (December 1956): 10; Robert C. Cunningham, “The Editorial Viewpoint: Israel’s Predicament,” *PE* 2234 (March 1957): 2; Robert C. Cunningham, “This Present World: News and Notes on Our Time,” *PE* 2262 (September 1957): 13; Raymond W. Becker, “Gleanings,” *TFM* 24, no. 7 (July 1951): 17, 20; J. Narver Gortner, “Russia’s Origin, Character and Doom as Revealed in the Bible,” *PE* 2002 (September 1952): 3, 11; W.W. Kirkby, “Ambitious Russia,” *PE* 2232 (February 1957): 6—7; Lloyd A. Post, “The Middle East in Bible Prophecy,” *TFM* 30, no. 3, (March 1957): 14; James C. Dodd, “Israel Today and Tomorrow” *PE* 2238 (March 1957): 16—17, 29; Lester Sumrall, “What a C.A. Should Know About Israel,” *CAH* 30, no. 8 (August 1957): 25; Harry J. Steil, “A Million Signs of the Times,” *PE* 2255 (July 1957): 4—6, 30; Merv Rosell, “God Pre-Writes the Headlines...” *PE* 2305 (July 1958): 10—11; John Dyke, “No Excuse for Ignorance,” *PE* 2340 (March 1959): 9; and Anna Lytical, “What They Are Reading,” *TFM* 32, no. 5 (May 1959): 18.

<sup>169</sup> For the most thorough explanation of the biblical distinctions between these battles, see Raymond W. Becker, “Russia: The Bigger They Are...” *TFM* 33, no. 7 (July 1960): 3, 31; Hart. R. Armstrong, “Night Before Morning,” *PE* 1889 (July 1950): 3—4; Guy Peacock, “Where Do We Go From Here?” *TFM* 27, no. 2 (February 1954): 10—12; William L. Hull, “Russia: Prepare!” *TFM* 28, no. 1 (April 1955): 7—9; Frank M. Boyd, “Israel and Armageddon,” *PE* 2221 (December 1956): 5; L.B. Lewis, “When God Defeats Communistic Russia,” *PE* 2221 (December 1956): 4—5, 22; and Ralph M. Riggs, “A Hiding Place,” *PE* 2226 (January 1957): 4—5.

<sup>170</sup> For example, one author writes, “The chemical industry is expected to become Israel’s most important earner of foreign exchange. Those who are familiar with the prophecy of Ezekiel 38 will immediately associate this new development with the coming invasion of Israel by the northern armies led by ‘Gog, the prince of Rosh’ or Russia. He will attack Israel in order to take a spoil and to take a prey; what a rich spoil this mineral wealth will be!” See Robert C. Cunningham, ed., “Passing and Permanent: News Briefs From Christian Perspectives,” *PE* 1966 (January 1952): 2. Rusthoi finds significance in the number of Russia’s horses: “In 1950, which is the latest figure available, Russia is reported to have had 14 million horses. .... How striking that is in the light of this prophecy, that says when Russia’s troops invade Israel, they will come riding on horses.” See Howard W. Rusthoi, “The Coming Messiah: Israel in Prophecy,” *TFM* 27, no. 6 (June 1954): 6—8. Further, Cox sees significance in the Suez Canal crisis: “Suez can contribute to the eventful fulfillment of Ezekiel 38 by allying Russia with Israel’s most conspicuous enemy.” Raymond L. Cox, “Suez and the Scriptures,” *PE* 2222 (December 1956): 8—9. Frank M. Boyd makes a specific political prediction, writing, “We dare to predict that Hussein, king of Jordan, will lose his kingdom, and that Israel will take over this territory west of the Jordan River as well as the old city of Jerusalem.” See Frank M. Boyd, “The Middle East in Prophecy,” *PE* 2313 (September 1958): 23.

explaining how current political situations with Russia and other foreign nations aligned with the description given by Ezekiel.<sup>171</sup> He even identified the “merchants of Tarshish” as England and other members of the British Commonwealth. The armies of Gog that would ascend and cover the land like a cloud were equated with Russian planes flying over Turkey on their way to Syria.<sup>172</sup> Most alarming is Riggs’ suggestion that the destruction of these nations by Yahweh’s fire, as described by Ezekiel, could refer to the fire of atomic warfare perpetuated by the United States. This somewhat subtle interpretive shift yields an overtly horrifying implication: in future global conflict, the nation to drop an atomic bomb on Russia could be acting on God’s behalf to destroy His enemies in fulfillment of Ezekiel’s ancient prophecy.<sup>173</sup> Affirming the prevalence of these views, Henry J. Steil, an Assemblies of God evangelist, wrote in a 1958 *C.A. Herald* column:

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<sup>171</sup> Riggs states, “It is the first battle of Gog and Magog, as described by Ezekiel, which appears to be on the verge of fulfillment.” See Riggs, “A Hiding Place,” 4—5. For a more thorough treatment of Riggs’ eschatology, particularly his interpretation of the book of Revelation, see Ralph M. Riggs, *The Story of the Future*, (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1968).

<sup>172</sup> See Riggs, “A Hiding Place,” 4—5. Similarly, Raymond L. Cox wrote, “The words of Ezekiel 38:9, relative to a great Russian-led invasion of Palestine in the last days, also may be prophetic of a vast air armada which will ‘ascend and come like a storm’ and ‘be like a cloud to cover the land.’ Supporting this interpretation is the resolution of the aggressors to ‘go up’ against the land of Israel (v. 11). And if this be true, then Ezekiel forecast military air activities almost 2500 years before men first flew!” See Raymond L. Cox, “Satellites and the Scriptures,” *PE* 2207 (August 1956): 4.

<sup>173</sup> Riggs elaborates: “What will be the outcome of this battle? God will call for a sword against Russia throughout all the nations of the world. Nature also will make its contribution with earthquake, rain (overflowing rain), great hailstones, fire and brimstone. The Lord said, ‘I will send a fire on Magog and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles [coasts].’ God will send a fire on the land of Russia and upon the coasts of the earth. (This could easily refer to atomic fire and destruction which is the prepared weapon of modern war). So great will be the slaughter that it will take seven months to bury the dead. This will mark the end of Russia, at least for a thousand years. But so deep-seated and virulent are the seeds of the atheism and rebellion of Gog and Magog against God, that they will bring forth another and final harvest at the end of time, just before the Great White Throne Judgment. See Revelation 20:7—9. This is the first time in all history that the stage has been set so accurately and completely for the fulfillment of this remarkable prophecy. This is confirmation not only that the Bible is God’s very Word, but that we are living in the end time. (The events of Ezekiel 38 and 39 are said to ‘come to pass in the latter days.’ The end time means the tribulation and all its horrors).” See Riggs, “A Hiding Place,” 5.

Most prophetic students believe the battle of Gog and Magog, as prophesied in Ezekiel 38 and 39, will be the provoking factor inciting all the world to the Battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16:12—16); i.e., Russia and her Iron Curtain allies will be the aggressor nations, attacking Palestine, while the rest of the world led by the NATO Alliance of Nations, including the United States, will march against Russia and company.<sup>174</sup>

Indeed, dispensationalism's militant apocalypticism dominated prophetic interpretation of the Gog and Magog texts by Pentecostals in the 1950s. Celebration of anticipated global warfare and ensuing destruction of God's enemies seems to have eclipsed compassion for these particular nations and conviction to share the gospel among them before Christ's imminent return.

## 2.2.6 1960s

Dispensationalism dominated the vast majority of Pentecostal interpretations from the 1960s, particularly regarding the belief that the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 and the massive numbers of Jews returning to the land fulfilled Ezekiel's "dry bones" prophecy, paving the way for Christ's imminent return.<sup>175</sup> For example, according to J. Bradford Bishop, while the first part of Ezekiel's prophecy (Ezek

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<sup>174</sup> The prevalence of connecting biblical prophecy to current events is also demonstrated in this prediction by Frank M. Boyd, "We dare to predict that Hussein, king of Jordan, will lose his kingdom, and that Israel will take over this territory west of the Jordan River as well as the old city of Jerusalem." See Frank M. Boyd, "The Middle East in Prophecy," *PE* 2313 (September, 1958): 23.

<sup>175</sup> See Ruth Toczek, "The King is Coming," *PE* 2541 (January 1963): 6; Harry J. Steil, "What Time Is It?" *PE* 2632 (October 1964): 2; Raymond L. Cox, "Petra: Mystery of the Ages," *PE* 2636 (November 1964): 18; Maude C. Johnson, "Israel: Nation with a Great Past and a Greater Future," *PE* 2261 (May 1965): 18; Harry J. Steil, "Two Million Signs of the Times," *PE* 2777 (July 1967): 2; Albert L. Hoy, "Israel's Answer to the Critics," *PE* 2777 (July 1967): 9; Russell Cox, "Is This Quickly That Quickly?" *CAH* 40, no. 8 (August 1967): 10; Frank M. Boyd, "Will Russia Attack Israel?" *PE* 2782 (September 1967): 2—4; Boyd, "Israel's Glorious Future," *PE* 2800 (January 1968): 2; John T. Reed, ed., "The Coming Invasion," *TBM* 56, no. 6 (June 1968): 1, 7; Ralph M. Riggs, "The Latter Rain and the Coming Christ," *PE* 2845 (November 1968): 7; and Ernest S. Williams, "Your Questions," *PE* 2892 (October 1969): 15.

37:1—14) was fulfilled with the return of the Jews to the land and the establishment of the state of Israel, Ezekiel's prophecy will only reach true fulfillment when the Jewish people experience spiritual revival and regeneration through faith in Jesus Christ.<sup>176</sup> Similarly, following a detailed description of the recent numbers of Jewish immigrants flooding the land of Israel from various countries, Louis H. Hauff affirmed, “The dry bones of Ezekiel have come to life and we need to pray that the Lord will breathe His Spirit upon them.”<sup>177</sup> In addition, two Pentecostal authors addressed the “Two Sticks” pericope—one of whom claimed that the reuniting of the two sticks has already begun with the revival of national Israel.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Bishop writes, “How marvelously the first part of Ezekiel's vision has been fulfilled! For nearly 1900 years the Jews, scattered like the bones in the field, were exiles in almost every land. The land of Israel lay desolate and barren, sparsely populated by Arab tribes. As recently as 65 years ago, there was a mere handful of Jews in Palestine. Since that time hundreds of thousands of Jews have found their way back to their land and, in an almost incredible manner, have raised up modern cities and transformed the wilderness into some of the most productive and fruitful land in the world! And just as surely as a national, political, and economic miracle has taken place among the Jews, the second phase of Ezekiel's vision will take place. Spiritual revival will break out. God will pour out upon His people the spirit of supplication. They shall look upon Him whom they have pierced, and shall repent and be reconciled to their God! (See Zechariah 12:10; Revelation 1:7; Zechariah 14:16; Isaiah 60:12, 14).” See J. Bradford Bishop, “The Valley of Life and Death: Ezekiel 37:1—14,” *PE* 2621 (August, 1964): 16; and Bishop, “Warning of the King,” *PE* 2747 (January 1967): 9.

<sup>177</sup> See Louis H. Hauff, “Israel, the Budding Fig Tree,” *PE* 2410 (July, 1960): 28. In another article, he wrote, “Ezekiel 37:1, 11—14 is a remarkable prophecy concerning the return of Israel to their own land after nearly 1900 years of absence. The dry bones of the vision have come together.” Again, this interpretation is not exclusively dispensational, although it is distinctly so. It was commonly held by Jews as well as evangelical Christians. To illustrate this point, Hauff also quotes Izhak Ben Zvi, the second president of the state of Israel, who says in reference to Ezek 37, “We are witnesses today of the wondrous process, the joining of the tribes of Israel, bone to bone, flesh to flesh, into one people. An ancient people condemned to exile and dispersion has sprung to life again.” Hauff explains that this could not have referred to the return from Babylonian captivity, since this refers to a permanent return. See Louis H. Hauff, “Dry Bones of Israel Come to Life,” *PE* 2780 (August 1967): 6; and Louis H. Hauff, “Pentecostal Convention in Jerusalem,” *PE* 2837 (September 1968): 16. For a more thorough explanation of Hauff's views on Israel and eschatology, see Louis H. Hauff, *Israel in Bible Prophecy*, (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1974).

<sup>178</sup> Ernest S. Williams, “Your Questions,” *PE* 2583 (November 1963): 11. In addition, Ralph M. Riggs stated that the historical, resurrected King David will literally rule over the restored Jewish nation in the millennium (Ezek 37:24). See Ralph M. Riggs, “The Golden Age,” *PE* 2481 (November 1961): 14—15.

Regarding Rev 19:11—21, three authors primarily emphasized the judgment of the wicked accompanying Christ’s return,<sup>179</sup> and Frank M. Boyd distinguished the Rev 19:11—21 Battle of Armageddon from the Ezek 38—39 battle, following the emerging dispensational trend of believing that Ezekiel’s battle will occur prior to the Battle of Armageddon.<sup>180</sup> Interpretations of the “Gog and Magog” texts in the 1960s continued to affirm Russia’s impending decimation.<sup>181</sup> For example, Ray W. Johnson and Donald W. Patten cowrote an article in which they stated,

Unless Russia repents of her evil intentions and values, this will surely come to pass, and it may be very soon. Her armies will be destroyed by earthquake, by flood, by great hailstones, by fire and brimstone! ... The irony is this, that the predators of the field will feed upon the armies of the predator nation, and that vultures of the air will feast upon the armies of a vulture government. And who will then complain of such poetic justice?<sup>182</sup>

In my view, that last sentence rings of nationalistic and vindictive retribution, seemingly devoid of compassion or concern for the thousands of Russians who would supposedly be slaughtered in “such poetic justice.” Regarding the method of this destruction, Henry J. Steil went so far as to speculate about U.S. military involvement in exacting Russia’s demise, when he wrote, “Our mighty U.S. Seventh Fleet carries

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<sup>179</sup> Ralph M. Riggs, “The Time of Great Trouble,” *PE* 2477 (October 1961): 9; Ralph M. Riggs, “God’s Timetable,” *PE* 2819 (May 1968): 20; Ernest S. Williams, “Your Questions Answered,” *PE* 2812 (March 1968): 24; and C.J.E. Kingston, “The Millennium,” *PE* 2725 (July 1966): 6. Despite this emphasis on judgment, one author instead highlights Christ’s victory as portrayed in the transition from his crown of thorns to his many crowns, or diadems. See Anna C. Berg, “From Thorns to Diadems,” *PE* 2521 (September 1962): 18.

<sup>180</sup> Frank M. Boyd, “Will Russia Attack Israel?” *PE* 2782 (Sept 1967): 4. See also Boyd, “Israel’s Glorious Future,” *PE* 2800 (January 1968): 3.

<sup>181</sup> Louise Nankevill, “How Near Is the End?” *PE* 2417 (September 1960): 3; and C.M. Ward, “Divided Cities, Divided Hearts, and a Divided World,” *PE* 2763 (April 1967): 8.

<sup>182</sup> Ray W. Johnson and Donald W. Patten, “The Coming Invasion,” *TBM* 56, no. 7 (July 1968): 3.

enough atomic destructive power to effectively cripple the Soviet confederacy. Could this have any relation to the prophecy in Ezekiel 39:1—2?”<sup>183</sup> In other words, the assumption is that U.S. military aggression in the form of nuclear warfare could help to fulfill Ezekiel’s prophecy, thus resulting in a celebration of human violence.

However, despite the dominance of dispensationalism in the 1960s, a few alternate readings emerged, most of which interpreted Ezekiel’s new heart and new spirit (Ezek 36:26—27) to be representative of the transformation experienced by believers through the work of the Spirit.<sup>184</sup> In addition, two authors saw the resurrection of the “dry bones” as representative of the spiritual revival of Pentecost that remains

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<sup>183</sup> See Henry J. Steil, “The Earth’s Ripening Harvest,” *PE* 2608 (May 1964): 3.

<sup>184</sup> See James A. Stewart, “Begin at My Sanctuary,” *PE* 2391 (March 1960): 5; James La Valley, “Something Better Than Psychiatry,” *PE* 2450 (April 1961): 15; Ida Roth, “A Converted Jewess,” *PE* 2489 (January 1962): 15; Fred J. Marrow, Jr., “Consecrated Youth,” *TFM* 36, no. 3 (March 1963): 10; J. Bashford Bishop, “John Announces Christ,” *PE* 2682 (October 1965): 8; Stanford E. Linzey, Jr., “Nicodemus and the Kingdom,” *PE* 2683 (October 1965): 11; Jerry W. Shepperd, “The Communion of the Holy Ghost,” *PE* 2711 (April 1966): 5; Arne Vick, “The Meaning of the New Birth,” *PE* 2753 (February 1967): 3; Gordon Chilvers, “How to Succeed in Life,” *PE* 2754 (February 1967): 8; and Indian Christian, “It’s A Must!” *PE* 2863 (March 1969): 24. In addition to these interpretations, one author testified of a miraculous physical healing of a heart condition, connecting it to the “new heart” of Ezek 36:26. See J.W. Farnan, “Gets a New Heart in Answer to Prayer,” *PE* 2671 (July 1965): 1—2.

available for all believers.<sup>185</sup> Also uniquely, Richard H. Philp wrote that Ezek 39:29 refers to the baptism of the Holy Spirit.<sup>186</sup>

### 2.2.7 1970s

It is no surprise that most Pentecostal articles written in the 1970s reflected dispensationalism, particularly because the 1970s saw a resurgence in dispensationalism's popularity due to the 1970 publication of Hal Lindsey's wildly popular *The Late Great Planet Earth*.<sup>187</sup> Lindsey's treatment of dispensational eschatology remained the top-selling nonfiction book of the entire decade, according to the New York Times, thereby expanding the breadth of dispensationalism's influence. Reflecting this theological bent toward dispensational eschatology, two Pentecostal articles affirmed the belief that contemporary Jewish immigration to Israel and ensuing prosperity of the land fulfilled the prophecies in Ezek 36:24, 33—35,<sup>188</sup> and four

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<sup>185</sup> See F.J. Walton, "Blow, Ye Winds," *PE* 2861 (March 1969): 8—9; and Robert C. Cunningham, "Let Us Keep the Feast," *PE* 2872 (May 1969): 4. Ironically, one of these authors was Robert C. Cunningham, whose interpretations of the Ezekiel and Revelation texts nearly always align with dispensationalism. Yet in this case, reminiscent of Frodsham, he seems to allow for multiple interpretations of the same text, seeking to maintain both Pentecostal hermeneutics and dispensational eschatology. Cunningham wrote, "The transformation wrought when men and women are baptized with the Holy Spirit is illustrated by Ezekiel's vision. ... Wherever there are churches or church members who seem to be "dead bones," God wills to breathe upon them and impart to them an abundance of spiritual life and power. The greatest need in every church today is to receive this breath from heaven." See Cunningham, "Let Us Keep the Feast," 4. In another article, Cunningham wrote, "In his vision the prophet saw an entire valley full of dry bones (Ezekiel 37). The scripture says they were very dry. The question was asked, 'Can these bones live?' The Lord said they could, for He would breathe upon them. ... The greatest need of the Church of the Lord Jesus today is to receive this breath from heaven, as the disciples received it on the day of Pentecost. ... This Breath of God is nothing less than the blessed Holy Spirit." See Robert C. Cunningham, "A Breath From Heaven," *PE* 2439 (February, 1961): 1.

<sup>186</sup> Richard H. Philp, "The Value of 'Tongues,'" *PE* 2509 (June 1962): 8.

<sup>187</sup> Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970).

<sup>188</sup> See Curtis W. Ringness, "The Jew—Fulfillment of God's Word," *PE* 2964 (February 1971): 23; and Ralph W. Harris, "Saga of the Sephardim," *PE* 3244 (July 1976): 8. Harris quotes Jewish archaeologist Nelson Glueck in support of this interpretation, demonstrating once again that while it is a distinctly dispensational interpretation, it is not exclusively so.

articles referred to various aspects of Ezekiel’s “dry bones” prophecy, finding partial fulfillment in the modern state of Israel, while recognizing that complete fulfillment would only come through the future spiritual restoration of Israel.<sup>189</sup> Interpretations correlating contemporary nations with those slated for divine judgment in Ezek 38—39 persisted in popularity in the 1970s.<sup>190</sup> Pentecostals continued to view Russia as “Gog,” and one author identified the European Economic Community with the revived Roman empire, and China with the “kings of the east.”<sup>191</sup> Another author claimed that political preparation for the fulfillment of Ezek 38—39 was underway, particularly because of Libya’s alignment with Egypt and commitment to further Russia’s political interests in the middle east. These interpretations reveal how Pentecostals perpetuated dispensationalism’s propensity to connect daily news headlines to biblical prophecy.<sup>192</sup>

Yet despite the resurgence of dispensationalism’s dominance in the 1970s, even then Pentecostals published several articles containing non-dispensational interpretations of these texts. Most prominently, Pentecostal authors wrote about regeneration and walking in the Spirit (Ezek 36:26),<sup>193</sup> and of God’s ability to bring life

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<sup>189</sup> See J. Bashford Bishop, “Resurrection of Israel,” *PE* 2971 (April 1971): 12; Ernest Kalapathy, “The One Like Moses,” *PE* 3025 (April 1972): 23; Kalapathy, “The Trembling Mountain,” *PE* 3041 (August 1972): 20; and Emil A. Balliet, “Jesus is Coming,” *PE* 3047 (October 1972): 9.

<sup>190</sup> See Louise Nankivell, “What Lies Ahead?” *PE* 2965 (March 1971): 5; Kenneth D. Barney, “Wave of the Future,” *PE* 2981 (June 1971): 13; C.M. Ward, “The ‘Servants’ of History,” *PE* 2984 (July 1971): 10; C.M. Ward, “The Little Season,” *PE* 3171 (February 1975): 14; Ian MacPherson, “I’ll Come Back for You,” *PE* 3304 (September 1977): 6; and Ian MacPherson, “The End of the World is Near,” *PE* 3194 (July 1975): 7.

<sup>191</sup> MacPherson, “I’ll Come Back for You,” 6.

<sup>192</sup> C.M. Ward, “The ‘Servants’ of History,” 10. Most likely, MacPherson and Ward borrowed these interpretations directly from Hal Lindsey’s wildly popular *The Late Great Planet Earth*.

<sup>193</sup> See Robert C. Cunningham, “A New Spirit Within,” *PE* 3008 (January 1972): 4; Ian McPherson, “A New Heart for a New Year,” *PE* 3060 (December 1972): 2; and Sharon Kay Bottoms, “Guided By His Eye,” *PE* 3307 (September 1977): 13. It should be noted that both Cunningham and

from death by the Spirit's power (Ezek 37:1—14).<sup>194</sup> Some authors displayed nuance in their interpretations of Ezek 37 by recognizing that while this text primarily relates to the restoration of Israel, it also carries profound spiritual implications for believers who experience the baptism and indwelling of the Holy Spirit.<sup>195</sup> Ruth Copeland also published an article emphasizing the victory of the returning Messiah over his enemies (Rev 19:11—21).<sup>196</sup>

## 2.2.8 1980s

Pentecostal journal articles from the 1980s reveal a dramatic theological pendulum shift, as my research only identified four articles that clearly demonstrated dispensational leanings, while the others either provided alternate interpretations, or did not relate directly to dispensational eschatology.<sup>197</sup> Of these four articles, three addressed the impending divine annihilation of Russia (aka the Soviet Union).<sup>198</sup>

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MacPherson wrote other articles reflecting dispensationalism, but that their interpretations of these particular texts in these articles departed from dispensationalism.

<sup>194</sup> See Don Mallough, "Impact 71: Take the Word!" *PE* (May 1971): 7; James A. Hamby, "Gentiles in the Land of Zion," *PE* 3014 (February 1972): 10; and J. Bradford Bishop, "The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit," *PE* 3148 (September 1974): 30.

<sup>195</sup> See Stanley Horton, "We Too Shall Rise," *PE* 3127 (April 1974): 12; Horton, "With You Forever," *PE* 3377 (January 1979): 19; and Melvin L. Hodges, "Spiritual Patterns of Church Growth," *PE* 3018 (March 1972): 9

<sup>196</sup> In my view, Copeland's article neither supports nor detracts from dispensationalism. See Ruth Copeland, "The Coming Great Confrontation," *PE* 3403 (July 1979): 4—5.

<sup>197</sup> The four articles reflecting dispensationalism are Robert C. Cunningham, "Will the Messiah Come in 1980?" *PE* 3429 (January 1980): 31; Ian MacPherson, "Biblical Weather Forecasting," *PE* 3795 (February 1987): 4; E.S. Caldwell, "God's Volcano Power," *PE* 3454 (July 1980): 7; and R.E. Orchard, "Birth Pangs of a New Order," *PE* 3611 (July 1983): 3. In addition, two other articles were written by authors who typically espouse dispensationalism, but these particular articles lack clear evidence of it. See Frank M. Boyd, "The Ultimate Destiny of the Church," *PE* 3642 (February 1984): 13; and Stanley M. Horton, "The Sides of the North," *PE* 3580 (December 1982): 21.

<sup>198</sup> See Cunningham, "Will the Messiah Come in 1980?" 31; Caldwell, "God's Volcano Power," 7; and Orchard, "Birth Pangs of a New Order," 3. Orchard writes, "The Russian bear long has been an

Perhaps the heightened Cold War tension of the 1980s contributed to this emphasis among those adhering to dispensational eschatology. The fourth article connected the establishment of the modern state of Israel to a fulfillment of Ezek 37:1—14.<sup>199</sup> By way of contrast, eleven articles published on Ezek 36 underscore the significance of the Spirit's power to transform hearts through salvation, physical healing, Spirit baptism, worship, and empowerment for a lifestyle of intercession and holiness, calling readers to repentance and awareness for need of the Spirit's power.<sup>200</sup> Another eight articles focused on how Ezek 37 highlights the Spirit's power to bring salvation, resurrection life, spiritual revival, physical healing, and surrender to God's sovereignty.<sup>201</sup>

The 1980s also saw a significant increase in the number of articles relating to Rev 19:11—21 and Christ's second coming. While these articles neither directly

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agent of Satan to hinder righteousness in the earth. Napoleon went after the bear in its own den but was defeated. Hitler also went to the bear's den and suffered loss. God has a different tactic. The bear must be brought out of its den, out into the open. So the prophet Ezekiel tells us that the bear will be enticed down to the mountains of Israel. There it will come face to face with the covenant people, and God will decimate its forces with pestilence and blood, with an overflowing rain, and with hailstones, fire, and brimstone. 'Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the Lord' (Ezekiel 38:23)."

<sup>199</sup> See MacPherson, "Biblical Weather Forecasting," 4.

<sup>200</sup> See Croft M. Pentz, "Let's Go to Heaven," *PE* 3437 (March 1980): 5; Colin C. Whitaker, "The Fourth R," *PE* 3958 (March 1980): 4; Robert C. Cunningham, "The New Person Needs a New Spirit," *PE* 3506 (July 1981): 30; Cunningham, "New Hearts Given to Rick and Jim," *PE* 3521 (November 1981): 14; Albert L. Hoy, "How You May Inherit the Earth," *PE* 3520 (October 1981): 4; Wanda Mangram, "Thousands Rally in Constitutional Hall on National Day of Prayer," *PE* 3555 (June 1982): 5; Kenneth Young, "Armor for the Handicapped," *PE* 3635 (January 1984): 10; G Raymond Carlson, "By My Spirit, Saith the Lord," *PE* 3647 (April 1984): 9; Jack West, "Pentecostal Fullness," *PE* 3654 (May 1984): 5; Everett Stenhouse, "Committed to Worship," *PE* 3833 (October 1987): 6; and Richard L. Dresselhaus, "Casting Off the Constraints of Traditionalism," *PE* 3845 (January 1988): 5.

<sup>201</sup> See Don Brannan, "Gangrenous Foot Is Healed," *PE* 3511 (August 1981): 20; Robert C. Cunningham, "Jill Briscoe Tells Festival 'Dry Bones' Can Live Again," *PE* 3515 (September 1981): 22; Morris V.C. Vaagenes, Jr., "The Spirit and the Church," *PE* 3572 (October 1982): 3; Paul E. Lowenberg, "Wind—Fire—New Wine," *PE* 3707 (May 1985): 4; Richard G. Champion, ed., "Evangelists Attend Seminar," *PE* 3853 (March 1988): 29; Janet M. Taylor, "What It's Like on Death Row," *PE* 3935 (October 1989): 23; Robert J. Strand, "Witnessing to Mormons," *PE* 3711 (June 1985): 11; and Fred Smolchuck, "Will I Recognize Him in Heaven?" *PE* 3804 (April 1987): 12.

support nor detract from dispensationalism, they are reminiscent of early Pentecostal writings in that they encompass what seems to be a renewed fervor for the expectation of Christ's imminent return. Prominent themes in these articles include Christ's victory over evil powers, Christ's judgment of the wicked, and Christ's millennial reign.<sup>202</sup> Significantly, one article highlighted the sacrificial nature of Christ's return by interpreting the blood on the Messiah's robe as his own shed blood on the cross (Rev 19:13), rather than as the blood of his enemies shed in battle—a reading which also aligns with earlier Pentecostal readings.<sup>203</sup>

### 2.2.9 1990s to the Present

After 1990, the number of Pentecostal periodical articles I located addressing the primary texts of this study diminished significantly. This could be due in part to the rise of “populist voices,” charismatic teachers and leaders who disseminated their information broadly via radio, television, internet, and bestselling books. In addition, possibly the cultural shift from a preference for printed periodicals to these varied media platforms could account for both the decline in the number of periodical publications related to these texts, and for the increasing influence of charismatic populist voices upon Pentecostal eschatology and biblical interpretation. Perhaps the

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<sup>202</sup> See Dan Betzer, “The Price of Power,” *PE* 3429 (January 1980): 21; Melvin L. Hodges, “Highlights of the Apocalypse,” *PE* 3451 (June 1980): 5—6; Dan Betzer, “Coming Up: The Greatest Battle on Earth,” *PE* 3475 (December 1980): 21; E.R. Anderson, “The Shuttle Generation,” *PE* 3506 (July 1981): 3; Paul Cramblit, “When Violence Will Cease,” *PE* 3631 (December 1983): 31; Kenneth D. Barney, “Eternal Torment,” *PE* 3655 (May 1984): 13; and Barney, “He Will Be Back,” *PE* 3704 (May 1985): 9.

<sup>203</sup> See Fred Smolchuck, “No Blood—No Life,” *PE* 3855 (March 1988): 22. For earlier Pentecostal readings with the same interpretation, see Steelberg, “The Speaking Blood,” 5, and Utley, “A Vision of His Glory on the Mount of Prayer,” 18.

most popular material of the 1990s for broadly disseminating dispensational eschatology was *The Left Behind* series, a collection of novels that outline dispensational eschatology in story format.<sup>204</sup> These novels, while not written by Pentecostals, perpetuated dispensationalism's popularity among evangelicals and Pentecostals alike, demonstrating the power of popular literature and media to wield profound theological influence. Therefore, while I will begin by summarizing the content of Pentecostal periodical articles from the 1990s onward, I will then go on to provide an overview of three “populist voices” in the charismatic and Pentecostal movements who, in my estimation, have most extensively influenced Pentecostal eschatology for the masses—and specifically Pentecostal interpretations of the primary texts in this study—over the past two and a half decades.

Pentecostal journal articles from the 1990s onward seem to be divided equally between dispensationalist and non-dispensationalist positions. Eminent Pentecostal scholar Stanley Horton contributed three articles that primarily addressed the anticipated sequence of “end times” events, essentially following the dispensational trajectory and equating the battle described in Ezek 38—39 with the battle of Armageddon in Rev 19:11—21.<sup>205</sup> Two other authors contributed similar pieces

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<sup>204</sup> The popularity of these novels extends beyond Christendom and into mainstream culture, leading many to believe that these books and their portrayals on film represent what the Bible teaches, especially the idea of a secret pre-tribulational rapture of the church. See Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, *Left Behind: A Novel of the Earth’s Last Days*, (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, 1995); and Thompson, *Kingdom Come*, 24—25, 40—41.

<sup>205</sup> Horton also supports a dispensational interpretation of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel, and also adheres to belief in a pre-tribulational rapture as a separate even to the second coming of Christ in Rev 19. See Stanley M. Horton, “The Promise to Abraham,” *PE* 4494 (June 2000): 22; and Stanley M. Horton, “The Great Tribulation,” *PE* 4512 (October 2000): 22. In his article on Rev 19:11—21, Horton takes the view that the army following the rider on the white horse is an army of saints, indicated by their white wedding garments. See Stanley M. Horton, “Inside the Bible,” *PE* 4342 (July 1997): 30.

detailing the progression of future eschatological events and aligning with dispensationalism.<sup>206</sup> Wayne I. Goodall connected the founding of the state of Israel to Ezek 36, hinting at the possibility that the generation to experience Israel's rebirth would also see Christ's second coming. Therefore, hope for Christ's imminent return was based upon a dispensational interpretation of Ezek 36 as it relates to the modern nation of Israel.<sup>207</sup> To balance this short smattering of dispensational interpretations, two authors wrote about Ezek 36:26 in terms of the Spirit's power to transform human hearts,<sup>208</sup> and five authors interpreted the resurrection of Ezekiel's "dry bones" as imagery depicting the Spirit's power to breathe resurrection life into the spiritually dead or dry, providing physical healing and spiritual revival.<sup>209</sup>

In addition to this summation of Pentecostal periodical articles from the 1990s onward, three highly influential Pentecostal and charismatic "populist voices" have contributed significant dispensational interpretations of the primary texts pertaining to this study in a variety of contexts: John Hagee, Pat Robertson, and Chuck Missler.

While these vocal few may not represent all Pentecostal and charismatic eschatological

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<sup>206</sup> Richard G. Champion, "The Kingdom of God As Described in Holy Scripture," *PE* 3953 (February 1990): 20; and Hal Donaldson, ed., "Things to Come," *PE* 4405 (October 1998):20—21.

<sup>207</sup> See Wayde I. Goodall, "The Jewish People and the Land of Israel in Prophecy," *PE* 4293 (August 1996): 14.

<sup>208</sup> See Eric A. Hansen, "Bad Kids Can Turn Out OK," *PE* 4179 (June 1994): 12; and G. Raymond Carlson, "The Holy Helper," *PE* 4208 (January 1995): 11.

<sup>209</sup> See Elsie Bolton Ezzo, "Power Walking," *PE* 4053 (January 1992): 5; Jeff Brawner, "You Need a Personal Pentecost," *PE* 4281 (May 1996): 8; Joel Kilpatrick, "Salt Lake City Church 'Birthed Out of Outpouring,'" *PE* 4384 (May 1998): 9; Everett Ruddick, "Recovers From Severe Burns," *PE* 1999 (January 1999): 37; and Robert Murray McCheyne, "The Vision of Dry Bones," *PE* 4455 (September 1999): 10.

views, nor do they represent contemporary scholarly consensus among Pentecostals and charismatics, neither should their pervasive influence be underestimated.

### 2.2.9.1 John Hagee

Undoubtedly one of the most influential Pentecostal “populist” voices today is John Hagee, a graduate of Southwestern Assemblies of God University and pastor of (the independent Pentecostal) Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, Texas.<sup>210</sup> Hagee’s interpretation of Ezek 36—39 and Rev 19—20 in *Jerusalem Countdown*, his popular nonfiction book predicting various geo-political “end times” events, reflects dispensational eschatology and illustrates the four prominent theological themes mentioned previously. First, Hagee finds the fulfillment of Ezekiel’s “dry bones” prophecy in the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948.<sup>211</sup> Second, Hagee expects a premillennial literal military battle against Gog of Magog as described in Ezek 38—39.<sup>212</sup> Third, Hagee identifies Gog in Ezek 38—39 as Russia, and the “merchants of

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<sup>210</sup> In addition to authoring 35 books, John Hagee telecasts sermons and teachings 24-hours-per-day in 249 nations on GETV.org. While Cornerstone Church identifies itself as “nondenominational evangelical,” the church’s statement of faith affirms belief in the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the operation of the gifts of the Spirit in the body of Christ today, as well as charismatic expressions of worship. Best known for his strong political support of Israel, as well as his promotion of dispensational eschatology, Hagee founded Christians United for Israel—the largest “pro-Israel” organization in the United States, with more than 1.3 million members. See <http://www.sacornerstone.org/about-beliefs> and <http://www.jhm.org/Home/About/PastorJohnHagee>.

<sup>211</sup> Hagee elaborates: “In a vision, God took Ezekiel to a valley full of dead bones that were very dry and scattered. This was God’s physical portrayal of the nation of Israel. Israel ceased to be a nation in A.D. 70 when the Jews were scattered to the ends of the earth by the Roman army under Titus. It would be more than two thousand years before Israel became a recognized state again in May 1948—and the bones grew very dry! ... On May 14, 1948, at 4:32 p.m., the State of Israel, after two thousand years, was reborn. Ezekiel’s prophetic vision was fulfilled.” Hagee also affirms the present need of the Jewish people for spiritual life: “Like the dry bones of Ezekiel 37, Israel awaits the spiritual awakening of the breath of God and the coming of the Messiah.” See John Hagee, *Jerusalem Countdown* (Lake Mary, Florida: FrontLine, 2007), 129, 131.

<sup>212</sup> While he does not specify the exact timing of this battle, he describes it as occurring before the Great Tribulation and the second coming of Christ. The battle of Armageddon, described in Rev 19—

Tarshish” with contemporary Western powers, including England and the U.S.<sup>213</sup>

Fourth, Hagee justifies human violence against Gog and allied powers by interpreting God’s judgment of fire on Gog and on those living securely in the coastlands (Ezek 39:3—6) as possibly the fire of nuclear war:

The fire Ezekiel sees coming to those living securely in the coastlands could be a direct judgment from God by hurricanes and tsunamis, or it could describe a nuclear war via an exchange of nuclear missiles. Could it be that America, who refuses to defend Israel from the Russian invasion, will experience nuclear warfare on our east and west coasts?<sup>214</sup>

By implication, those nations who attack Gog and allies militarily via nuclear warfare could be fighting on God’s behalf and according to God’s will in fulfillment of Ezekiel’s prophecies. Faydra L. Shapiro explores how Hagee’s political support for a pre-emptive strike on Iran’s nuclear facilities, ostensibly to protect the interests of Israel and the U.S., may actually be based on his interpretation of Ezek 38—39. Noting how Hagee’s oft-repeated belief that a nuclear conflict with Iran will trigger the war of Gog and Magog as described in Ezek 38—39, Shapiro asks whether Hagee’s support of a pre-emptive strike against Iran reveals his hopes to hasten the initiation of this battle and the rapture of the church?<sup>215</sup> Shapiro concludes, “It is reasonable to suggest then

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20, then takes place during the Great Tribulation after the rapture of the church. Hagee, *Jerusalem Countdown*, 154—158.

<sup>213</sup> Hagee writes, “Make no mistake—at some moment in the countdown to doomsday, Russia, together with her Arab allies, will lead a massive attack upon the nation of Israel that probably will involve unclear weapons. The prophet Ezekiel clearly describes the coming battle.” See John Hagee, *From Daniel to Doomsday* (Nashville: Th. Nelson, 1999), 135. In the same chapter he also adds, “I believe ‘Rosh’ of Ezekiel 38 is a combination of Russian states.” See also Hagee, *Jerusalem Countdown*, 138—145.

<sup>214</sup> Hagee, *Jerusalem Countdown*, 150.

<sup>215</sup> Shapiro also notes this statement on the cover of Hagee’s *Jerusalem Countdown*: “Iran’s president has said ‘Israel must be wiped off from the map of the world.’ Iran’s nuclear arsenal is ready, and will impact the world as never before imagined ... COULD THIS BE THE BEGINNING OF THE END? [capitals in original].” See John Hagee, *Jerusalem Countdown*, quoted in Faydra L. Shapiro, “Taming Tehran: Evangelical Christians and the Iranian Threat to Israel,” *Studies in Religion/Sciences*

that for Pastor Hagee, an effective blow for God is a pre-emptive strike on Iran, who threatens Israel and ultimately America.”<sup>216</sup> In *Allies for Armageddon*, Victoria Clark accurately summarizes Hagee’s expectations for the war against Gog:

[H]e sees an Ezekiel 38—39 scenario taking shape—a Russia that has helped to nuclear-arm Iran, and a coalition of Muslim states, led by Iran, all coming against Israel in a dress rehearsal for Armageddon.<sup>217</sup>

Clark then documents how John Hagee’s book, *Jerusalem Countdown*, may have influenced John McCain and Newt Gingrich to view the July 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war as the potential prelude to “World War III,” according to their comments made during a Larry King Live interview, illustrating the political power of popular Pentecostal eschatology. Clark notes the similarity to the influence of *The Late Great Planet Earth* upon the political perspectives of Ronald Reagan and Menachem Begin. Although difficult to track and prove definitive connections between populist Pentecostal or dispensational voices and ensuing perspectives of political leaders, at the very least it is accurate to say that right-wing political leaders, swayed greatly by their conservative evangelical base, would have been influenced by the direct political implications of the popular eschatology their evangelical base espoused.<sup>218</sup>

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*Religieuses* 39, no. 3 (2010): 370. For more on Hagee’s political support of a pre-emptive strike against Iran, see John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2007), 301; and Aaron William Stone, *Dispensationalism and United States Foreign Policy With Israel* (ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, 2010), 86.

<sup>216</sup> Shapiro, “Taming Tehran,” 371.

<sup>217</sup> Victoria Clark, *Allies for Armageddon: The Rise of Christian Zionism* (London: Yale University Press, 2007), 163.

<sup>218</sup> Clark, *Allies for Armageddon*, 163.

### **2.2.9.2 Pat Robertson**

Perhaps even more influential than John Hagee as a dominant voice in Pentecostal eschatology is religious and political leader Pat Robertson, founder of the Christian Broadcasting Network, Regent University, and the American Center for Law and Justice.<sup>219</sup> Bae notes the nuance of Robertson's eschatology, explaining that while it contains some elements of classic dispensationalism such as an emphasis upon Israel and a tendency to connect news headlines to prophesied "end times" events, he departs from certain dispensational distinctives such as the pre-tribulational rapture.<sup>220</sup> For the purposes of this study, Robertson's interpretations of the Ezekiel and Revelation texts remain dispensational, and therefore, although every aspect of his eschatology may not align with classic dispensationalism, he still wields tremendous influence by disseminating dispensational interpretations of these particular texts.<sup>221</sup> For example, Robertson believed the political chaos in 1980 leading up to the overthrow of Iran's Shah fulfilled Ezekiel's prophecies, in which he also saw the modern nations of the Soviet Union, Ethiopia, and possibly the United States figuring prominently.<sup>222</sup> In the

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<sup>219</sup> Robertson also founded the popular television show "The 700 Club." See <http://www.patrRobertson.com/Biography/index.asp>.

<sup>220</sup> See Dawk-Mahn Bae, "*Kingdom Now*": *Social Implication of Eschatology in the Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement in America* (ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, 2004), 152—158. For an example of how Robertson connects news headlines to "end times" events, he explains his view on "the times of the Gentiles," when he writes, "This prophecy was literally fulfilled in June of 1967 at the end of the Six-Day War... When that event took place a clock began to tick that signaled the downfall of the great Gentile powers... A biblical generation is 40 years. If June 1967 began the "generation" of the end of the times of the Gentiles, the 40 years takes us to the year 2007." In other words, Robertson implies that the "times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24) will conclude in 2007 because of the events of 1948 and 1967.

<sup>221</sup> Bae, "*Kingdom Now*," 152—158.

<sup>222</sup> Bruce A. Barron documents this in his dissertation, *Rechristianizing America: The Reconstruction and Kingdom Now Movements in American Evangelical Christianity* (ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, 1991), 86—87, 104. See also *Pat Robertson's Perspective*, March and June 1979. Barron also notes, "As further documentation, the September-October 1978 issue also describes

1980s, Robertson anticipated an imminent war between the United States and the Soviet Union in fulfillment of biblical prophecy.<sup>223</sup> On a 1981 television show, Robertson declared,

I believe that the Bible indicates that ultimately Israel will take territory all the way up to the Euphrates River, which is north of Damascus. This might well be the trigger that would bring the Soviet Union down on Israel for an invasion that was spoken of in the book Ezekiel, chapter 38, and I don't think we've got a long time to wait for that.<sup>224</sup>

Robertson also suggested that Lebanon's invasion of Israel in 1982 initiated the fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecies. However, by 1985, Robertson acknowledged that speculation and date setting was dangerous, and he admitted that he no longer anticipated a global nuclear holocaust in the 1980s.<sup>225</sup> Regarding the 1991 Gulf War, Robertson told his viewers of *The 700 Club* that "what's going down is exactly what the Bible said."<sup>226</sup> Robertson continued to advocate U.S. military aggression against Russia, most likely based on his interpretation of Ezek 38—39, as was demonstrated in

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events in Iran as fulfillment of prophecy; in January 1980 Robertson predicted that 'the 1980s will bring serious dislocations to our world' and urged believers to focus on the glorious millennium to come; and the June-July 1980 issue stated, 'In these times, Christians see a transition period leading to the Second Coming of Christ.'"

<sup>223</sup> In 1980, Robertson stated, "The coming Middle East war is an absolute certainty, as is the destruction of the Soviet Union. All available economic and military intelligence pinpoints 1982 as the optimum time for such a Soviet strike." David Yoon highlighted this and others significant quotes by Robertson in his dissertation, *The Restored Jewish State And the Revived Roman Empire*, 540—541. For this particular quote, Yoon cites David Edwin Harrell, Jr., *Pat Robertson: A Personal, Religious, and Political Portrait* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 147.

<sup>224</sup> See Yoon, *The Restored Jewish State And the Revived Roman Empire*, 540; and Myra MacPherson, "The Pulpit and the Power; '700 Club's' Pat Robertson, Preaching Gospel and Eyeing the White House," *The Washington Post*, October 18, 1985, Style D1.

<sup>225</sup> See Yoon, *The Restored Jewish State And the Revived Roman Empire*, 517—518; Gore Vidal, "Reagan's Holy War," *Sydney Morning Herald* (Australia), December 12, 1987, Saturday Late Edition, Spectrum, 63; and Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 205—206.

<sup>226</sup> Paul Della Valle, "Does the Gulf War Mean That the End Is Near?" *Telegram & Gazette*, (Worcester, Mass, February 3, 1991): A2.

a speech he gave just prior to his 1987 presidential campaign, in which he stated, “We should stand for the ultimate overthrow or elimination of Communist tyranny from the face of the earth, including one day the Soviet Union itself.”<sup>227</sup> In 2011, Robertson identified the Israeli raid on a Turkish flotilla bound for Gaza and the ensuing international outcry against Israel as the prophetic aligning of nations against Israel, in preparation for the war against Gog and the nations. Robertson writes,

I think it’s shaping up before our eyes: Russia allies with Iran, Iran is allying with enemies of Israel—Libya and Sudan in the Muslim camp, the Muslim people in the region of the Caucasus—and now Turkey. It’s all getting ready to happen. As we begin to see the line-up of nations conforming to the prophecies of the Bible, we can be very sure of the outcome: God has promised that He will destroy the enemies of Israel and bring glory to Himself.

Robertson then identified modern nations with those listed in Ezek 38: Gog is Russia, Put is Libya, Cush is Sudan, Gomer is Turkey, and Persia is Iran.<sup>228</sup>

#### **2.2.9.3 Chuck Missler**

Another significant voice among charismatic eschatologists is Calvary Chapel Bible teacher Chuck Missler.<sup>229</sup> A graduate of the naval academy and former branch chief of the Department of Guided Missiles, Missler combines his scientific and

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<sup>227</sup> Pat Robertson in San Jose, California, Rotary Club speech, July 17, 1987, AFRA, quoted in David John Marley, *Pat Robertson: An American Life* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007), 166. For more on Robertson’s foreign policy views, see David Edwin Harrell, Jr., *Pat Robertson: A Personal, Religious, and Political Portrait* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1987), 190—194.

<sup>228</sup> Pat Robertson, “The Prophecy of Ezekiel 38,” (2011): 2.

<sup>229</sup> Although Calvary Chapel churches more closely resemble charismatic evangelical churches, the Calvary Chapel statement of faith does affirm belief in the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a distinct experience subsequent to salvation, as well as the exercise of all the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the church today. See <http://calvarychapel.com/about/doctrine/view/doctrine/>.

defense knowledge with his study of biblical prophecy.<sup>230</sup> Like Hagee, Missler affirms the fulfillment of Ezekiel’s “dry bones” prophecy in the establishment of the state of Israel, placing the timing of the Gog war before the Great Tribulation. Missler believes that the reference to Gog and Magog in Rev 20 after the millennium is a different battle than the one described by Ezekiel, in which he identifies Magog as Russia with Gog as its king, and Magog’s allies as contemporary Muslim nations.<sup>231</sup> Drawing from his weapons expertise, Missler claims that the judgment exacted upon these nations by God will be in the form of nuclear warfare. He even correlates nuclear warhead disposal procedures with the “clean-up” instructions Ezekiel gives for the aftermath of the war in chapter 39. Missler’s equation of nuclear warfare with God’s judgment against Gog and allies justifies human violence against the nation or nations identified as “Gog.”<sup>232</sup> Recently, Missler has been teaching that a Psalm 83 apocalyptic war, in which the IDF will destroy Israel’s contemporary surrounding neighbors and gain control of the Middle East, will precede the Ezekiel 38—39 war against Gog. For Missler, the destruction of Israel’s neighbors in the Psalm 83 war explains their absence in the Ezek

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<sup>230</sup> Missler closely follows the classic dispensational eschatology of John Nelson Darby and C.I. Scofield. In addition, his “longtime personal relationship with Hal Lindsey” undoubtedly helped to set a theological trajectory for his ministry. Through his Koinonia House dissemination of teaching via radio, podcasts, newsletters and conferences, Missler reaches tens of thousands monthly, and has distributed more than 8 million Bible study resources in 35 countries. See [http://www.khouse.org/pages/mcat/about\\_us/](http://www.khouse.org/pages/mcat/about_us/), and [https://www.khouse.org/pages/mcat/khouse/about\\_the\\_misslers/](https://www.khouse.org/pages/mcat/khouse/about_the_misslers/).

<sup>231</sup> Missler writes, “All of the allies of Magog (Russia) are reasonably well identified and all of them are Muslim. Their intense hatred of, as well as their commitment to destroy, Israel unites them in a common cause. … The present lineup of allies with Magog makes Ezekiel 38 and 39 appear more imminent with each issue of our daily newspaper.” Missler, *The Magog Invasion*, 121.

<sup>232</sup> “Some analysts see an intercontinental nuclear exchange possibly suggested. With the proliferation of nuclear weapons throughout the world today, such a prospect is disturbingly likely. … As Israel comes under attack, the U.S., once again, might attempt a show of brinksmanship, but this time it all goes awry. The U.S. missiles might provide the ‘hailstones of fire’ and vice versa. Ezekiel 38 appears increasingly timely the more we understand the passage.” Missler, *The Magog Invasion*, 179—180.

38—39 war. For example, Missler identifies the “tents of Edom” (Psalm 83:6) as the Palestinian refugees, who will be destroyed by the IDF in fulfillment of biblical prophecy.<sup>233</sup>

### 2.3 Conclusion

Having reviewed Pentecostal interpretations of Ezek 36:16—39:29 and Rev 19:11—21 and 20:7—10, as disseminated via Pentecostal periodicals and influential “populist voices” from 1906—2006, two observations stand out to me as particularly significant. First, I noticed a shocking lack of attention to Ezek 37:15—28, the “Two Sticks” pericope and the primary text of this study. While a handful of authors throughout the decades presented interpretations of this passage, these brief articles paled in comparison to the prolific attention given to other portions of Ezek 36:16—39:29. Second, the eschatological expectation for a literal, premillennial war against Gog and allied nations (as described in Ezek 38—39) led interpreters to identify contemporary peoples and nations as enemies of God destined for imminent destruction. The shift in Pentecostal eschatology to a premillennial expectation for the battle against Gog by equating Ezek 38—39 with Rev 16:13—16 and 19:11—21, along

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<sup>233</sup> See Chuck Missler’s two-part video teaching series, “The Magog Invasion: An Alternate View, Ezekiel 38—39,” on [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HaCUC\\_SD740](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HaCUC_SD740), and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JcAyAh70ENg>. In these teachings, Missler seems to follow the work of his Calvary Chapel prophecy colleague, Bill Salus. Salus believes the prophesied war of the Arab nations against Israel in Psalm 83 will occur prior to the Great Tribulation. According to Salus, Israel will destroy these nations and gain their land in preparation for an even greater war against Gog (Ezek 37—38). Identifying the Edomites in Psalm 83, Salus argues, “At the helm of this confederacy are the descendants from the ancient Edomites. In the process the IDF executes the vengeance of their God on the Palestinians and their coalition of Arab allies.” Describing the transformation of the Jewish people, Salus makes this disturbing assertion: “The Jews will change from victims to victors, from destroyed to destroyers, and from hunted to hunters.” For a thorough treatment of Salus’ interpretation of Psalm 83, see Bill Salus, *Psalm 83: The Missing Prophecy Revealed* (La Quinta: Prophecy Depot Ministries, 2013), 103; and Bill Salus, *Nuclear Showdown in Iran: Revealing the Ancient Prophecy of Elam* (La Quinta: Prophecy Depot Ministries, 2014), 135—177.

with the identification of Gog with Russia, drastically altered the missional perspectives of primarily Western Pentecostals toward those nations supposedly named in Ezek 38—39. Early Pentecostal journal articles reveal that eschatological fervor eagerly anticipating Russia’s destruction may have heightened contemporary political animosity and perhaps even minimized a missiological focus toward the people of Russia. Those contemporary Pentecostal “popular voices” who disseminate dispensational eschatology continue this trend by eagerly anticipating the coming destruction of Russia, Iran, and Israel’s surrounding neighbors as a sign of the fulfillment of Ezekiel’s prophecy.

As a Pentecostal, these dispensational intertextual readings of Ezekiel and Revelation, absorbed widely by Pentecostals throughout history, disturb me greatly. I find that it is impossible to wed a hopeful and peaceful Pentecostal view of eschatology, in which the Spirit empowers believers to transform the world with gospel, to a fatalistic and violent dispensational eschatology, in which believers may politically and militarily help to destroy God’s enemies in judgment.<sup>234</sup> In addition, I wonder if there could be a connection between my two observations; in other words, could the lack of attention to Ezek 37:15—28 be directly related to the prominence of anticipation for divine destruction of Russia and other nations based upon Ezek 38—39 and Rev 19:11—21? This historical review, therefore, demonstrates more strongly the potential significance of my primary research question in this thesis.

Another historical question of great theological importance remains: how thoroughly did dispensationalism dominate Pentecostal eschatology in the earliest years

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<sup>234</sup> I will explore contemporary Pentecostal eschatologies that reflect such values in greater depth in chapter three of this thesis.

of the movement? In his monograph *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, Larry McQueen challenges the prevailing historical view that “all early Pentecostals were (modified) dispensationalists.”<sup>235</sup> McQueen concludes that the Pentecostal groups that allowed their spirituality to inform their eschatology—Wesleyan Holiness streams in particular—developed various eschatological models via the process of discernment in the context of community, allowing for different understandings of how contemporary political events intersected with ancient biblical prophecies, or even if they did at all.<sup>236</sup> For example, eschatology reflected in several articles in *AF* departed greatly from classic dispensationalism. Instead of interpreting OT prophecies and texts from Revelation futuristically, these writers looked for present-day applications emphasizing Pentecostal spirituality.<sup>237</sup> In addition, I note that, in *TBM*, Frank Bartleman departs from classic dispensationalism by upholding pacifism, even in the context of the Great War: “Nationalism forces men to a spirit of patriotism and militarism. It is the ‘mark of the beast.’ The command is to murder, to destroy our fellow-men... What will the church do about it? Will she side with the world, or with heaven?”<sup>238</sup> While Bartleman does identify Gog as Russia, he does not do so to justify American military aggression against Russia in the name of fulfilling prophecy. Rather he argues that Christians

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<sup>236</sup> McQueen explains, “Political and social events in the world served to confirm more than to inform each group’s eschatological orientation.” See McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 142.

<sup>237</sup> See McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 74.

<sup>238</sup> See Frank Bartleman, “Last Day Conditions,” *TBM* 9, no. 180 (March, 1916): 4; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 85. Bartleman also states, “We are coolly killing with our ammunition the millions of Europe today, while we blandly smile at the clinking of the dollar (blood money). Like Pilate, we seek to wash our hands in innocence, while we hypocritically ejaculate in pious accents the Lord’s Prayer. But ‘the sheep are bleating’ against us, ‘Be sure your sin will find you out.’” See Frank Bartleman, “The War—Separation,” *TBM* 9, no. 178 (January, 1916): 4.

should not be involved in the destruction of their fellow man. Bartleman's eschatology, as well as various eschatologies expressed in *AF*, *TBM*, and other early Pentecostal publications, demonstrate the presence of non-dispensationalist eschatologies in early Pentecostalism.<sup>239</sup> Although generally speaking the literature seems to indicate that the majority of Pentecostals increasingly absorbed dispensational eschatology as history progressed, my research reveals that non-dispensational interpretations of the Ezekiel and Revelation texts remained present in every decade, confirming that the pneumatic discernment distinctive to Pentecostal hermeneutics persisted despite dispensationalism's encroaching dominance.

In conclusion, a rigid dispensationalist hermeneutic, applied to Ezek 36:16—39:29 and Rev 19:11—21 and 20:7—10, is rooted in rationalism and limited by the expectation of an exclusive interpretation yielding a futuristic fulfillment via literal political events. It is therefore a very un-Pentecostal approach at heart. Furthermore, in a dispensationalist view, ancient biblical nations must be equated with modern nations, and ancient prophetic texts describing battles must be fulfilled in the context of

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<sup>239</sup> For other examples of Pentecostal interpretations of the Gog and Magog biblical texts that are not dispensational, see D. Wesley Myland, "The Book of Revelation of Jesus Christ: Eleventh Lecture—Christ Coming in Glory," *LRE* 4, no. 5 (February 1912): 11—12; William A. Coxe, "That Day," *PE* 564 (September 1924): 3; William A. Coxe, "The Consummation of the Ages," *PE* 761 (August 1928): 6; See Charles W. Walkem, "Question Box," *BCF* 15, no. 9 (February 1932): 23; Charles W. Walkem, "Question Box," *BCF* 16, no. 4 (September 1932): 29; Charles W. Walkem, "The Question Box," *TFC* 7, no. 7 (November 1932): 7; Charles W. Walkem, "The Book of Revelation," *BCCF* 1, no. 15 (October, 1934): 9, 15; Charles W. Walkem, "Birds Eye Bible Briefs: Pre or Post-Tribulation Rapture, Installment 4," *TFC* 2, no. 35. (February 1936): 5—8; Charles W. Walkem, "The Question Box," *TFC* 12, no. 40 (March 1939): 4; Charles W. Walkem, "Birds Eye Bible Briefs: Pre or Post-Tribulation Rapture, Installment 4," *TFC* 2, no. 35. (February 1936): 8; Stanley H. Frodsham, ed., "The Dying World and the Living Word," *PE* 1416 (June 1941): 4; Paul F. Beacham, "Question Drawer," *PHA* 12, no. 34 (December 1928): 9; Paul F. Beacham, "Question Drawer," *PHA* 13, no. 49 (April 1929): 9; Paul F. Beacham, "Question Drawer," *PHA* 13, no. 19 (September 1929): 8; Paul F. Beacham, "Question Drawer," *PHA* 24, no. 5 (May 1940) 7; Paul F. Beacham, "Question Drawer," *PHA* 24, no. 44 (March 1941): 8; Paul F. Beacham, "Question Drawer," *PHA* 25, no. 16 (August 1941): 8, Paul F. Beacham, "Light on the Subject," *PHA* 33, no. 13, (August 1949): 6; and Paul F. Beacham, *PHA* 30, no. 18 (August 1946): 4.

contemporary political warfare—necessarily resulting in the celebration of human violence as the fulfillment of ancient prophecy. I strongly believe that the glorification of such violence contradicts Pentecostal theology, mission and ethos. Therefore, both dispensational hermeneutics and eschatology are inimical for Pentecostals, both misrepresenting and contradicting Pentecostalism at its core.<sup>240</sup>

If Pentecostals should therefore abandon dispensational eschatology and hermeneutics, as I am persuaded they should, what other eschatological frameworks present viable options for Pentecostals, aligning with their core values and theological convictions? Contemporary Pentecostal scholars continue to explore this question, and therefore, the following chapter will provide an overview of non-dispensational Pentecostal eschatologies. In chapter three, I will begin with a brief overview of Pentecostal eschatology and its relationship to dispensational eschatology, and then I will proceed with an analysis of the work of contemporary Pentecostal scholars who construct non-dispensational eschatologies. I will conclude by highlighting the most prominently repeated and significant theological themes emerging from this analysis.

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<sup>240</sup> McQueen similarly concludes that “...the holistic and apocalyptic nature of early Pentecostal spirituality” stood in contradiction to classical dispensationalism. While dispensational premillennialists expected things to get worse and worse up until the return of Christ, early Pentecostals expected the inbreaking power of the Spirit in the kingdom of God to transform the world. Those Pentecostals influenced more strongly by Wesleyan-Holiness eschatology embraced a “latter rain” expectation of the gifts and power of the Spirit experienced by the early church to return in the latter days preceding Christ’s return. Dispensational premillennialism and latter rain restorationism, while incongruent, both greatly influenced various streams of the Pentecostal and charismatic eschatology throughout the past century. See McQueen, “Early Pentecostal Theology,” 153.

### 3. PENTECOSTAL ESCHATOLOGY OF CONTEMPORARY SCHOLARS

#### 3.1 Pentecostal Eschatology: A Brief Overview

Pentecostals understand eschatology to be pneumatological in nature because it encompasses not only the future and the afterlife, but also Spirit baptism and its ensuing empowerment and motivation for missional exigency.<sup>1</sup> Faupel argues convincingly that the premillennial eschatological passion of early Pentecostals fueled their intense urgency for spreading the gospel throughout the world before Christ's imminent return.<sup>2</sup> In fact, Dayton explains how early Pentecostals believed the "latter rain" outpouring of the Spirit was given precisely for this purpose, because they were living in the last days immediately preceding the Second Coming of Jesus.<sup>3</sup> Macchia further summarizes how eschatology entirely encompasses Pentecostal life and thought:

Eschatology for Pentecostals is not simply about the end times as the last chapter of a theological system. It is a living hope that affects the entire Christian life. Christ as the coming king integrates and defines Christ's saving work, Spirit baptism, and healing. This is the Pentecostal understanding of the Christian Gospel, and it is eschatological through and through.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Macchia explains, "The Pentecostal view of Spirit baptism seeks to challenge the church to rediscover the early Christian zeal, power, and proliferation of extraordinary and powerful gifts of the Spirit, such as speaking in tongues and divine healing. Spirit baptism thus has an eschatological goal, for the gospel must be preached effectively to the entire earth before the end comes (Matt. 24:14)." See Macchia, "Pentecostal and Charismatic Theology," 281—283; Faupel, *The Everlasting Gospel*; Wacker, *Heaven Below*; 251—265; and Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 60—65.

<sup>2</sup> Faupel, *The Everlasting Gospel*, 18; and Macchia, "Pentecostal and Charismatic Theology," 282.

<sup>3</sup> Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, 143; and Macchia, "Pentecostal and Charismatic Theology," 282.

<sup>4</sup> Macchia, "Pentecostal and Charismatic Theology," 282. See also Frank D. Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 271. Macchia grounds this idea in Hollenweger's use of Moltmann's eschatology in relation to Pentecostals. Moltmann writes, "Eschatology is 'not just one element of Christianity, but it is the medium of Christian faith as such, the key in which everything else in it is set, the glow that suffuses everything here in the dawn of an expected new day.'" See Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a*

Therefore, in light of the evidence and arguments presented by Faupel, Dayton and Macchia, among others, it seems reasonable to concur that the entire theological framework for early Pentecostalism was based upon eschatology, and, I would add more precisely, upon premillennial eschatology.<sup>5</sup> Early Pentecostals embraced a proleptic or “now and not yet” view of the kingdom of God, in that Christ breaks into the “now” miraculously by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2, 1 Cor 12—14), while the “not yet” indicates the future consummation of the kingdom, when Christ returns and establishes his millennial reign upon the earth—only then will the full power and authority of God’s kingdom be actualized.<sup>6</sup> In that sense, as Macchia proposes, Pentecostal eschatology is both “other-worldly” in its anticipation of the full realization of God’s kingdom, yet also practically “this-worldly” in its expectation of the Spirit’s power to be demonstrated through healings, miracles, other tongues, and the advance of the gospel across the globe.<sup>7</sup> In other words, Pentecostal eschatology is an inaugurated eschatology.

As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, while large numbers of Pentecostals likely absorbed dispensational premillennialism by the middle of the twentieth century, theological diversity still persisted regarding

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*Christian Eschatology* (London: SCM, 1967), 39, quoted in Walter Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals* (2d ed; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1988), 419.

<sup>5</sup> Macchia, “Pentecostal and Charismatic Theology,” 283.

<sup>6</sup> See Murray W. Dempster, “Christian Social Concern in Pentecostal Perspective: Reformulating Pentecostal Eschatology,” *JPT* 2 (April 1993): 62; and Macchia, “Pentecostal and Charismatic Theology,” 287—288.

<sup>7</sup> Macchia, “Pentecostal and Charismatic Theology,” 283—284; and Wacker, *Heaven Below*.

eschatological perspectives especially in the earliest years of Pentecostalism, and most frequently in journals published by the Wesleyan-Holiness stream of Pentecostalism.<sup>8</sup> My research also supports the findings of Gerard T. Sheppard and suggests that early Pentecostals—even those in the Finished Work tradition like the Assemblies of God—decidedly were not completely dispensationalist in the earliest years of Pentecostalism, particularly regarding their views of a secret pre-tribulational rapture.<sup>9</sup> Sheppard further argues that the Pentecostal shift toward fundamentalism did not begin until the 1930s, and was not completed until the 1950s. Althouse and Macchia affirm Sheppard’s view; in fact, Althouse finds that even in the period between 1930—1950, fundamentalist and dispensationalist interpretations were not as prolific as initially supposed.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, Macchia’s research demonstrates that early Pentecostal literature reveals an openness to various perspectives regarding “end-times” events, and even a level of disinterest in what he calls “useless speculation about end-time doomsday scenarios.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 74, 142.

<sup>9</sup> Sheppard, “Pentecostals and the Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism,” 7—22. See also Althouse, “‘Left Behind’—Fact or Fiction,” 197—198; Peter E. Prosser, *Dispensational Eschatology and Its Influence on American and British Religious Movements* (Texts and Studies in Religion 82; Queenston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1999); and Cecil M. Robeck, “The Assemblies of God and Ecumenical Cooperation: 1920—1965,” in *Pentecostalism in Context: Essays in Honor of William w. Menzies* (JPTSup 11; eds. Wonsuk Ma and Robert P. Menzies; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 107—150.

<sup>10</sup> Althouse supports this view with the research of Douglas Jacobsen. See Althouse, “‘Left Behind’—Fact or Fiction,” 198—201; Sheppard, “Pentecostalism and the Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism,” 5—9; Douglas Jacobsen, “Knowing the Doctrine of Pentecostals: The Scholastic Theology of the Assemblies of God, 1930—55,” in *Pentecostal Currents in American Protestantism* (eds. Edith E. Blumhofer, Russell P. Spittler and Grant A. Wacker; Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 90—107.

<sup>11</sup> Macchia, “Pentecostal and Charismatic Theology,” 285.

Macchia encapsulates the following primary reasons that a growing number of Pentecostal scholars are seeking to distance contemporary Pentecostals from dispensationalism. First, dispensationalists apply certain biblical texts exclusively to historical periods and groups of people, whereas Pentecostals believe the Spirit involves them personally in the entire narrative of the biblical text. Second, Pentecostals view the era of the church as promised by the Spirit in the OT (Joel 2:28), while dispensationalists believe such prophecies can only be fulfilled by ethnic and national Israel in the millennium. Third, Pentecostals maintain an optimistic outlook because they expect a great outpouring of the Spirit to empower the church for effective witness, but dispensationalists tend to view the church as, in Macchia's words, "a beleaguered little flock waiting to be raptured away."<sup>12</sup> Certainly for these and other reasons previously stated, Pentecostals need an alternative eschatological framework to dispensationalism. Numerous contemporary scholars recognize this growing need, and therefore, in the following section I will summarize the contributions of scholars who have worked toward articulating theological and biblical non-dispensational Pentecostal eschatologies that align more copasetically with Pentecostal ethos and the historical witness of early Pentecostal eschatology.

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<sup>12</sup> Macchia, "Pentecostal and Charismatic Theology," 285.

### **3.2 Contemporary Constructive Pentecostal Alternatives to Dispensational Eschatology**

In his monograph, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, Larry R. McQueen offered the most extensive review of the contributions of contemporary scholars toward Pentecostal eschatology to date.<sup>13</sup> Employing a slightly different approach, Melissa L. Archer generated a comprehensive survey of Pentecostal publications on the Apocalypse since 1983.<sup>14</sup> Both McQueen and Archer thoroughly summarized each piece in a chapter-by-chapter or section-by-section format, with great attention to detail in analyzing every aspect of each scholar's publication(s).

In the following survey, while I am dealing with much of the same content that McQueen and Archer have already addressed meticulously, it is not my intent to replicate their work. Rather, my survey focuses more narrowly upon only those authors whose theology aligns with core Pentecostal convictions and who present a clearly viable alternative to dispensational eschatology, particularly regarding biblical texts and theological themes concerning “end times” events. In addition, I do not endeavor to provide exhaustive reviews of each author’s publications, but rather I will briefly summarize the significance of the overall contribution and highlight the unique aspects that seem most pertinent to this study. By design, the following survey is by no means comprehensive, but rather I have intentionally selected the contributions that in my view are the most helpful toward developing constructive, non-dispensational

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<sup>13</sup> McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 5—59, 207—214, 292.

<sup>14</sup> Melissa L. Archer, “Pentecostals and the Apocalypse: A Survey of Recent Pentecostal Biblical Scholarship on the Apocalypse,” *JPT* 24, no. 1 (2015): 57—91.

Pentecostal eschatologies. Therefore, I have included some authors that either McQueen or Archer neglected, and I have omitted several whom they had included.

My purpose is to display the variety and creativity in both the content and approach of these Pentecostal scholars, as well as to highlight how particular aspects of their contributions either challenge the dispensational narrative or offer a viable alternative to it. I have organized the scholars first by discipline (systematic theologians, biblical theologians, and biblical commentators), and then by publication date. I will begin with those whose work reflects a more comprehensive theological approach, and then progress to contributions of scholars in the field of biblical studies. Admittedly, those scholars who focused upon analysis of particular texts did not necessarily intend to construct a systematic Pentecostal eschatology. However, their textual analysis does carry broader theological and eschatological implications, and therefore I believe their work remains indispensable toward the end of articulating biblically based non-dispensational Pentecostal eschatologies. In addition, their diversity of hermeneutical and methodological approaches to the text echoes the openness to a multiplicity of eschatological perspectives reflected in early Pentecostal publications.

### 3.2.1 Systematic Theologians

#### 3.2.1.1 *Steven J. Land*

In Land's book, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom*, he presents eschatology as the unifying framework upon which all of Pentecostalism hangs. Land argues that the term "spirituality" more appropriately describes

Pentecostalism than does “systematic theology.”<sup>15</sup> The point Land makes, correctly in my view, is that Pentecostalism was birthed out of its experiential spirituality characterized by intense passion, rather than out of systematic intellectual deduction.<sup>16</sup> This is not to diminish the value of the historical development of Pentecostal systematic theologies, but rather to highlight the emphasis of early Pentecostal spirituality and ethos. Land argues convincingly that any wholistic or systematic treatment of Pentecostal theology must take into account its deeply spiritual and experiential character, from which its ethos and mission flows. Land emphasizes how the presence of the Spirit demonstrates to Pentecostals that the kingdom is now present in the life of the church.<sup>17</sup> For Land, even though the kingdom is not yet fully consummated, the Spirit mediates spiritual experiences throughout the ages and therefore serves as the “bridge or bond” between the ages.<sup>18</sup> Since the outpouring of the Spirit is an “apocalyptic revelatory experience,” the presence of God also signifies the impending presence of the end, thereby necessitating the “already-not yet” paradox of the kingdom, of which Land argues both sides deserve equal attention.<sup>19</sup> Land describes this as a proleptic eschatological view of the kingdom of God. The spiritual experiences of Pentecostals and charismatics serve as a foretaste of the kingdom that is to come,

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<sup>15</sup> Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 29—57; and Althouse, *Spirit of the Last Days*, 3.

<sup>16</sup> Land defines spirituality as, “The integration of beliefs and practices in the affections which are themselves evoked and expressed by those beliefs and practices.” See Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 13.

<sup>17</sup> Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 54—55; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 45.

<sup>18</sup> Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 55; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 45.

<sup>19</sup> Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 61, 70—71; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 46.

and a confirmation of the kingdom that is already present. Land views the church as an eschatological community fueled by the demonstration of the Spirit's power.<sup>20</sup> In addition, Land merges the doctrine of sanctification with the "latter rain of the Spirit" Pentecostal power.

Land then expands his vision of Pentecostal spirituality from the eschatological community to the eschatological Trinity. By emphasizing the Trinitarian presence in creation, redemption and glorification, the eschatological focus shifts to the presence of God and away from "end times" conjecture.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, the eschatological Trinitarian presence motivates the church toward missionary fervor, which results in not only the preaching of the gospel, but also spreading God's kingdom via social justice, creation care, and pacifism.<sup>22</sup> Land relies heavily on Moltmann in his eschatological Trinitarian views, emphasizing as Moltmann does the themes of love and hope in connection to eschatology.<sup>23</sup> Land also proposes that the upper mobility particularly of Western Pentecostals has contributed toward a lack of apocalyptic urgency, and he encourages those Pentecostals to get into touch with their theological roots.<sup>24</sup> While Land acknowledges that Pentecostal eschatology is decidedly premillennial, he urges Pentecostals to participate in activism with a postmillennial fervor, while maintaining premillennial expectation for the inbreaking of the

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<sup>20</sup> Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 60—61.

<sup>21</sup> Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 199; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 47.

<sup>22</sup> Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 222—223; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 47.

<sup>23</sup> Macchia affirms that next to Barth and Wesley, Moltmann was Land's primary source of inspiration for *Pentecostal Spirituality*. See Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 49.

<sup>24</sup> Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 71.

kingdom.<sup>25</sup> Following Moltmann, Land embraces and advocates an “eschatology of hope” that transforms society and the cosmos. He argues that a hopeful view of the coming kingdom brings transformation power for the present.<sup>26</sup> He encourages Pentecostals to articulate an apocalyptic spirituality, emphasizing a Trinitarian orientation for orthodoxy, orthopraxy, and orthopathy.<sup>27</sup>

In my view, Land’s work presents a helpful alternative to dispensational eschatology in three primary ways. First, as stated previously, his emphasis upon the “now” or realized eschatology of the kingdom through the demonstration of the Spirit’s power contrasts dispensationalism’s view that the presence of the kingdom is relegated to the millennium or to the eternal state. This provides a hopeful and optimistic lens, as opposed to a pessimistic dispensational lens, through which the church can view this present age—despite the suffering and presence of evil, there is hope because the Spirit is actively at work, demonstrating His love through the Spirit-empowered church. Second, Land’s emphasis on eschatological Trinity displaces dispensational “end times” speculations; the focus shifts from the uncertain future to the certainty of God’s eschatological Trinitarian presence at work now in the community of faith. Third, Land’s expansion of his vision of the kingdom’s inbreaking now to include issues of social justice, creation care and pacifism contradicts dispensationalism’s focus solely on “soul-winning” and the future “end times” destruction of the world. In addition,

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<sup>25</sup> Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 222—223; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 47.

<sup>26</sup> Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 179—186; and Althouse, *Spirit of the Last Days*, 4.

<sup>27</sup> Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 122—181; and Althouse, *Spirit of the Last Days*, 195.

Land's emphasis on pacifism contrasts dispensationalism's celebration of apocalyptic violence and is in keeping with the ethical views of early Pentecostals.<sup>28</sup>

### **3.2.1.2 Frank D. Macchia**

Frank D. Macchia's contributions to Pentecostal eschatology are unparalleled, since he remains—as Peter Althouse rightly recognizes—the preeminent theologian on Spirit baptism and speaking in tongues.<sup>29</sup> Macchia views Spirit baptism as an eschatological event, and tongues as an expression of Pentecostal eschatology.<sup>30</sup> For Macchia, tongues is a divine self-disclosure reminiscent of the theophanies of the OT, such as the burning bush and the giving of the law. However, it is also an eschatological sign looking forward to the fullness of the coming kingdom; it serves as both a foretaste of the future and a present cry for liberation and equality.<sup>31</sup> Macchia argues that tongues is both an expression of God's freedom in self-disclosure and also a sacrament, which is a sign pointing to a greater eschatological reality.<sup>32</sup> In addition,

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<sup>28</sup> For more on early Pentecostal pacifism, see Beaman, *Pentecostal Pacifism*; and Paul Alexander, *Peace to War: Shifting Allegiances in the Assemblies of God* (Telford: Cascadia Publishing House, 2009).

<sup>29</sup> Peter Althouse, “Pentecostal Eschatology in Context: The Eschatological Orientation of the Full Gospel,” in *Perspectives in Pentecostal Eschatologies: World Without End* (eds. Peter Althouse and Robby Waddell; Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2010), 220.

<sup>30</sup> See Frank D. Macchia, “Sighs Too Deep for Words: Toward a Theology of Glossolalia,” *JPT* 1 (1992): 57; and Althouse, “Pentecostal Eschatology in Context,” 220.

<sup>31</sup> Frank D. Macchia, “The Question of Tongues as Initial Evidence: A Review of *Initial Evidence*, edited by Gary B. McGee,” *JPT* 2 (1993): 125; Macchia, “Sighs Too Deep for Words,” 59—66; and Althouse, “Pentecostal Eschatology in Context,” 220.

<sup>32</sup> Macchia, “Sighs Too Deep for Words,” 63, 70; and Althouse, “Pentecostal Eschatology in Context,” 220—221.

tongues is ecumenical because it signifies the early church's unity in diversity, while eschatologically anticipating the parousia, God's ultimate theophanic revelation.<sup>33</sup>

In *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology*, Macchia explores Spirit baptism as an eschatological event that encompasses not only personal renewal and empowerment for ecclesial and evangelical ministry, but also the transformation of society and the cosmos.<sup>34</sup> Based on Ezek 37 and 39, Macchia views the Spirit as an "eschatological gift,"<sup>35</sup> suggesting that Land's proposal that eschatology is the central Pentecostal distinctive is "most interesting and helpful in rethinking Pentecostal theology for the twenty-first century."<sup>36</sup> Therefore, eschatology must remain a primary concern for Pentecostals, because eschatology and pneumatology are intricately connected—in fact, Macchia proposes that an eschatological view of Spirit baptism expands it theologically.<sup>37</sup> Macchia explains this connection as follows:

I find Spirit baptism to be a useful metaphor for getting at the pneumatological substance of eschatology. Eschatology is helpful for showing the expansive reach of pneumatology, because eschatology implies a participation in God that is both purifying and empowering, presently at work and still unfulfilled, and life-transforming and demanding in terms of how we will respond to the reign of God in our times.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Frank D. Macchia, "The Tongues of Pentecost: A Pentecostal Perspective on the Promise and Challenge of Pentecostal/Roman Catholic Dialogue," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 35 (Winter 1998): 7; and Althouse, "Pentecostal Eschatology in Context," 221.

<sup>34</sup> Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 281—291.

<sup>35</sup> Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 48, 88.

<sup>36</sup> Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 49.

<sup>37</sup> Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 48.

<sup>38</sup> Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 41.

I understand Macchia's "presently at work and still unfulfilled" to be reflective of a Pentecostal understanding of proleptic or inaugurated eschatology, both active in the present and waiting actively for the future culmination of God's kingdom at Christ's return. Macchia confirms this view, crediting Ladd for articulating a view of the kingdom which is both "now" and "not yet."<sup>39</sup> Macchia understands eschatology as that which joins the future to the present, and as that which is both healing and conquering, as God is moving all things in history toward the new creation.<sup>40</sup> Macchia writes, "In eschatology, the future overlaps the present and interprets the past anew (altering its hold on us)." Furthermore, the eschatological dimension of Spirit baptism explains the dual priorities of intimacy with God and burden for global mission; the same Spirit that draws believers deeper into God's heart is the Spirit who imparts to them God's heart for the world.<sup>41</sup> Macchia brilliantly connects the values of early Pentecostals—expectation for the imminent return of the Bridegroom and passionate love for the Bridegroom—with eschatological hope. The emphasis on intimacy with, and "first love" for, Jesus, coupled with the belief in his imminent appearing, fueled the eschatological hope of early Pentecostals.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Macchia explains, "Pentecostals not only expected the kingdom to be fulfilled miraculously at Christ's return, they also favored a current experience of the kingdom in power through the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit featured in the book of Acts and especially in 1 Corinthians 12—14." See Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 97, 273; and George Eldon Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959): 24.

<sup>40</sup> Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 97. Macchia explains that participating in the life of God is joining the divine effort to move all things toward new life. See Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 48—49.

<sup>41</sup> Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 271.

<sup>42</sup> Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 271—272.

Macchia then traces the historical shift of the evangelical church from postmillennialism to premillennialism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, observing how Pentecostals wholeheartedly embraced premillennialism and allowed certain aspects of dispensationalist teaching to permeate their thinking, particularly regarding eschatology. He supports Sheppard's efforts at distancing Pentecostal eschatology from dispensationalism, arguing that the emphasis of early Pentecostals was empowerment for service, and not future speculation about "end times" scenarios.<sup>43</sup>

In addition, Macchia argues that Pentecostal eschatology also encompasses the physical elements of salvation, include healing from illness and disease, as well as societal healing and transformation.<sup>44</sup> Pentecostals see the presence of healing and miracles as a type of resistance to suffering, as an expression of faith in the God who performs the impossible, and as a witness to the world.<sup>45</sup> Macchia explains that Pentecostal eschatology envelops both an otherworldly apocalypticism, in which believers await miraculous divine intervention, and a holistic view that humans partner with God in their efforts to effect social and political change. While at times the otherworldliness of Pentecostal eschatology has emphasized salvation of souls over transformation of society, Macchia advocates for a "prophetic eschatology," in which human participation in God's supernatural work avoids both "fundamentalist escapism

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<sup>43</sup> Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 274—275.

<sup>44</sup> See Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 275—276. For Macchia, this aspect of Pentecostal eschatology is also reminiscent of Moltmann's reflection on Pentecostal expectation to "experience the abundant, full, healed, and redeemed life with all of our senses." Jürgen Moltmann, "A Pentecostal Theology of Life," *JPT* 9 (October 1996): 4, quoted in Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 277.

<sup>45</sup> Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 276—277.

and a one-sided otherworldliness.”<sup>46</sup> Macchia urges Pentecostals to embrace an eschatology that prioritizes social action, anticipating the world’s transformation instead of the world’s annihilation.<sup>47</sup> He also acknowledges and regrets the lack of Pentecostal attention to broader societal issues, such as the “social structures” supporting poverty and racism.<sup>48</sup> In sum, Macchia encourages Pentecostals to embrace both the spiritual and societal realities of an inaugurated Pentecostal eschatology, in which humans work to bring about societal transformation in the power of the Spirit, while relying upon divine intervention to effect eternal spiritual transformation.

In his essay, “Jesus is Victor: The Eschatology of the Blumhardts with Implications for Pentecostal Eschatologies” published in *Perspectives in Pentecostal Eschatologies: World Without End*, Macchia summarizes the eschatology of Johann and Christoph Blumhardt, considering how their beliefs may inform and influence Pentecostal eschatology.<sup>49</sup> Macchia argues that their theological framework for the kingdom of God, which includes both divine healing and social transformation, possesses powerful implications for Pentecostal eschatology. The Blumhardts, whose

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<sup>46</sup> Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 278.

<sup>47</sup> Macchia refers to the work of Dempster here, who writes, “When couched within the prophetic tradition, the eschatological continuity between the ‘already’ and the ‘not yet’ kingdom implies that the apocalyptic act at the end of this age will not be one of total annihilation of the world but one of total transformation of the world.” Dempster, “Christian Social Concern in Pentecostal Perspective,” 62, quoted in Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 278—279.

<sup>48</sup> Macchia writes, “But Pentecostals in general have been less attuned to the social structures and cultural realities that implicitly support poverty and racism. They have been less attuned to the sighs of the Spirit that yearn for these powers to be overthrown so that God’s people might recognize more of the divine grace implicit in creation, a grace that is fulfilled, but by no means eclipsed, by redemption and healing through the gospel of Christ.” See Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 280.

<sup>49</sup> Frank D. Macchia, “Jesus is Victor: The Eschatology of the Blumhardts with Implications for Pentecostal Eschatologies,” in *Perspectives in Pentecostal Eschatologies: World Without End* (eds. Peter Althouse and Robby Waddell; Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2010), 375—400.

work triggered a resurgence of concern with eschatology in contemporary theology, profoundly influenced such important theologians as Barth, Tillich, Bonhoeffer, and Moltmann, among others. In addition, since European Pentecostal scholars trace a theological heritage to the Blumhardts, Macchia explains, the eschatology of the Blumhardts remains directly relevant for Pentecostals worldwide.<sup>50</sup>

Macchia then identifies three primary facets of the Blumhardts' eschatology that are most pertinent for Pentecostals. First, the Blumhardts viewed the kingdom of God as God's dynamic and liberating reign in the world, and not as a physical space to be occupied. For the Blumhardts, "eschatological hope was God centered," including both a robust Christology and pneumatology. Therefore, for the elder Blumhardt (Johann), Christ's victorious kingdom was expressed in physical healing, and for the younger (Christoph), it was seen in the liberation of society's oppressed. Second, the Blumhardts' eschatology balanced God's sovereignty with human freedom and responsibility. Their *Christus Victor* atonement theory demanded that God's people work and fight to make this victory manifest in the earth, while remaining humble and identifying with society's most disenfranchised. Macchia explains that for the Blumhardts,

The spirituality implied by the passionate hope for the kingdom of God in the world was one of 'hurrying and waiting,' or of active waiting and a patient action.<sup>51</sup>

Third, and most significant in my opinion, the eschatology of the Blumhardts concerned itself with hope for the renewal of life instead of pessimistic speculation about events of the "end times." For the Blumhardts, this powerful eschatological hope

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<sup>50</sup> Macchia, "Jesus is Victor," 398.

<sup>51</sup> Macchia, "Jesus is Victor," 398.

transforms not only personal morality, but also society and the cosmos. Therefore, social action particularly in the areas of justice for the oppressed and care for the earth cannot be separated from spiritual salvation and physical healing. All are signs of the God's inbreaking kingdom, and all flow from a liberating eschatology of hope. The gospel is not about escaping this world's evils, but rather about renewing life and creation globally.<sup>52</sup>

Macchia's most recent publication concerning Pentecostal eschatology is his commentary co-authored with John Christopher Thomas, in *The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary* series, in which Macchia provides his theological reflection on the Apocalypse.<sup>53</sup> The commentary is organized with Thomas' work presented first, in a verse-by-verse narrative and literary analysis of the text. Macchia's theological reflection is organized by the following themes: God, Christ, Holy Spirit, Church, Salvation, and Eschatology. Each theme is then ordered according to the sub-sections of "Revelation and Biblical Theology" first, followed by "Revelation and Systematic Theology." Under the theological theme of "Eschatology," Macchia first examines how NT texts address the topic, and he discovers several prominent themes.<sup>54</sup> First, God is self-giving and personally involved at every stage of the "eschatological drama of salvation." Second, the Trinitarian framework is the locus in which the entirety of God's eschatological purposes unfold. Third, believers already experience the coming

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<sup>52</sup> Macchia closes with this exhortation to Pentecostals: "May the Blumhardts encourage us in our struggle by God's grace to know the unknowable, to grasp the ungraspable, or to speak that which is beyond words. Only then can we know the liberation of the kingdom of God on earth in its deepest sense. Only then can we truly say, 'Jesus is Victor.'" Macchia, "Jesus is Victor," 400.

<sup>53</sup> Thomas and Macchia, *Revelation*.

<sup>54</sup> Macchia, *Revelation*, 584—609.

kingdom as God draws them into his transforming power by the Spirit.<sup>55</sup> Finally, God's beloved and faithful saints are united inseparably with his love, and they experience the final triumph at Christ's return. God's coming kingdom culminates in the resurrection of the dead and the transformation of the new heavens and earth.<sup>56</sup>

After addressing how NT texts speak to the theological theme of eschatology, Macchia then progresses to a systematic theological review of eschatology, organized by the following five sub-themes: 1) the necessity of eschatology, 2) the question of apocalyptic, 3) the delay of Christ's coming, 4) the ultimate embrace, and 5) uttering the unutterable. Macchia begins by proposing that eschatology is a story of victory that primarily concerns hope, because it is rooted in God's embrace of humanity by Christ and the Spirit. Macchia seeks to distance the focus of eschatology from the "end times," proposing instead that the focus should remain upon God Himself.<sup>57</sup> Thus, Macchia concurs with Moltmann that eschatology must maintain a central role in the Christian faith, oriented in hope towards God's coming kingdom, which is also now present through the Spirit.

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<sup>55</sup> Macchia explains, "Through the Spirit of life, the death and resurrection of Christ have brought the future salvation into the present and set in motion the coming fulfillment." In this sense, for Macchia, the eschatological kingdom is both "now" and "not yet." See Macchia, *Revelation*, 609.

<sup>56</sup> Macchia, *Revelation*, 609.

<sup>57</sup> Macchia writes, "God reigns. The story of victory that culminates at the final triumph cannot be confined to 'end times.' We are in fact no longer accustomed to speaking of eschatology merely as 'end times.' Eschatology can no longer serve as nothing more than the closing chapter of one's understanding of history or of a theological system. The reason does not lie in a rejection of any connection between eschatology and the 'end.' Clearly eschatology tends to highlight the end, or the ultimate fulfillment of God's purposes for history or for creation. The reason lies more substantially in the fact that eschatology is not primarily about the end times or events but rather about the God who takes creation up into the divine embrace through Christ and the Spirit." Macchia, *Revelation*, 609—610.

Second, regarding the question of apocalyptic, Macchia considers Martin Buber's criticism of Christian apocalyptic literature and traditions, accusing them of minimizing the prophetic witness of human responsibility in the world in lieu of a determinism that yields passive resignation.<sup>58</sup> Macchia then notes how certain beliefs, such as the rapture doctrine, tend to replace concern for renewal and social justice with the desire to escape the coming cataclysmic destruction of the earth.<sup>59</sup> He also concludes that Buber wrongly understands the NT texts; Macchia argues that apocalyptic insight was never at the expense of prophetic responsibility. Rather, "the apocalyptic and prophetic are joined in the Spirit of the crucified and risen Christ."<sup>60</sup> In this blend of both the apocalyptic and the prophetic is space for both God's action and human action; humans endure as they wait for God's supernatural intervention, and rest in His sovereignty while recognizing that their deeds remain significant in God's kingdom purposes.<sup>61</sup>

Third, Macchia addresses the delay of Christ's coming, concluding that the text of Revelation particularly reveals the expectation for Christ's imminent return. However, this imminence does not detract from the significance of the prophetic

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<sup>58</sup> Macchia, *Revelation*, 614—615; and Martin Buber, "Prophecy, Apocalyptic, Historical Hour," in *On the Bible: Eighteen Studies* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 187.

<sup>59</sup> Macchia explains, "The attempt to criticize utopian dreams as unrealistic expressions of human hubris has unfortunately made many vulnerable to the opposite quietist error of shirking their God-given stewardship of creation and historical destiny. There is a sharp tension detectable between apocalyptic doom and prophetic hope for renewal when one considers the negative possibilities of an eschatology devoted to a near-apocalyptic end to all things." See Macchia, *Revelation*, 615.

<sup>60</sup> Macchia, *Revelation*, 616.

<sup>61</sup> Macchia describes it this way, "This creative tension between waiting and action depicts an active waiting and a patient action. It depicts an eschatological salvation that belongs to God but that also invites and grants significance to human participation. ... Certainly, one cannot identify God's kingdom with human actions, but neither can one radically separate the two. Human actions are by God's grace both a sign and an instrument of the coming kingdom in the world." See Macchia, *Revelation*, 616.

witness of the church in history fulfilling its destiny in God's purposes, nor does an imminent return convey the possibility of human ability to calculate scientifically the timing of Christ's return. Rather, the focus of the imminence is revealed in the bride's longing for her groom, and the world's longing for kingdom justice.<sup>62</sup> Such intense longing results in "loving action" and not in "passive resignation."<sup>63</sup>

Fourth, Macchia addresses what he calls "the ultimate embrace," namely, the question of how to reconcile the seeming contradiction of both the eschatological judgment and salvation of the nations. Macchia concludes that particularly in the book of Revelation, "grace towers over judgment," and judgment serves merely as a backdrop to showcase the immense extravagance of God's grace. While those who persist in opposing God's embrace are granted permission to do so eternally, the gates of the temple remain open, signifying a divine openness to all among the nations who will choose to follow God and the Lamb.

Finally, Macchia unravels his phrase "uttering the unutterable" by explaining two aspects of the kingdom. The first is that since natural human language remains inadequate to describe the glory of God's coming kingdom, tongues serves as a sign of the eschatological kingdom. Second, the book of Revelation employs evocative language intentionally regarding the future to transform our lives in the present. Macchia contends,

The transformation of the present is the main goal of the language of Revelation, for only then can the future salvation be experienced in the here and now. The goal is not to satisfy one's curiosity about the future but to view and experience the present in a new way, in a way that is

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<sup>62</sup> Macchia, *Revelation*, 618—619. See also Frank D. Macchia, "The Time is Near! Or, Is It? Dare We Abandon Our Eschatological Expectation?" *PNEUMA* 25 (2003): 161—163.

<sup>63</sup> Macchia, *Revelation*, 620.

more open to God, open to the crucified and risen Lamb, as well as the life of the Spirit.<sup>64</sup>

Macchia concludes that eschatology inspires both patient waiting and faithful obedience, characterized by hope in the imminent return of the risen Lamb who was slain.<sup>65</sup>

Macchia's voluminous contributions to the topic of Pentecostal eschatology offer readers an entirely new way of viewing and even defining eschatology, not as a study of "last days" events to come, but rather as a central theological focus in which hopeful anticipation for the coming kingdom radically transforms the present. First, his treatment of Spirit baptism as an eschatological event, with tongues as the primary eschatological expression, reorients Pentecostals theologically by allowing them to reclaim eschatology as central to their core convictions. What I mean is that instead of borrowing dispensational eschatology and attaching it like an awkward appendage, Pentecostals can recognize that Pentecostalism is inherently eschatological in nature, and that a Pentecostal eschatology must be rooted in Spirit baptism as the inaugural event that both declares and anticipates the presence of the kingdom. From this perspective, a dispensational trajectory of "last days" speculations fades from view, because the presence of Christ through the Spirit and the eager anticipation of his imminent parousia become the central focus of eschatology. Second, Macchia's emphasis on the significance of the Blumhardts' eschatology for Pentecostals is instructive, because their hopeful eschatology demands action, both in the areas of physical healing and social justice. It does not resemble the passive resignation and

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<sup>64</sup> Macchia, *Revelation*, 622.

<sup>65</sup> Macchia, *Revelation*, 624.

fearful escapism of dispensationalism, but rather it finds its expression of the inaugurated kingdom in Spirit-empowered patient action (the “now”) and active waiting (the “not yet”). Third, his systematic eschatology based upon the book of Revelation directly addresses the fallacies of dispensationalism head-on and provides both a new interpretive framework for and fresh theological conclusions from the primary text upon which dispensationalists stake most of their claims. Particularly profound is Macchia’s critique of dispensationalism’s rapture doctrine, through which he demonstrates how it minimizes a concern for issues of social justice and creation care. In this way, he reveals how eschatology figures so significantly in formulating not only theology, but also ethical, political, and missional action or lack thereof. Macchia’s eschatology calls believers to Spirit-empowered action that encompasses social justice as well as the salvation of souls. Throughout decades of scholarly contributions, Macchia presents more than a powerfully compelling alternative to dispensationalism; he invites Pentecostals to revision their eschatology through the lens of Spirit baptism, and then to act upon that vision.

### ***3.2.1.3 Murray W. Dempster***

Murray W. Dempster explores the implications of Pentecostal eschatology for social ethics in his article, “Christian Social Concern in Pentecostal Perspective: Reformulating Pentecostal Eschatology.”<sup>66</sup> Dempster begins by admitting how the Pentecostal expectation for Christ’s imminent return has dulled sensitivity to social

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<sup>66</sup> Dempster, “Christian Social Concern in Pentecostal Perspective,” 51—64.

needs.<sup>67</sup> He then highlights the eschatological significance of Christian social work by identifying key concepts of Pentecostal mission that involve social ministry, especially that which is based in the narrative of Acts 2.<sup>68</sup> He also argues that expectation for Christ's triumphant return, based in Jesus' teaching on the kingdom of God, legitimizes the importance of Christian social work. The expressions of justice, love, equality, and respect for all will characterize the coming kingdom of God, and therefore should be demonstrated now in Christian service. Like Macchia, Dempster credits Ladd with articulating the "already-not-yet" nature of God's kingdom.<sup>69</sup> With this eschatological understanding, Dempster argues that social work emerges as an expression of the kingdom that is here now and is yet to be consummated when Christ returns.<sup>70</sup> Dempster expresses the implications of the "now" and the "not yet" kingdom:

When couched within the prophetic tradition, the eschatological continuity between the "already" and the "not yet" kingdom[s] implies that the apocalyptic act at the end of this age will not be one of total annihilation of the world but one of total transformation of the world.<sup>71</sup>

In my view, Dempster's "now" and "not yet" perspective on the kingdom of God creates space for a hopeful eschatology that is decidedly premillennial; believers anticipate the consummation of the kingdom in terms of transformation and not

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<sup>67</sup> Dempster summarizes Pentecostal attitudes toward social needs by quoting Dwight W. Wilson, who observes, "Since the end is near, Pentecostals are indifferent to social change and have rejected the reformist methods of the optimistic postmillennialists and have concentrated on "snatching brands from the fire" and letting social reforms result from humankind being born again." See Dwight W. Wilson, "Eschatology, Pentecostal Perspectives On," in *DPCM* (eds. Stanley M. Burgess and G.B. McGee; Grand Rapids: 1988), 267, quoted in Dempster, "Christian Social Concern in Pentecostal Perspective," 52.

<sup>68</sup> Dempster, "Christian Social Concern in Pentecostal Perspective," 54.

<sup>69</sup> Dempster, "Christian Social Concern in Pentecostal Perspective," 54.

<sup>70</sup> Dempster, "Christian Social Concern in Pentecostal Perspective," 61—63.

<sup>71</sup> Dempster, "Christian Social Concern in Pentecostal Perspective," 62.

annihilation. Dempster argues that the early church's expectation for Christ's imminent return was not one of anticipating escape from annihilation. Rather, hope in the return of Jesus validated the presence of the kingdom in the church by the power of the Spirit, resulting in hopeful anticipation for his return and the transformation of the earth. Dempster claims that this hopeful anticipation motivated the early church toward evangelism and social work, since both are expressions of the eschatological kingdom. This hope even motivates environmental concern as believers look forward to the transformation, not the annihilation, of the world. Therefore, Dempster cogently concludes,

“Maranatha,” the coming of the Lord, should therefore fuel the fires of the church’s social concern with the same intensity that this hopeful expectation has historically brought to the task of evangelism.<sup>72</sup>

I concur emphatically with Dempster on this point, that social concern should not be separated from evangelism in the context of Pentecostal eschatology, but rather evangelism and social concern should be seen as equally valuable aspects of the inauguration of God’s kingdom and the activity of the Spirit through the ministry of the church.

In his recent essay, “Eschatology, Spirit Baptism, and Inclusiveness: An Exploration into the Hallmarks of a Pentecostal Social Ethic,” published in *Perspectives in Pentecostal Eschatologies: World Without End*, Dempster argues that expectation for Christ’s triumphant return, when viewed in light of Jesus’ earthly ministry and message, creates an eschatological impetus for the church’s moral and

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<sup>72</sup> Dempster, “Christian Social Concern in Pentecostal Perspective,” 64.

ethical interaction with society.<sup>73</sup> He argues that dispensational premillennialism is “the major theological factor” that both initiated and has sustained contention among Pentecostals regarding the role of social ministry in church mission. In contrast to a dispensational view of the kingdom, Dempster proposes that the eschatological coming reign of God bears a moral character, grounded in the ministry of Jesus, that contains ethical principles upon which the social engagement of the church should be based.<sup>74</sup> He begins by reviewing the historical connection between Pentecostal eschatology and global evangelism, arguing that premillennial urgency for the imminence of Christ’s return motivated mission. However, Dempster suggests that amid such intense evangelical fervor, Pentecostals neglected to develop a strong social ethic.<sup>75</sup> He then outlines an eschatological framework for understanding the church’s mission and ministry as depicted in Luke-Acts, arguing that the Spirit empowered the church’s witness and moral mission. Specifically, the *koinonia* of the church served as an example of an eschatological community—a visible witness to the world—testifying of “the future redemptive order of life.”<sup>76</sup> Dempster explains how the empowering of the Spirit enabled the church to go beyond the proclamation of the gospel to penetrate the moral and ethical issues facing society, maintaining that only the Spirit can empower the church to live according to the values of the kingdom, exuding a robust social ethic,

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<sup>73</sup> Murray W. Dempster, “Eschatology, Spirit Baptism, and Inclusiveness: An Exploration into the Hallmarks of a Pentecostal Social Ethic,” in *Perspectives in Pentecostal Eschatologies: World Without End* (eds. Peter Althouse and Robby Waddell; Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2010), 155—156.

<sup>74</sup> Dempster, “Eschatology, Spirit Baptism, and Inclusiveness,” 155—157.

<sup>75</sup> Dempster, “Eschatology, Spirit Baptism, and Inclusiveness,” 156—160.

<sup>76</sup> Dempster, “Eschatology, Spirit Baptism, and Inclusiveness,” 187.

amid this world's brokenness.<sup>77</sup> Yet, according to Dempster, the paradigm in Luke-Acts for kingdom and Pentecost creates a theological basis not only for social action toward the transformation of society, but also for the inner transformation of the church itself, in order to offer the world a "moral witness" of the power of the gospel. For Dempster, this witness must include "love, justice, and respect of persons" in addition to the proclamation of the gospel message in the power of the Spirit.<sup>78</sup>

In conclusion, Dempster identifies dispensationalism as the theological root of Pentecostal ambivalence (at best) toward and disregard (at worst) for social action, demonstrating how in contrast to dispensationalism, the Pentecostal theology of Luke-Acts, which is organized and characterized by *glossolalia* and Spirit baptism, includes a strong social ethic founded in the ministry of Jesus and the eschatological nature of the kingdom of God.<sup>79</sup> Dempster presents what seems to me to be a compelling case for the necessity of understanding social action and concern for love, justice and equality as inseparable from the proclamation of the gospel. He cleverly unmasks the ethical pitfalls of dispensationalism's futuristic escapism mindset by urging Pentecostals to demonstrate the values of the coming kingdom in the present. This aligns more closely with the Pentecostal perspective that the kingdom is both "now" and "not yet," as

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<sup>77</sup> He argues, "Spirit baptism empowered the church in its corporate life to witness to the moral dynamic of the gospel to transform people, change deep-seated prejudices, and restructure relationships so the participants incorporated into the inclusive believing community possessed an equally valued status in Christ." See Dempster, "Eschatology, Spirit Baptism, and Inclusiveness," 187.

<sup>78</sup> Dempster, "Eschatology, Spirit Baptism, and Inclusiveness," 188.

<sup>79</sup> Dempster supports this claim by referring to Wilson, who explores how dispensational premillennialism impacts Pentecostal attitudes toward social ministry, and Sheppard, who evaluates the "uneasy relationship" between dispensationalism and Pentecostalism. See Dwight J. Wilson, "Eschatology, Pentecostal Perspectives on," 267; Sheppard, "Pentecostalism and the Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism," 5—33; and Dempster, "Eschatology, Spirit Baptism, and Inclusiveness," 155—157.

opposed to the dispensational view that the kingdom is only “not yet.” Although biblically based and theologically grounded, Dempster’s contribution is distinctive in that the focus of his argument is moral and ethical. Therefore, in my view, Dempster not only reveals yet another downside to dispensationalism, but he also pragmatically demonstrates the biblical necessity of viewing the church’s present social, moral and ethical action as inherent to Pentecostal eschatology.

### **3.2.1.4 Larry D. Hart**

*Truth Aflame*, Larry D. Hart’s systematic theology for evangelicals and charismatics, addresses soteriology, eschatology and ecclesiology. Hart’s soteriology is Arminian, which is consistent with much of Pentecostal thought and stands counter to the Calvinism inherent in both reformed and dispensational theology.<sup>80</sup> His emphasis on a hopeful eschatology intentionally reflects Moltmann’s focus on hope as the theme that best encapsulates all of Christianity. In tracing hope as the organizing theme for eschatology, Hart refers to the work of William Seymour, Martin Luther King, Jr., Steven J. Land, and Jürgen Moltmann as examples of leaders and theologians whose life messages were, in Hart’s assessment, anchored theologically in hope.<sup>81</sup> For Hart, the kingdom is both “already” and “not yet,” and therefore, eschatology encompasses both the present and the future.<sup>82</sup> Hart argues that the purpose of Jesus’ “end times” teachings was to prepare the church for mission. He sees the “birth pains” and

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<sup>80</sup> See Larry D. Hart, *Truth Aflame: A Balanced Theology for Evangelicals and Charismatics* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999); and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 48.

<sup>81</sup> Hart, *Truth Aflame*, 463—467.

<sup>82</sup> Hart, *Truth Aflame*, 417; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 48.

descriptions of tribulation, particularly in Matt. 24 and other related texts, as applicable to every generation since the time of Christ, recognizing that Christian suffering will continue until Jesus returns. However, he acknowledges that these texts also refer specifically to the time directly preceding Christ's return. Therefore, Hart allows for multiple applications of these texts to different contexts of Christian suffering throughout the ages. In my opinion, this approach of allowing for multiple applications of the text to various historical situations is distinctly Pentecostal because it is reflective of the methodological openness of early Pentecostal literature, as well as of the Pentecostal belief that the Spirit speaks directly and personally to the readers of the text throughout the ages, making timeless truths relevant to their particular situations. Hart also emphasizes the dramatic, apocalyptic nature of Christ's second coming when he describes it as "a cataclysmic, public culmination of human history and the full realization of God's kingdom."<sup>83</sup> In addressing the book of Revelation, Hart argues that John's purpose was to bring hope to his readers, and he cautions interpreters to recognize the dramatic symbolism John employs. Leaning on the apostle Paul's "theology of suffering," Hart adopts a historic premillennial framework, while allowing for various possibilities on the timing and sequence of "end times" events.<sup>84</sup> He urges evangelicals and charismatics to unify around the hope of Christ's return instead of being divided by various eschatological theories.

I found Hart's work extremely helpful toward developing Pentecostal eschatology in several significant aspects. First, his emphasis on hope as the unifying

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<sup>83</sup> Hart, *Truth Aflame*, 439; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 48.

<sup>84</sup> In his review of Hart's work, McQueen notes the following relevant texts to this perspective: 2 Thess 1:3—10; Rom 8:18; 2 Tim 1:11—12; 1 Cor 1:4—9; 2 Pet 4:12—13. See McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 48.

theme of Christianity necessitates an optimistic framework for the future, as opposed to the pessimistic outlook of dispensationalism. This hope is anchored in the future coming of Christ, but also in the reality of the inaugurated eschatological kingdom. Similar to Land's work, Hart's emphasis on the "already" or the "now" of the kingdom counteracts the dispensational idea that the kingdom is only "future" in the millennium. Second, Hart's historic premillennial framework presents a helpful alternative for Pentecostals who still hold to premillennialism but want to distance themselves from dispensationalism. Hart straddles the theological divide of maintaining both optimism and premillennialism, demonstrating that one is not required to dispense with premillennialism in order to maintain a hopeful, optimistic expectation for the inbreaking of Christ's kingdom both now and in the future consummation.<sup>85</sup> Third, Hart's openness to the various possibilities regarding the timing and sequence of "end times" events, as well as his view that texts can have multiple applications and interpretations throughout history, reflects a Pentecostal hermeneutic that echoes the ethos of early Pentecostals and diametrically opposes the dogmatism of dispensationalism's narrow hermeneutical approach.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> The significance of this nuanced perspective should not be underestimated, particularly for those Pentecostals who view amillennialism or postmillennialism as the only potential frameworks that reflect a "latter rain" hopeful expectation endemic to the core of Pentecostal convictions. For a collection of essays presenting cogent arguments in favor of historic premillennialism, see Craig L. Blomberg and Sung Wook Chung, eds., *A Case for Historic Premillennialism: An Alternative to "Left Behind" Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009). Though not written from a Pentecostal perspective, these authors address eschatological issues concerning Pentecostals, and in particular, Blomberg's chapter addresses the issue of maintaining a sense of expectancy for the imminence of Christ's return without holding onto the view of a dispensational pre-tribulational rapture. See Craig A. Blomberg, "The Posttribulationism of the New Testament: Leaving 'Left Behind' Behind," in *A Case for Historic Premillennialism: An Alternative to "Left Behind" Eschatology* (eds. Craig L. Blomberg and Sung Wook Chung, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 61–88.

<sup>86</sup> A final aspect of Hart's work that I found remarkably compelling is the accessibility of the material and the engaging writing style he employs. While some may argue that it lacks the sophistication of other scholarly works, it is the very accessibility of the book that translates "Ivory Tower" ideas for the local church, which I find so attractive and helpful. I believe it is this very problem

### **3.2.1.5 Peter Althouse**

In his monograph, *Spirit of the Last Days*, Peter Althouse brings four Pentecostal theologians into conversation with Jürgen Moltmann concerning eschatology: Steven Land, Eldin Villafaña, Miroslav Wolf, and Frank Macchia.<sup>87</sup> Althouse highlights how Moltmann and all four scholars view eschatology as central and foundational to Christian theology. In addition, all four Pentecostal scholars also follow Moltmann in emphasizing creation's transformation and anticipation of the consummation of God's kingdom, instead of focusing on the apocalyptic annihilation of the world. This thinking aligns with Moltmann's understanding of apocalypticism as "the destruction of sin and the powers of evil," rather than the obliteration of the globe.<sup>88</sup> Regarding Moltmann's view of the kingdom's relationship to Christ and the Spirit, Wolf and Villafaña share the most similarities, and Macchia's emphasis on the Spirit as "an independent eschatological force" contrasts the other theologians in their understanding of the Spirit as subordinated to Christ.<sup>89</sup> Next, Althouse considers Moltmann's eschatology and the spheres of its political implications, including concerns like social justice, ecological care, and feminism. Wolf and Villafaña also align most closely with Moltmann in their political theology, and Land's work on the ethics of eschatology resonates with Moltmann as well. Macchia most closely resembles Moltmann in his work on social mission, especially since they both rely

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that often relegates contemporary Pentecostal eschatologies to the academy, and for such ideas to reach the masses, perhaps Pentecostal scholars should follow Hart's example in making their eschatologies more accessible, in hopes of persuading the broader populace to consider abandoning dispensationalism.

<sup>87</sup> Althouse, *Spirit of the Last Days*; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 49.

<sup>88</sup> Althouse, *Spirit of the Last Days*, 117; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 50.

<sup>89</sup> McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 51.

upon some of the same sources—namely, the Blumhardts. Moltmann’s cosmic eschatology also finds echoes in the work of all four Pentecostal scholars, in that they all envision the future new creation as a transformation of the existing world, rather than as a destruction and recreation of it.<sup>90</sup> From his study, Althouse concludes that to varying degrees, all four scholars incorporate elements of Moltmann’s hopeful eschatology into their own Pentecostal eschatologies, partly in order to “critique the unfortunate infiltration of fundamentalist eschatology into mid-century Pentecostalism.”<sup>91</sup> Althouse concludes by advocating for revisioning Pentecostal theology in order to “recover prophetic elements” that motivate Pentecostals toward “social engagement in the world,” an aspect of Pentecostalism that dispensationalism’s influence diminished.<sup>92</sup> Althouse warns Pentecostals of the dangers of embracing fundamentalist assumptions, which can lead to a destructive sort of passive resignation amid the world’s deterioration. He highlights the significant work of Land, Villafaña, Volf, and Macchia—in conversation with Moltmann—as theologians who broaden the scope and shape of Pentecostal theology while urging social action as an expression of the eschatological kingdom of God.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Of the four Pentecostal scholars, Villafaña addresses this topic the least, since his focus is on the transformation of social structures. See Althouse, *Spirit of the Last Days*, 191; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 52.

<sup>91</sup> Althouse, *Spirit of the Last Days*, 191; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 52.

<sup>92</sup> Althouse, *Spirit of the Last Days*, 193—194.

<sup>93</sup> Althouse closes by summarizing the contributions of these four scholars toward expressing and expanding Pentecostal theology: “Through theological engagement, they have moved Pentecostal theology from isolation to inclusion, from separation to ecumenism, and from otherworldly preoccupation to transformation.” See Althouse, *Spirit of the Last Days*, 197.

In addition to his monograph, Althouse has also contributed an article dealing more directly with dispensationalism, as depicted in the immensely popular *Left Behind* novels.<sup>94</sup> By evaluating how Moltmann's eschatology of hope critiques dispensationalism, Althouse explains that an eschatology of hope values activism in this present world by standing with the oppressed and opposing ungodly powers, whereas dispensational eschatology results in passive withdrawal in hopes of escaping this world's evils and God's coming judgment by the secret rapture.<sup>95</sup> Althouse argues convincingly that this type of escapist mindset abdicates responsibility to "protest against the powers of sin and oppression in all their personal, social and cosmic dimensions."<sup>96</sup>

He then presents two primary arguments in favor of distancing Pentecostal eschatology from dispensationalism: the first is hermeneutical, and the second is historical. First, Althouse critiques the literalistic hermeneutic employed by dispensationalists, seemingly without cognizance of variations in genre or employment of literary devices such as metaphor, symbolism, satire, etc. Althouse proposes a helpful distinction between a "literalistic hermeneutic" and a "literal hermeneutic," explaining that the literal sense of the text is also the "literary sense" of the text, which

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<sup>94</sup> Peter Althouse, "'Left Behind'—Fact or Fiction," 187—207.

<sup>95</sup> Regarding the use of eschatology to justify human violence, Althouse quotes Moltmann when he writes, "Anyone who talks here about 'the apocalypse' or the Battle of Armageddon is providing a religious interpretation for mass human crime, and is trying to make God responsible for what human beings are doing." Althouse then follows Moltmann's quote with this thought, "Nuclear or ecological destruction of the world will not bring the apocalypse or the kingdom, but will bring the end of life." See Althouse, "'Left Behind'—Fact or Fiction," 190; and Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology* (trans. Margaret Kehl; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 203.

<sup>96</sup> See Althouse, "'Left Behind'—Fact or Fiction," 191.

a “literalistic hermeneutic” disregards.<sup>97</sup> His delineation of the difference between “literalistic” and “literal” originates with Vanhoozer, who explains:

Literal interpretation seeks understanding by determining the nature and content of the literary act. Literalistic interpretation, on the other hand, disregards the illocutionary intent and focuses rather on the conventional meaning of isolated words.”<sup>98</sup>

To further illustrate the difference between “literalistic” and “literal,” Althouse effectively borrows Vanhoozer’s analogy of the difference between a word-for-word transliteration that ignores the illocutionary intent and renders a reading that although linguistically accurate, remains terse and devoid of the intended meaning, and a dynamic equivalent translation, that seeks to convey the literal meaning of the entire message, presented through various genres and literary devices that are understood and treated as such.<sup>99</sup> Dispensationalists, Althouse argues, employ a literalistic hermeneutic that ignores the purpose of literary devices, such as metaphor, simile, analogy, and hyperbole, resulting in a reading of the text that can be described as a “modernistic epistemology.” Pentecostals, however, seek to employ a literal hermeneutic that prioritizes the literal meaning of the text, while considering the use of various genres and literary devices, in order to convey illocutionary intent and overall “plain meaning.”<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Althouse, “‘Left Behind’—Fact or Fiction,” 191—194; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 53.

<sup>98</sup> Kevin L Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text: The Bible, the Reader and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 312; and Althouse, “‘Left Behind’—Fact or Fiction,” 193.

<sup>99</sup> Althouse, “‘Left Behind’—Fact or Fiction,” 193; and Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text*, 311.

<sup>100</sup> Althouse explains in greater detail how this type of interpretation is explained in the Left Behind novels, “The literary form of metaphor is violated, for instance, when *Left Behind* character, Tsion, insists that, unless connecting words such as ‘like’ or ‘as’ (technically simile) are used, the

Second, Althouse makes a compelling case that early Pentecostals did not all embrace dispensational eschatology, and he follows Sheppard's research suggesting that fundamentalism did not dominate Pentecostal thinking until the 1930s, and then not even fully until the 1950s.<sup>101</sup> As stated earlier in this chapter, Althouse finds evidence that even between the 1930s—1950s, dispensationalism was not as pervasive as scholars had previously assumed.<sup>102</sup> He argues that Pentecostalism, with an emphasis on the “latter rain” outpouring of the Spirit, is more in keeping with a covenantal eschatology than with a dispensationalist eschatology,<sup>103</sup> highlighting the theological inconsistencies of trying to maintain Pentecostal ecclesiology and dispensational eschatology by asking,

If there is a complete separation between Israel and the church, and if the prophecies of the OT are relegated to the Jewish dispensation, not to be fulfilled until after the Rapture, then how can Pentecostals legitimately speak about the charismata of the Spirit in the church today?<sup>104</sup>

The answer to Althouse’s rhetorical question is that it remains logically impossible to maintain both, and yet this is the theological incongruity that numerous contemporary

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comparison must be taken for the thing itself. The literal interpretation advocated in *Left Behind* is not a nuanced understanding of the *sensus literalis* that gives priority to the literal and includes multiple layers of understanding, but a narrowing of literary genres to articulate to univocal propositions. This can be seen primarily in the authors’ understanding of prophecy as a predictive description of the future—a view which confirms a speculative pre-understanding of the end-times. Fundamentalist dispensational theorists claim to know what the biblical authors did not know, a blueprint of the last days.” See Althouse, “‘Left Behind’—Fact or Fiction,” 193—194.

<sup>101</sup> Althouse, “‘Left Behind’—Fact or Fiction,” 197—201.

<sup>102</sup> See Althouse, “‘Left Behind’—Fact or Fiction,” 198—201; Sheppard, “Pentecostalism and the Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism,” 5—9; and Douglas Jacobsen, “Knowing the Doctrine of Pentecostals,” 90—107.

<sup>103</sup> Althouse, “‘Left Behind’—Fact or Fiction,” 194—201; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 53.

<sup>104</sup> Althouse, “‘Left Behind’—Fact or Fiction,” 201.

Pentecostals perhaps unknowingly perpetuate. Althouse concludes his article by drawing on the work of Wolf, Dempster, and Macchia to argue in favor of an eschatology of “proleptic anticipation,” which demands present participation but also anticipates the sovereign inbreaking of the kingdom for its future consummation.<sup>105</sup>

In one further essay, “Pentecostal Eschatology in Context: The Eschatological Orientation of the Full Gospel,” in *Perspectives in Pentecostal Eschatologies*,<sup>106</sup> Althouse credits Moltmann with two key theological concepts which he believes should transform Pentecostal eschatology: the recovery of eschatological hope, and the idea that the orientation of all theology is eschatological.<sup>107</sup> He builds upon Dayton’s argument that the fourfold gospel should be prioritized as the foundation of Pentecostal theology over glossolia, proposing that the fourfold gospel, when viewed with an eschatological orientation, is more theologically robust than has been recognized thus far.<sup>108</sup> His essay then explores the theological dimensions of each aspect of the fourfold gospel—in conversation with various Pentecostal scholars, as well as with reformed theologians like Karl Barth and N.T. Wright—throughout which he presents his perspective on how an eschatological orientation of hope enhances each.<sup>109</sup> Althouse concludes that in order to remain faithful to the Jewish-Christian origins of Christianity, theology must be established in an eschatological context. He commends Barth and

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<sup>105</sup> For Althouse, it is crucial that such an eschatology also creates space for ecumenical dialogue. See Althouse, “‘Left Behind’—Fact or Fiction,” 201—207; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 53—54.

<sup>106</sup> Althouse, “Pentecostal Eschatology in Context,” 205—231.

<sup>107</sup> Althouse, “Pentecostal Eschatology in Context,” 205.

<sup>108</sup> Althouse, “Pentecostal Eschatology in Context,” 205—206.

<sup>109</sup> Althouse, “Pentecostal Eschatology in Context,” 206—230.

Wright as theologians who model the articulation of an eschatological soteriology, and he urges Pentecostals to mature their theology by reframing all of theology eschatologically, instead of tacking on eschatology as a side topic about the “end times.”<sup>110</sup> Althouse concludes by explaining how such an approach enhances the strength, unity and consistency of Pentecostal theology: “Salvation, healing, Spirit baptism and the Lord’s coming are all interpreted along the continuum of the already and not yet of the eschatological parousia of God.”<sup>111</sup>

Althouse, therefore, contributes significantly to the construction of a hopeful, victorious Pentecostal eschatology and the deconstruction of dispensational eschatology. In his important monograph, *The Spirit of the Last Days*, Althouse strengthens the case for revisioning Pentecostal eschatology apart from dispensationalism, primarily by emphasizing the following characteristics of all four Pentecostal theologians’ eschatologies: 1) a hopeful anticipation of the inbreaking of God’s kingdom in both the present and the future, and 2) a hopeful anticipation of the world’s future transformation (as opposed to the world’s future decimation). The common theme among all five scholars is hope, which aligns with a proleptic eschatology that is empowered by the Spirit for the purpose of present and future transformation.

From my perspective, Althouse’s most effective arguments in his article, “Left Behind—Fact or Fiction,” toward dissuading Pentecostals from embracing dispensationalism are first, his distinction between a fundamentalist literalistic hermeneutic and a Pentecostal literal hermeneutic. Pentecostals can maintain a literal

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<sup>110</sup> Althouse, “Pentecostal Eschatology in Context,” 230.

<sup>111</sup> Althouse, “Pentecostal Eschatology in Context,” 231.

“plain meaning of the text” approach while still evaluating the text appropriately in light of genre and literary devices. Second, Althouse demonstrates that early Pentecostals were not wholly dispensational, and he cleverly exposes the logical fallacies of seeking to maintain both dispensational eschatology and Pentecostal soteriology. Third, his articulation of an eschatology of “proleptic anticipation” maintains the “already” and “not yet” kingdom perspective of Pentecostalism, with an emphasis on optimism and hope for the kingdom’s inbreaking by the Spirit’s power.

Finally, Althouse’s essay, “Pentecostal Eschatology in Context,” urges Pentecostals to view all of theology as eschatological, contrasting the dispensational approach of reducing eschatology to a series of future events preceding Christ’s return. Althouse follows Moltmann in emphasizing the significance of hope, reframing the fourfold gospel eschatologically to bring cohesion, consistency and maturity to Pentecostal theology. In conclusion, Althouse’s monograph on Pentecostal eschatology, his article challenging dispensationalism, and his essay on the significance of the full gospel for Pentecostal eschatology offer indispensable insights for Pentecostals seeking to follow his example in articulating and embracing eschatologies characterized by Pentecostal proleptic anticipation, as opposed to dour dispensational determinism.

### **3.2.1.6 Matthew K. Thompson**

In his groundbreaking monograph, *Kingdom Come: Revisioning Pentecostal Eschatology*, Matthew K. Thompson develops an extensive Pentecostal eschatology, set forth as an alternative proposal to dispensational premillennialism.<sup>112</sup> He begins first

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<sup>112</sup> Thompson, *Kingdom Come*.

by documenting the historical roots of Pentecostalism, then proceeds by examining how dispensationalism effected the movement, and ends by critiquing dispensationalism as an interpretive system—particularly highlighting its theological incompatibility with Pentecostalism. Thompson then explores how the beliefs of significant theologians throughout history may be compatible with Pentecostalism and may help toward constructing Pentecostal eschatology.<sup>113</sup> Finally, Thompson lays out his own Pentecostal eschatology, which he describes as a “pneumatological cosmic soteriology, a thematic eschatology from the perspective of the Pentecostal Full Gospel.”<sup>114</sup> Thompson argues that Spirit baptism and sanctification serve as analogies for God’s redemptive purposes for the world as well; therefore, he anticipates the eschatological transformation of this world, and not the apocalyptic destruction of it. Leaning on Moltmann, Boesch, and Land, Thompson explains why Pentecostalism is distinctly premillennial; he argues that neither postmillennialism nor amillennialism can adequately align with a Pentecostal understanding of the eschatological kingdom of God.<sup>115</sup> While Thompson remains premillennial, he sets forth a unique understanding of the tribulation, the Antichrist and the millennium as biblical symbols (rather than literal time periods or people) that provide eschatological hope for this world and this

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<sup>113</sup> Thompson, *Kingdom Come*, 59—74.

<sup>114</sup> Thompson, *Kingdom Come*, 109; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 54—55. Thompson also presents a brief synopsis of his eschatology in “Eschatology as Soteriology: The Cosmic Full Gospel,” in *Perspectives in Pentecostal Eschatologies: World Without End* (eds. Peter Althouse and Robby Waddell; Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2010), 189—204.

<sup>115</sup> In this thesis, I will argue in favor of a premillennial framework for Pentecostal eschatology. See chapter eight for a more thorough engagement with this topic.

cosmos.<sup>116</sup> He also draws on the work of Gregory Boyd and Karl Barth to develop an interesting concept of “hell” as “a contentless form of existence.”<sup>117</sup>

Thompson’s intent is to propose an eschatology that is “more biblically sound and certainly much more faithful to Pentecostalism’s distinctive spirituality and specific theological goals,” and I believe he accomplishes that task, to a large extent.<sup>118</sup> His eschatology maintains an expectation for the imminent return of Christ, and he establishes a “pneumatological connection” between the salvation process for individuals and the redemption of the world and the cosmos. However, for me, his interpretations of hell and of the millennium veer slightly too far from the traditional Pentecostal understanding gained by employing a literal hermeneutic to the book of Revelation, (as opposed to the dispensationalist literalistic hermeneutic described earlier by Althouse). Despite that small interpretive discrepancy, I still find Thompson’s articulation of a Pentecostal eschatology enormously helpful; in fact, he is the first theologian I have encountered that proposes an entirely new systematic eschatology for Pentecostals to consider, with the express purpose of articulating a viable alternative to dispensationalism. His eschatology not only addresses prominent eschatological themes, such as time and eternity, tribulation, anti-Christ, the second coming of Christ, the millennium, and the new heavens and earth, but he also creates a dynamic theological framework through which to view the future, which is based upon Pentecostal soteriology and is characterized by Pentecostal pneumatology. Like

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<sup>116</sup> Thompson, *Kingdom Come*, 140—143; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 55.

<sup>117</sup> Thompson, *Kingdom Come*, 155—160; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 55—56.

<sup>118</sup> Thompson, *Kingdom Come*, 162.

Moltmann, Land, Macchia, Dempster, and Althouse, Thompson emphasizes the hopeful expectation of the transformation of this world, and he urges his readers to work toward that transformation currently, while awaiting the final consummation, which can only be performed by God.<sup>119</sup> I certainly resonate with Thompson's aspiration, and I emphatically concur with the closing statement of his monograph:

The system [dispensationalism], particularly its use by Pentecostals, must be straightforwardly challenged across all the theological disciplines. If theology is to have 'street value' at pew level, as Pentecostals of all people must maintain, this issue needs to be addressed in our churches and our denominational leadership.<sup>120</sup>

### 3.2.1.7 Amos Yong

The last chapter of Amos Yong's book on Pentecostalism and political theology, *In the Days of Caesar*, addresses eschatology and explores some of its ethical and political implications. Yong critiques the tendency of contemporary Pentecostals to lean toward dispensationalism, and he confronts its "escapist and futurist tendencies" as well as its "apocalyptic mentality."<sup>121</sup> Yong argues that the "futurist emphasis" of dispensationalism promotes both escapism and ahistorical orientation toward politics.<sup>122</sup> He explains how the escapism and pessimism of dispensationalism springs

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<sup>119</sup> Thompson explains "The sort of Pentecostal premillennial dispensationalism I am proposing in this chapter will take matters of social justice, ecology, and peace seriously because it recognizes that the creation is not ordained for total annihilation ... Pentecostals will work toward the renewal of all things because that is the goal of the Triune God. The millenarianism of Pentecostals is the expectancy of a new order, the Kingdom of Glory, glimpsed now through a glass darkly (1 Cor. 13.12) through the kenotic presence of the Spirit in the Church." See Thompson, *Kingdom Come*, 127; and Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 222—223.

<sup>120</sup> Thompson, *Kingdom Come*, 162.

<sup>121</sup> Yong, *In the Days of Caesar*, 316—318; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 56.

<sup>122</sup> Yong, *In the Days of Caesar*, 323.

from placing hope in the rapture (1 Thess. 4:16—17) instead of in Christ’s kingdom and in the Spirit’s power, and from accentuating the belief in a great last days apostacy (Matt. 24:12, 2 Tim 3:1—9), thereby robbing Christians of any reason to sustain hope for the church or the world.<sup>123</sup> He then demonstrates how these approaches remain untenable in light of Pentecostal spirituality, especially its expectation for a “latter rain” outpouring of the Spirit, and he proposes instead a “pneumatological apocalypticism” which accentuates the Spirit’s outpouring across the earth in the last days.<sup>124</sup> He also cautions Pentecostals against swallowing the hermeneutics of dispensationalism which demand rigid, literalistic, propositional interpretations of the text. Regarding the literal approach to biblical interpretation inherent in Pentecostal hermeneutics, Yong writes:

Such a literalism, however, seems misguided when applied to apocalyptic texts. It is one thing to claim that people are healed and that the Spirit saves souls, heals the sick and enables one to speak in strange tongues; it is quite another matter altogether to see references in the highly symbolic and metaphorical language of biblical apocalyptic to contemporary Russia, Egypt or Iran. If Pentecostals are pragmatists rather than speculative eschatologists, they are more interested in how the Holy Spirit continues to save, sanctify and redeem human life in the present age than in the esoteric aspects of biblical prophecy seen through the dispensational grid.<sup>125</sup>

I agree with Yong’s perspective which is reminiscent of Althouse, in that a Pentecostal embrace of a literal, as opposed to literalistic, hermeneutical approach does not necessarily result in treating all genres of Scripture equally; in other words, I mean that the Pentecostal interpreter should take the metaphorical, symbolic nature of apocalyptic literature into account instead of acting as if historical narrative and

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<sup>123</sup> Yong, *In the Days of Caesar*, 324.

<sup>124</sup> Yong, *In the Days of Caesar*, 324—325.

<sup>125</sup> Yong refers to Wacker’s proposition that Pentecostals are pragmatists. See Yong, *In the Days of Caesar*, 326—327; and Wacker, *Heaven Below*.

apocalyptic imagery should be treated with the same level of literalism. From my perspective, this does not mean that Pentecostals should swing the pendulum in the other direction and view the whole of Scripture as allegorical or symbolic, but neither should they apply a rigid literalistic hermeneutic to all genres of the text equally and uncritically.<sup>126</sup>

Yong also analyzes the political implications for Pentecostals of dispensationalism's strict separation between Israel and the church, documenting how contemporary Pentecostals largely have absorbed dispensationalism's eschatology and ensuing political ideologies.<sup>127</sup> He clearly explicates the inevitable results of such ideas, that most Pentecostals understand Israel's enemies uncritically to be God's enemies, and therefore Palestinians, Arabs and their allies are viewed "in a negative theological light," resulting in an absence of compassion, and I would add, a missional burden for these peoples. Yong argues,

Finally, a multifarious and ecclesiological approach to eschatology that includes both a complex Israel and the pluralistic lot of gentiles will reject any politics of Armageddon that sees Americans and Russians or any other world or national superpowers as being uniquely placed to bring about the culmination of history.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> See Althouse, "'Left Behind'—Fact or Fiction," 191—194.

<sup>127</sup> Yong writes, "I will also argue that a dispensational eschatology seduces Pentecostals into embracing certain historical and political attitudes and positions that are theologically problematic." See Yong, *In the Days of Caesar*, 320—321, 325—326.

<sup>128</sup> Yong also writes, "In fact, inasmuch as the original outpouring of the Spirit on Jews and proselytes also included those from Crete and the Arab world (Acts 2:11), to that degree the destinies of Jews and Arabs can also be understood as intertwined in the economy of the Spirit. Hence any theology of Israel requires also a theology of the wider Arabic and even Muslim world." Yong, *In the Days of Caesar*, 321—322, 337.

Yong insists upon abandoning any kind of dualism that pits “us” against “them” in the last days.<sup>129</sup> He then dialogues with Daniel Boyarin, who proposes a “deterritorializing Jewishness,” concluding that the “diasporic and complex nature of Jewish identity and thus its persistence to the present time also signals the impossibility of any dualistic eschatological scheme that pits Israel against the rest of the world.”<sup>130</sup> Yong calls for a balanced perspective on the restoration of Israel that lands somewhere between dispensationalism’s strict separation of Israel and the church, and supersessionism’s disregard of Israel’s historical and theological distinctives.<sup>131</sup>

Thus as an alternative to dispensationalism, Yong advocates what he calls “an eschatological politics of hope,” which includes not only a revised perspective on Israel and the church, but also a hopeful outlook on the new heavens and the new earth (as opposed to a violent apocalypticism that anticipates the earth’s annihilation), which then should motivate the church toward creation care as an expression of the inbreaking kingdom of God.<sup>132</sup> Finally, Yong concludes that a hopeful eschatology must also

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<sup>129</sup> Yong writes, “Finally, with regard to the good-versus-evil dualism that pits ‘us’ against ‘them’ in the last days, I insist that 1) ‘No one is good but God alone’ (Luke 18:19; 2) that none of us can presume to bring about ‘the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority’ (Acts 1:7); and 3) that it is not for us to determine either who is the ‘them’ that are the enemies or God, or how ‘they’ are to be opposed with our earthly weapons, often of mass destruction. Instead, the famous quote of the comic-strip character, Pogo, ‘We have met the enemy and he is us,’ can be seen as anticipated theologically in St. Paul’s saying, ‘all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God’ (rom. 3:23), so any further division between ‘us’ and ‘them’ is both politically and theologically incorrect.” Yong, *In the Days of Caesar*, 353.

<sup>130</sup> Yong explains this as a “multicultural nation rather than (single) Jewish state that is ‘devoid of exclusivist and dominating power.’” See Yong, *In the Days of Caesar*, 335, 337; and Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 243, 259.

<sup>131</sup> Yong notes the historical connection to supersessionism and Anti-Semitism, which should not be taken lightly. Yong, *In the Days of Caesar*, 333.

<sup>132</sup> Yong, *In the Days of Caesar*, 332, 343—347.

include theology of suffering, while maintaining a “proleptic anticipation of the inbreaking kingdom of the Spirit.”<sup>133</sup>

Therefore, of any Pentecostal publication to date of this magnitude, Yong goes further than do any other scholars, in my view, in terms of spelling out the ethical, social and political implications of dispensational eschatology and offering a robust eschatological alternative. However, for his dynamic message of a hopeful eschatology to be made more accessible and relevant to the broader Pentecostal populace, it could be helpful for Yong to provide greater clarity to his thinking on the book of Revelation (admittedly, that was not his intent in this book). He rejects both preterist and futurist-only interpretations of the book of Revelation, but he does not provide his perspective on Christ’s second coming or other “end times” events, other than to critique the escapism of dispensationalism’s pre-tribulational rapture.<sup>134</sup> Nonetheless, Yong has moved Pentecostal eschatology forward by leaps and bounds in this magnificent treatise.

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<sup>133</sup> Yong, *In the Days of Caesar*, 357—358.

<sup>134</sup> Yong, *In the Days of Caesar*, 324—325.

### 3.2.2 Biblical Theologians<sup>135</sup>

#### 3.2.2.1 Charles L. Holman

In a revised version of his doctoral dissertation, *Till Jesus Comes*, Charles L. Holman investigates the origins of Christian apocalyptic expectation, with the purpose of relating those discoveries to the modern church.<sup>136</sup> He does so by tracking the growth of apocalyptic expectation first in the OT, and then in Jewish apocalyptic literature through the NT era, in which he notices a tension between delay and imminence.<sup>137</sup> Holman sees an increasingly pronounced tension between these two concepts both in “The Synoptic Apocalypse” (Mark 13, Matt. 24—25, Lk. 21:5—36) and the book of Revelation, and he argues that eschatological delay played a positive role in the NT texts and in early Christianity. Holman concludes that a realized eschatology, with an emphasis on eschatological hope, best accounts for this tension between delay and imminence throughout Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature.<sup>138</sup> It is delay that motivates believers to hope for the coming of Jesus, trusting what Holman calls “the mystery of God’s sovereignty.”<sup>139</sup> Holman describes this

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<sup>135</sup> While the distinction between systematic theologians and biblical theologians is slightly artificial, it remains nonetheless helpful in framing the disciplinary contexts, as well as methodological approaches and theological emphases of the various scholars with whom I am engaging in this chapter.

<sup>136</sup> Charles L. Holman, *Till Jesus Comes: Origins of Christian Apocalyptic Expectation* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996); and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 22—23; an earlier version was previously published as “Eschatological Delay in Jewish and Early Christian Apocalyptic Literature” (PhD thesis; University of Nottingham, 1982).

<sup>137</sup> Holman, *Till Jesus Comes*, 9—150; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 24.

<sup>138</sup> Holman, *Till Jesus Comes*, 161; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 24.

<sup>139</sup> Holman, *Till Jesus Comes*, 161; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 24.

tension between delay and imminence as “anticipation,” which he views as a nuanced form of imminence. Believers eagerly anticipate Christ’s parousia, recognizing the indefiniteness that accompanies divine delay.<sup>140</sup> To close, Holman urges believers, as they live in the tension between delay and imminence, to emulate the coming kingdom now in their ethics, spirituality and mission.<sup>141</sup> Holman claims that for believers who live in the reality of eschatological hope, ethical or spiritual passivity is not an option—true belief will be modeled through action.<sup>142</sup> Such action is demonstrated through spiritual gifts, particularly miraculous signs and wonders, and care for the needy.<sup>143</sup>

Holman’s emphasis on eschatological hope aligns with the direction of Land, Macchia, Althouse and others who focus on hopeful expectation for the pneumatological inbreaking of the kingdom, as opposed to the pessimistic fatalism of dispensationalism. In addition, Holman’s articulation of the significance of both delay and imminence in Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature closely resembles the “now” and “not yet” Pentecostal eschatological perspective of the kingdom, and demonstrates that this idea is actually rooted in and consistent with ancient apocalyptic ideas. Like Land, Macchia, Dempster, Althouse, Thompson and Yong, Holman advocates for social activism that is faithful to a Pentecostal expectation for the inbreaking of God’s kingdom imminently, an idea that is often neglected by dispensationalism. In these ways, Holman’s work contributes significantly to

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<sup>140</sup> Holman explains, “If we are to apply a biblical eschatology to today’s church, we need to include this dialectic in our present day application of biblical futuristic eschatology.” See Holman, *Till Jesus Comes*, 161.

<sup>141</sup> Holman, *Till Jesus Comes*, 164—166; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 25.

<sup>142</sup> Holman, *Till Jesus Comes*, 164—165.

<sup>143</sup> Holman, *Till Jesus Comes*, 164.

constructing a Pentecostal eschatology that is both hopeful for the future and active in the present.

### 3.2.2.2 Hubert Jurgensen

Hubert Jurgensen's article on 1 Thess. 4:13—5:11 seeks to understand this text from a Pentecostal eschatological perspective.<sup>144</sup> Jurgensen selected this text partially because of its frequent use by dispensationalists as the “proof text” for a pre-tribulational rapture, a reading which Jurgensen argues places presuppositions upon the text. In contrast to this approach, he intends to perform a careful, bias-free exegesis.<sup>145</sup> Methodologically, Jurgensen emphasizes first the grammar, philology, and rhetoric of the text, and then the hermeneutics and interpretive implications. For Jurgensen, Paul's primary purpose is to bring comfort to believers in Thessalonica who were grieving the loss of loved ones by assuring them of the resurrection and the *parousia* of Christ. He also argues that Paul is writing to address those who sought to discover the exact date of the *parousia*, cautioning them against assumptions which can cause spiritual lethargy. Rather, Paul urges them to remain expectant, alert, and confident in the hope of their salvation.<sup>146</sup> Jurgensen examines the *parousia* in the context of Jewish apocalyptic traditions rather than Hellenistic ceremonies, concluding that the church is

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<sup>144</sup> Hubert Jurgensen, “Awaiting the Return of Christ: A Re-examination of 1 Thessalonians 4:13—5:11 from a Pentecostal Perspective,” *JPT* 4 (1994): 81—113. This article is a summation of his doctoral dissertation, “Saint Paul et la parousia: 1 Thessalonians 4:13—5:11 dans l’ exégèse moderne et contemporaine,” (DTh thesis; Université des Sciences Humaines de Strasbourg, 1992). See also McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 26.

<sup>145</sup> Jurgensen, “Awaiting the Return of Christ,” 83—84.

<sup>146</sup> Jurgensen, “Awaiting the Return of Christ,” 97—98, 111—113; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 27.

called to live in the tension between the “already” and “not yet” of primitive Christianity and Jewish apocalyptic literature. Jurgensen therefore proposes an “eschatology of waiting” to renew the apocalyptic hope of Pentecostalism.<sup>147</sup> He concludes by urging contemporary Christians to heed Paul’s warning against apocalyptic speculation and date setting, and rather to shift their focus to the hope of Christ’s imminent return, a hope which will motivate believers to live ethical lives, guided by faith, hope and love.<sup>148</sup> Jurgensen emphasizes the significance of how such an eschatology should transform the Christian’s daily lifestyle:

Apocalyptic spirituality calls for constant vigilance in the light of the nearness of the coming of Christ. It is carried by the promise of his return, which, when taken seriously by the believer, causes his or her entire lifestyle to be focused upon it.<sup>149</sup>

Jurgensen’s emphasis on the ethical lifestyle of believers grounds his eschatology in a pragmatic reality that prioritizes activism, motivated by the “already” presence of the eschatological kingdom. His “already” and “not yet” paradigm of the kingdom resonates not only with the Jewish apocalyptic traditions he highlights, but also with the eschatologies of early Pentecostals and a growing number of contemporary scholars, such as Land, Althouse, Thompson, and Yong, among others. It is this emphasis on the “already” of God’s kingdom that contradicts dispensationalism’s relegation of the kingdom to the “not yet” of the future millennium. In addition, Jurgensen’s insistence upon avoiding eschatological speculations flies in

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<sup>147</sup> Jurgensen, “Awaiting the Return of Christ,” 93; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 26—27.

<sup>148</sup> Jurgensen, “Awaiting the Return of Christ,” 111—113; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 27.

<sup>149</sup> Jurgensen, “Awaiting the Return of Christ,” 113.

the face of dispensationalism’s date-setting susceptibility. In conclusion, Jurgensen offers perhaps the most extensive Pentecostal treatment of 1 Thess. 4:13—5:11 to date, proposing a compelling argument in favor of an imminent *parousia*, as opposed to the secret pre-tribulational rapture espoused by dispensationalists. In my view, Jurgensen’s alternate reading constitutes a significant development for Pentecostal eschatology, especially since scholars have identified the dispensational rapture doctrine as the greatest contributor to a lack of concern for social ministry among Pentecostals.<sup>150</sup> Therefore, in addition to serving as a strong corrective to dispensationalism and a deconstruction of the belief in a pre-tribulational “secret rapture” of the church, I believe Jurgensen succeeds in providing Pentecostals with a textual interpretation that maintains imminent expectation for the Lord’s return—a core Pentecostal value—without the fatalistic escapism that paralyzes concern for social action.

### **3.2.2.3 Francis Martin**

In his article “Book of the Apocalypse” in the *DPCM*, Martin emphasizes that the primary purpose of the Apocalypse is to bring encouragement and correction to believers, aligning with the intent of the other NT epistles.<sup>151</sup> Martin draws attention to the idea that God is ruling over all of history, and therefore the function of the millennium is to provide hope for “the disinherited.”<sup>152</sup> Organizing his summation of

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<sup>150</sup> See Wilson, “Eschatology, Pentecostal Perspectives On,” 267; Dempster, “Eschatology, Spirit Baptism, and Inclusiveness,” 155—157; and Macchia, *Revelation*, 615—616.

<sup>151</sup> Francis Martin, “The Book of the Apocalypse,” in *DPCM* (eds. Stanley M. Burgess and G.B. McGee; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 11—13; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 28.

<sup>152</sup> Martin, *The Book of the Apocalypse*, 13; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 28.

the book around the theme of the Spirit's activity, Martin highlights the following three aspects in which the book of Revelation is pneumatological. First, John employs the phrase “in the Spirit” four times (Rev. 1:10, 4:2, 17:3, 21:10) to identify the Spirit as the origin of revelation. Second, John’s identification of the “testimony of Jesus” with the “Spirit of prophecy” (Rev. 19:10) reveals the prophetic authority of the death and resurrection of Jesus.<sup>153</sup> Third, the Spirit “establishes the church in its unique identity as the Bride and witness of Jesus.”<sup>154</sup> Particularly, Martin encourages believers in every generation to recognize the forces of evil in their world, understanding their suffering in light of these forces. Essentially, Martin argues, the book of Revelation is “a word of prophecy for the disinherited.” Finally, Martin summarizes his approach to the interpretation of the Apocalypse:

One may neither relegate the words of this prophecy exclusively to a distant future nor interpret them as a code by which one can chart the course of contemporary history. These words are prophetic teaching by which we may measure our own situation with an eschatological perspective.<sup>155</sup>

Martin subtly steers his readers away from dispensationalism by accentuating both the activity of the Spirit and hopeful expectation for the future—two emphases that are inherently Pentecostal. While there is hope for the future, epitomized in the millennium, Martin makes the book applicable to the present suffering of believers, instead of relegating the book’s relevance to prophesied events of the distant future.

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<sup>153</sup> McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 28.

<sup>154</sup> Martin, *The Book of the Apocalypse*, 13; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 28.

<sup>155</sup> Martin, *The Book of the Apocalypse*, 13.

### **3.2.2.4 Robby Waddell**

Robby Waddell's monograph, *The Spirit of the Book of Revelation*, focuses on identifying the Spirit's role in the Apocalypse.<sup>156</sup> Waddell's goal is to bring together Pentecostal theological presuppositions and praxis with an intertextual analysis of Rev 11:1—13. After surveying Pentecostal interpretations of the Apocalypse and explaining his appropriation of intertextual methodology, he identifies the following elements of the Apocalypse that resonate with a Pentecostal ethos: revelatory experience, obedience to the words of prophecy, being “in the Spirit” communally, and worshiping God by fearing Him.<sup>157</sup> He then connects these themes to his interpretation of Rev 11:1—13, arguing that it is both the structural and theological center—as well as the predominant prophecy—of the entire book.<sup>158</sup> Pulling from OT texts resonating with Rev 11:1—13 (Dan 7, Zech 4), Waddell concludes that the Spirit's role in the Apocalypse is to encourage the church to be a Spirit-empowered witness for Jesus in the midst of persecution and opposition. Therefore, Waddell argues, “the role of the Spirit in the Apocalypse is to inspire the prophetic witness of a pneumatic church.”<sup>159</sup> Significantly, Waddell's emphasis on the role of the Spirit in encouraging believers amid their challenging circumstances shifts the focus to the Spirit's role in the present time, eschewing dispensational speculation about the sequence of future “end times” events.

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<sup>156</sup> Waddell, *The Spirit of the Book of Revelation*; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 30.

<sup>157</sup> Waddell, *The Spirit of the Book of Revelation*, 97—131; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 30—31.

<sup>158</sup> Waddell, *The Spirit of the Book of Revelation*, 132—191; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 31.

<sup>159</sup> Waddell, *The Spirit of the Book of Revelation*, 189; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 31.

In addition to his monograph, Waddell has also published two essays and an article that remain relevant to Pentecostal eschatology. In his essay called “Revelation and the (New) Creation,” Waddell examines Rev 21:5 in which John writes about the new heavens and the new earth.<sup>160</sup> Waddell notes the significance of the phrase “all things new,” arguing that God says he will make “all things new,” and not “all new things” (Rev 21:5). Waddell’s point is to challenge the perception that God will destroy the earth and start over with a new creation. Rather, Waddell argues, God will transform the current creation and make “all things new.”<sup>161</sup> Further, he challenges the notion that Christians will go to a “far away” place called heaven when they die. Rather, he argues, the book of Revelation depicts the kingdom of heaven coming down to earth in the form of the “New Jerusalem.”<sup>162</sup> Waddell also proposes the view that John’s reference to the heavens and the earth having passed away really refers to death; death is the thing that has passed away, and therefore without death, the heavens and the earth are called “new.” This does not, he argues, refer to the destruction and recreation of the cosmos, but rather its transformation.<sup>163</sup> Waddell urges his readers to rid themselves of false notions perpetuated by fundamentalism and dispensationalism, in order to embrace Pentecostal eschatological hope for a transformed creation.

In his second essay, “Apocalyptic Sustainability: The Future of Pentecostal Ecology,” Waddell argues that creation care should be a primary concern for

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<sup>160</sup> Robby Waddell, “Revelation and the (New) Creation: A Prolegomenon on the Apocalypse, Science, and Creation,” in *The Spirit Renews the Face of the Earth: Pentecostal Forays in Science and Theology of Creation* (ed. Amos Yong; Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2009), 30–50.

<sup>161</sup> Waddell, “Revelation and the (New) Creation,” 31.

<sup>162</sup> Waddell, “Revelation and the (New) Creation,” 37.

<sup>163</sup> Waddell, “Revelation and the (New) Creation,” 41.

Pentecostals.<sup>164</sup> He begins by acknowledging the general lack of Christian concern for ecological sustainability (often based on an interpretation of 2 Pet 3:10), and then progresses to considering humanity's role in the created order and an alternate interpretation of 2 Pet 3:10. Waddell believes that humanity's commission to creation care in Gen 1:28, the present reality of God's kingdom on the earth, and the eschatological expectation for the future transformation of this world should motivate Christians to care for the environment now.<sup>165</sup> He concurs with Miroslav Wolf, who contends that theologically the apocalyptic expectation for the future annihilation of this world remains inconsistent with a view of God's goodness in creation. The belief in annihilation, when combined with an expectation of Christ's imminent return, renders ecological concerns illogical.<sup>166</sup> Therefore, Waddell presents his interpretation of 2 Pet 3:10—13, the most commonly employed proof-text for those advocating annihilation. Waddell summarizes the argument of 2 Pet 3:10—13 with the following five points: 1) the delay of Christ's return does not negate its reality, as false teachers claimed, 2) the delay demonstrates God's patient desire for all to come to repentance, 3) the delay is not an acquittal—judgment is coming, 4) God is preparing a place for the righteous, and 5) therefore, readers are urged to live at peace with God. Waddell argues that 2 Pet 3:10 serves primarily as a prophetic announcement of the coming judgment of evil, and not of the annihilation of the cosmos. Waddell concludes by

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<sup>164</sup> Robby Waddell, "Apocalyptic Sustainability: The Future of Pentecostal Ecology," in *Perspectives in Pentecostal Eschatologies: World Without End* (eds. Peter Althouse and Robby Waddell; Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2010), 95—110.

<sup>165</sup> Waddell, "Apocalyptic Sustainability," 96—102.

<sup>166</sup> Waddell, "Apocalyptic Sustainability," 102—103, and Miroslav Volf, "On Loving with Hope: Eschatology and Social Responsibility," *Transformation* 7 (July—September 1990): 28—31.

proposing that since Pentecostalism has long been the religious expression of the poor and marginalized globally, since Pentecostals historically have been active in caring for the poor and concerned with issues of social justice, and since global poverty and environmental care are so inseparably intertwined, ecological theology should remain at the forefront of Pentecostal concerns.<sup>167</sup>

Finally, Waddell's article, "What Time Is It? Half-Past Three: How to Calculate Eschatological Time," challenges the dispensational notion of a worldwide seven-year tribulation period that is largely accepted by Pentecostals.<sup>168</sup> Waddell explains how although a "seven-year tribulation" is never mentioned in the book of Revelation, "dispensational math" adds the 1,260 days of protection for the woman (Rev 12) to the 42 months of the beast's authority over the nations (Rev 13:5). Dispensationalists also view the "Great Tribulation" of the book of Revelation as equivalent to the seventieth week of Daniel, assumed by dispensationalists to be a prophesied future seven-year period that has been delayed for an indefinite amount of time.<sup>169</sup> Waddell argues that this type of biblical interpretation relies upon "an artificial and unreliable patchwork of biblical texts."<sup>170</sup> Rather, he proposes that the 1260 days, 42 months, and "times, time and half a time" of the book of Revelation are three different ways to refer to a time period of three-and-a-half years, during which the beast will persecute the church and gain authority over the nations. For Waddell, this is a reinterpretation of "Daniel's

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<sup>167</sup> Waddell, "Apocalyptic Sustainability," 109—110.

<sup>168</sup> Waddell, "What Time Is It," 141–52.

<sup>169</sup> Waddell, "What Time Is It," 145.

<sup>170</sup> Waddell, "What Time Is It," 142.

image of a final week,” and the point is not whether it was fulfilled historically or whether it is yet to be fulfilled nearer the time of the second coming.<sup>171</sup> The point, for Waddell, is the “call to faithfulness and patient endurance.”<sup>172</sup> He then explains how Pentecostals have always viewed their present times as near to the eschatological end times, according to their understanding of Acts 2. In addition, inherent to Pentecostal theology is an “inaugurated eschatology,” in which the kingdom of God is both “already” present, and “not yet” fully realized. Waddell explains how historically Pentecostals have vacillated between embracing the apocalyptic eschatology of dispensationalism and the realized eschatology of postmillennialism, when in reality, “inaugurated eschatology” is most faithful to Pentecostal spirituality and theological understanding of Scripture.<sup>173</sup> For example, an inaugurated eschatology holds that Spirit baptism, other tongues, prophecies, healings, and miracles demonstrate the presence of the kingdom of God, and yet the presence of evil and sin in this world reveal the “not yet” element of the kingdom’s future consummation.<sup>174</sup> Waddell also argues the point that this inaugurated eschatology, which includes the present

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<sup>171</sup> See Waddell, “What Time Is It,” 149—150. Waddell then explains his interpretation of the beast and his profound concern for the church as follows, “The Dispensational approach which projects the meaning of Revelation into the future may very well have some truth because the future may hold a version of the beast that is far worse than heretofore seen. Yet, my real concern is for the current status of the church which has been duped into believing that she is safe because a popular interpretation of the book has convinced her that if she is not presently suffering, whether physically, socially, economically, or politically, that she is not in any imminent danger of being destroyed by the beast. In fact, the danger of the church—especially in North America and Europe—assimilating into the beastly systems of the world, has never been more prevalent.”

<sup>172</sup> Waddell elaborates, “The message is simple. The people of God experience both times of blessing and times of trouble, but before evil is allowed to fully run its course and totally destroy the world God will intervene and justice will be served.” Waddell, “What Time Is It,” 152.

<sup>173</sup> Waddell, “What Time Is It,” 151.

<sup>174</sup> Waddell, “What Time Is It,” 146—147.

functioning of the charismatic gifts, contradicts dispensationalism, which consigns charismatic gifts to the age of the apostles.<sup>175</sup> He concludes his article by warning Pentecostals against a dichotomy between their eschatology and their social and ethical action, urging Pentecostals to participate in creation care and social ministry as an expression of their Spirit-empowered inaugurated eschatology.<sup>176</sup>

In my opinion, Waddell's compelling contributions toward Pentecostal eschatology in all four of his relevant publications dismantle the following aspects of dispensationalism. First, Waddell creatively deconstructs both the “seven-year tribulation” and the apocalyptic futuristic eschatology of dispensationalism in his article “What Time Is It?”, proposing instead a convincing argument in favor of a three-and-a-half-year tribulation, along with a much more symbolic understanding of the identity of the beast, as well as an “already” and “not yet” inaugurated Pentecostal eschatology that urges social activism and creation care as crucial aspects of gospel mission. Second, Waddell replaces dispensationalism’s pessimistic anticipation of the annihilation and recreation of the cosmos with Pentecostalism’s hopeful expectation for the eschatological transformation of the current world we inhabit in his essays, “Revelation and the (New) Creation,” and “Apocalyptic Sustainability,” presenting compelling biblical, theological, ethical and political arguments in favor of creation care. Waddell’s articulation of a hopeful eschatology seems to me to be wholly consistent with the “latter rain” optimism of early Pentecostal eschatology, as well as with Pentecostal spirituality and ethos. Third, Waddell’s monograph dismisses

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<sup>175</sup> Waddell, “What Time Is It,” 146; and Sheppard, “Pentecostals and the Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism.”

<sup>176</sup> Waddell, “What Time Is It,” 152.

dispensationalism’s relegation of the Spirit’s eschatological activity to “end times” events such as the great tribulation, the second coming, and the millennium, and instead emphasizes the present activity of the Spirit in this world now, encouraging believers toward faithful Spirit-empowered witness amid challenging circumstances. This is perhaps Waddell’s most significant contribution in my view, because he shifts the focus of eschatology from the future to the present, engaging the church with the activity of the Spirit through the present inbreaking of God’s kingdom in the world, despite such obstacles as suffering, persecution, and the world’s evils. In conclusion, I believe Waddell’s careful biblical scholarship considerably enhances Pentecostal eschatology and distances it further from dispensationalism, rooted in textual interpretations that are faithful to Pentecostal spirituality and theology.

### **3.2.2.5 Larry R. McQueen**

Amos Yong described Larry R. McQueen’s groundbreaking monograph, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, as “required reading for the foreseeable future for all interested in pentecostal eschatology.”<sup>177</sup> I heartily concur with Yong’s commendation of McQueen’s work, as his monograph contributes to the advancement of Pentecostal eschatology in the following three ways. First, McQueen provides a comprehensive survey of Pentecostal scholars who have contributed toward the development of Pentecostal eschatology thus far, organized by those who espouse dispensationalism, those who present an altered version of dispensationalism that

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<sup>177</sup> See Amos Yong, review of Larry R. McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, *RelSRev* 39, no. 2 (June 2013), 85—86; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*.

reflects concern for Pentecostal distinctives, and those who construct an entirely new eschatological framework that is more faithful to Pentecostal spirituality.<sup>178</sup> This not only orients the reader to McQueen's ensuing historical review of Pentecostal eschatology, but it provides the theological groundwork for future studies in the area of Pentecostal eschatology. Second, McQueen examines Wesleyan Holiness, Finished Work, and Oneness streams of Pentecostalism by reviewing early Pentecostal literature to ascertain which streams of Pentecostalism adhered to dispensational eschatology unswervingly, and which streams allowed for theological diversity. He concludes that while the Wesleyan Holiness stream demonstrated a variety of eschatological perspectives, the Finished Work and Oneness streams unfalteringly perpetuated dispensationalism.<sup>179</sup> In his favorable review of McQueen's monograph, Althouse challenges McQueen's conclusion regarding the extent to which dispensationalism dominated the Finished Work tradition in early Pentecostal literature, both on methodological grounds and on literary grounds by citing evidence of what Althouse calls "proleptic anticipation" in some of the quotes McQueen uses to prove the fidelity of the Finished Work stream to dispensationalism.<sup>180</sup> Althouse's conclusion follows the work of Sheppard and confirms the findings of my research in early Pentecostal literature, that essentially although dispensational readings became more prolific toward the mid-twentieth century, eschatological diversity did in fact occur throughout

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<sup>178</sup> See McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 5—59.

<sup>179</sup> See McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 141—143, 198—199.

<sup>180</sup> See Peter Althouse, review of Larry R. McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, *PNEUMA* 35 (2013), 253—314.

history but especially in the early years of Pentecostalism, even among those in the Finished Work tradition.<sup>181</sup>

Third, McQueen articulates his original and biblically-focused Pentecostal eschatology—in fact, he presents perhaps the first eschatology to be organized according to the five-fold Pentecostal gospel of Jesus as Savior, Healer, Sanctifier, Baptizer, and Coming King.<sup>182</sup> For McQueen, salvation includes social, ecological, political and cosmic aspects, in addition to the salvation of individuals.<sup>183</sup> He bases his eschatology on “pneumatic discernment,” a Pentecostal process he found evidenced in early Pentecostal literature. McQueen concludes with a brief section on pneumatically discerning eschatology in contemporary theological practice and ministry, in which he urges his readers to “read the text in the present tense,” meaning that readers find themselves in the world of the Apocalypse. McQueen explains:

I suggest that Pentecostalism must reappropriate the book of Revelation, not as a text to be dissected and pieced together to form a map for the future, but as a symbolic world into which we enter in order to be challenged and transformed by the same Spirit in which John received the revelation.<sup>184</sup>

McQueen then argues that instead of motivating the church to witness faithfully to the nations, dispensationalism “promotes eschatology as entertainment in a culture of consumerism,”<sup>185</sup> in which futuristic reductionism diminishes dynamic faith. McQueen explains,

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<sup>181</sup> See chapter two of this thesis for evidence supporting this claim.

<sup>182</sup> See McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 214—291.

<sup>183</sup> See McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 228—229.

<sup>184</sup> McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 286.

<sup>185</sup> McQueen is most likely referring to the pop culture phenomenon of the *Left Behind* series of novels and movies. McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 286.

To reduce the book of Revelation to a literal map of the future (i.e. history written in advance) is to reduce spiritual truth to an impersonal, mechanistic (perhaps even Gnostic) plan of redemption, by which we trade lived faith for bland certainty.<sup>186</sup>

McQueen intentionally contrasts the dynamic faith of Pentecostalism with the propositional epistemology of dispensationalism, and he argues that Pentecostal eschatology is centered on discerning the Spirit in every aspect of life, anticipating pneumatological “experiences of salvation, sanctification, Spirit baptism, and healing.”<sup>187</sup>

In addition to his monograph addressing Pentecostal eschatology, McQueen also contributed the essay, “Early Pentecostal Eschatology in the Light of *The Apostolic Faith*, 1906—1908,” in *Perspectives in Pentecostal Eschatologies*.<sup>188</sup> McQueen examines the eschatology presented in *AF* between 1906—1908 to evaluate the influence of dispensational eschatology in the earliest years of Pentecostalism. He concludes that the eschatology presented in this literature departs drastically from dispensationalism, challenging the widely held notion that early Pentecostals modified dispensationalism to different degrees.<sup>189</sup> McQueen concludes that early Pentecostal eschatology in *AF* differed from dispensationalism in the following five ways: 1) OT texts related directly to Pentecostals, 2) imagery in Revelation was relevant for contemporary believers and not relegated to future events, 3) the rapture doctrine was not a primary emphasis, 4) the church was not identified by its distinction from Israel,

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<sup>186</sup> McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 291.

<sup>187</sup> McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 296.

<sup>188</sup> McQueen, “Early Pentecostal Eschatology,” 135—154.

<sup>189</sup> McQueen, “Early Pentecostal Eschatology,” 139—140.

and 5) the millennium was a time for faithful believers to reign with Christ, not a time relegated for fulfillment of God's promises to the Jews.<sup>190</sup> McQueen presents compelling historical evidence to support his claim that early Pentecostals held a uniquely distinct Pentecostal eschatology, and not merely a modified form of dispensationalism.

In my view, McQueen's significant contribution to the field of Pentecostal eschatology presents a viable alternative to dispensationalism in the following ways. First, his extensive literature review of scholars who have contributed to the shaping of Pentecostal eschatology reveals that the majority, particularly of contemporary scholars, have proposed Pentecostal eschatologies which depart from dispensationalism. Second, his historical review demonstrates that early Pentecostals were not solely dispensational, and therefore all early Pentecostals were not dispensationalists. Third, by articulating his Pentecostal eschatology based upon the five-fold gospel, McQueen presents a robust replacement for the dispensational eschatological framework, and he convincingly contrasts the Pentecostal pneumatological faith and dynamic process of discerning what the Spirit is saying with dispensationalism's rationalistic epistemological approach of reducing the Apocalypse to "history written in advance." McQueen has addressed the topic uniquely from the theological, historical and biblical perspectives, yielding an impressive and important contribution to Pentecostal eschatology.

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<sup>190</sup> McQueen, "Early Pentecostal Eschatology," 152—154.

### **3.2.2.6 *Melissa L. Archer***

In her monograph, *I Was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day*, Melissa L. Archer presents a literary reading of the Apocalypse centered on worship scenes.<sup>191</sup> She argues that the central context of the book of Revelation is “a narrative about worship,” proposing that the Apocalypse was intended to be read through the lens of worship.<sup>192</sup> She then proposes that a community’s interaction with the Spirit in the process of reading the Apocalypse leads the community into experiential worship, through which the Spirit transforms the community. Therefore, a Pentecostal theology of worship can be constructed through the Spirit-led reading of the Apocalypse—especially its worship scenes—in the context of communal worship. Archer performs both a literary analysis of the worship scenes in the Apocalypse, as well as a reception history analysis of early Pentecostal literature related to worship scenes in the Apocalypse. She concludes that the communal worship of early Pentecostals was informed and shaped by the worship scenes of the Apocalypse, suggesting that the Apocalypse remains relevant for contemporary Pentecostals “as a liturgical text,” for use both in their experience and theology of worship.<sup>193</sup> In addition, her textual analysis demonstrates an emphasis upon the throne of God and upon God and the Lamb only as the recipients of worship, through which Archer concludes that the text reveals a monotheistic understanding of Jesus as God.<sup>194</sup> In fact, Archer argues, worship reveals the allegiance of the

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<sup>191</sup> Melissa L. Archer, *I Was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day: A Pentecostal Engagement with Worship in the Apocalypse* (Cleveland: CPT Press, 2015).

<sup>192</sup> Archer, *I Was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day*, 298.

<sup>193</sup> Archer, *I Was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day*, 298.

<sup>194</sup> Archer, *I Was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day*, 179, 191.

worshipper—either to God and to the Lamb, or to the dragon and the beast. Therefore, believers defeat the beast by eschatological worship of God and the Lamb.<sup>195</sup>

According to Archer, worship is both the eschatological purpose for creation, and a proleptic sign of eternal eschatological worship to come in the throne room of God.

Archer's fresh reading of the book of Revelation centered on the theme of worship provides Pentecostals with an entirely new paradigm through which to read the book and to view its emphasis. Although Archer does not directly address “end times” events espoused by dispensationalists in the book of Revelation, her persistent focus upon worship in the Apocalypse disputes the focus of dispensational eschatology by diminishing its stress upon the sequence of cataclysmic eschatological events, and rather reorients the reader to the text as a liturgical narrative and model for worship. Archer's contribution is significant both as a development of a Pentecostal theology of worship, and as a new lens through which readers can view both the content and intent of the Apocalypse.

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<sup>195</sup> Archer, *I Was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day*, 311.

### 3.2.3 Biblical Commentators<sup>196</sup>

#### 3.2.3.1 R. Hollis Gause

In his commentary on the book of Revelation, R. Hollis Gause presents a helpful overview in his introduction of various millennial perspectives, as well as a distinction between dispensational theology and progressive revelation.<sup>197</sup> He argues that progressive revelation is a superior theological model to dispensationalism, resulting in an understanding of the process of redemption throughout biblical history as one covenant of grace, yielding a unified perspective on Israel, the church, and the kingdom of God. He therefore views the book of Revelation as “the culmination of what God has been doing in all ages.”<sup>198</sup> Gause also gives readers an accessible overview of preterist, futurist, historicist and idealist approaches to interpreting the book of Revelation, describing his interpretive philosophy as a combination of the preterist and futurist perspectives.<sup>199</sup> While Gause distinguishes his approach from dispensationalism and espouses “progressive revelation” instead, his exegesis of the text retains the classic dispensational view of the following eschatological events and

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<sup>196</sup> Admittedly, the following analysis of the work of Pentecostal biblical commentators lacks the depth and precision of the previous sections, due to the nature of the focus of the publications. Since encapsulating their verse-by-verse interpretations is not doable in the scope of this study, I have summarized their methodological and theological approaches, followed by my view of how their work contributes to Pentecostal eschatology in a general sense. For specific interpretations by the following authors of the primary texts in this study, see my intertextual literary analysis in chapter seven of this thesis.

<sup>197</sup> R. Hollis Gause, *Revelation: God's Stamp of Sovereignty on History* (Cleveland: Pathway Press, 1983); and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 27.

<sup>198</sup> Gause, *Revelation*, 21; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 27.

<sup>199</sup> Gause, *Revelation*, 22—23.

characters: a literal Antichrist, two literal witnesses, the battle of Armageddon, a literal one-thousand-year reign of Christ upon the earth, the final judgment, and a new heavens and new earth.<sup>200</sup> However, departing from the literalistic dispensational approach, Gause sees the following elements as symbolic: the forty-two-month reign of the beast, the 144,000, the measurements of the temple, and the marriage supper of the Lamb, which he believes is symbolic for the final salvation. In addition, he does not argue for a literal seven-year period for the tribulation, nor does he advocate seeking to identify Gog with Russia or any other contemporary nation. Rather, he explains, “The character of Gog and Magog is present in all nations that have oppressed the righteous (whether ethnic Israel or spiritual Israel).”<sup>201</sup> The style of the commentary is a verse-by-verse analysis with attention to theological conversation about relevant OT and NT texts, the historical situation of the text, and the symbolism employed in the book of Revelation.<sup>202</sup> Gause’s reading allows for enough symbolism to depart from dispensational eschatology and to introduce his own unique understanding of the nature and sequence of these “end times” events and characters.<sup>203</sup> In conclusion, Gause finds the book’s overall eschatology subsumed in the final words of Jesus, “Behold, I come

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<sup>200</sup> In contrast to classical dispensationalism, Gause holds to a mid-tribulational rapture. Gause explains progressive revelation as God revealing his nature and his character of salvation progressively throughout history. Contrasting this with dispensationalism, Gause writes, “It is the opinion of this writer that the view of progressive and unified revelation of the history of salvation offers the better interpretation of Scripture.” He also clarifies his belief that “the concepts of the kingdom of God, Israel and the Church are unified,” drastically contradiction dispensationalism’s strict separation of those entities. See R. Hollis Gause, *Revelation: God’s Stamp of Sovereignty on History*, (Cleveland: Pathway Press, 1983), 17—21.

<sup>201</sup> Gause, *Revelation*, 256—257.

<sup>202</sup> See Melissa Archer, “Pentecostals and the Apocalypse” 57—58.

<sup>203</sup> McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 28.

quickly.”<sup>204</sup> Archer explains the significance of Gause’s contribution as “the first non-dispensational commentary on Revelation written by a Pentecostal.”<sup>205</sup>

Therefore, although Gause’s interpretation of the book of Revelation does contain some similarities to a dispensational interpretation, he clearly articulates that his reading is not dispensational, and he demonstrates this, as Archer notes, by refusing to fit narrowly into any particular categorical perspective. In addition, his emphasis on symbolism in the book of Revelation reveals the use of a literal Pentecostal hermeneutic (as opposed to a literalistic dispensational hermeneutic), in that he takes nature of apocalyptic genre and intent of literary devices into account when interpreting the text. Gause provides a helpful resource for Pentecostal pastors and laity to interpret the Apocalypse outside of a dispensational framework.

### **3.2.3.1 Craig Keener**

In his commentary on the book of Revelation, Craig Keener emphasizes the importance of understanding the book in its original historical and cultural context in order to discern its meaning and implications for modern readers.<sup>206</sup> Keener analyzes the text according to these three perspectives in the style of the *NIV Application Commentary* series: understanding the text in its original context, bridging the gap between the biblical and modern world, and elucidating the contemporary significance of the text. In his introduction, Keener summarizes various approaches to interpreting

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<sup>204</sup> Gause, *Revelation*, 279; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 28.

<sup>205</sup> Archer continues by explaining that Gause “offers a reading of Revelation in which the text is allowed to make its own meaning without being forced into a particular theological framework.” Archer, “Pentecostals and the Apocalypse,” 58.

<sup>206</sup> Craig Keener, *Revelation, NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000).

the book of Revelation, including preterist, historicist, futurist, idealist and eclectic. Keener's thorough footnotes enhance the necessarily brief exegesis sections, in which he addresses literary and intertextual interpretive issues, as well as details pertaining to the cultural and historical backgrounds of the text. Keener makes the primary themes of the text relevant for modern readers; for example, regarding human suffering in the book of Revelation, he asks his readers to consider the implications of the text for contemporary forms of human suffering, such as cholera and AIDS.<sup>207</sup> In addition, he challenges some dispensational interpretations of the text, such as the belief in a pre-tribulation rapture based on Rev 4:1. Keener provides precision of exegetical treatment, depth of theological insight, and relevance of personal life application for his readers in this commentary. While he does not express his intention to undermine dispensational eschatology, his careful interpretation of the text, bolstered by his linguistic, historical and cultural expertise, implicitly do so. Keener's commentary is a significant tool, especially because it is so accessible and relevant for both pastors and their congregations, for exposing some of the fallacies of reading the book of Revelation through a dispensational eschatological grid.

### **3.2.3.2 *Skaggs and Benham***

Rebecca Skaggs' commentary on the book of Revelation in the *Pentecostal Commentary Series* was co-written with her sister, Priscilla Benham, who tragically lost her battle with cancer before finishing her work on the commentary.<sup>208</sup> In the

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<sup>207</sup> Keener, *Revelation*, 208—216.

<sup>208</sup> Priscilla C. Benham and Rebecca Skaggs, *Revelation, Pentecostal Commentary Series* (ed. John Christopher Thomas; Blandford Forum: Deo Publishing, 2008).

introduction to the commentary, Skaggs relays her sister's passion for the work, evidenced by her insistence on writing even up to the day before she died. Skaggs then picked up the work beginning in Revelation 14 where Benham left off, resulting in what is truly a unique and deeply meaningful contribution to Pentecostal biblical scholarship.<sup>209</sup> While Benham's section of the commentary seems to align more closely with dispensational interpretations, Skaggs performs a literary analysis of the text and departs from dispensationalism. Regarding the unique construction and perspective of this commentary, Archer makes this astute observation, "The two halves of this commentary, in some respects, are reflective of the relationship between Pentecostals and the book of Revelation, its eschatology in particular."<sup>210</sup> In her introduction, Benham offers an overview of the preterist, historical, futurist, and idealist approaches to the text, explaining that utilizing elements of all four approaches best treats the multifaceted nature of the text. Benham's hermeneutical approach is a modified version of the historical-grammatical methodology.<sup>211</sup> Skaggs' approach invites the reader to allow the text to create its own meaning, challenging dispensational interpretations and assumptions of the text. For example, regarding the timing and location of the battle of Armageddon, as well as what nations will participate in it, Skaggs encourages her readers to avoid making definite conclusions about such details. Rather, she writes:

For now, the important thing is that there is obviously a great battle at the end time for which all the kings of the world will gather to confront God himself. Wherever it occurs, "Armageddon" (v. 16) symbolizes the

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<sup>209</sup> Skaggs, *Revelation*, xi—xii.

<sup>210</sup> Archer, "Pentecostals and the Apocalypse," 70.

<sup>211</sup> Skaggs, *Revelation*, 11—13; and Archer, "Pentecostals and the Apocalypse," 70.

final battle of Christ and the beast, God and Satan, the powers of good and evil.<sup>212</sup>

While Benham's interpretations at times may seem to reinforce dispensational eschatology, Skaggs departs from it significantly, both in her hermeneutical approach and in her theological conclusions. In my view, the twin sisters model an openness for varying interpretations among Pentecostals, which is reminiscent of the openness exhibited by early Pentecostals to different eschatological perspectives. Such an approach helps readers to avoid dogmatism and provides a reading of the book of Revelation that is more faithful to Pentecostal hermeneutics, theology and ethos than a classical dispensational interpretation.

### **3.2.3.3 John Christopher Thomas**

In his exhaustive commentary on the book of Revelation, John Christopher Thomas presents a highly detailed literary analysis of the Apocalypse, employing both narrative and intertextual methodologies.<sup>213</sup> His focus is elucidating how the book would have been received originally, bringing various OT texts and the entire Johannine corpus into conversation with the book of Revelation. Thomas intentionally invites his readers into the “pneumatic discernment” in which the original audience would have participated, addressing questions and concerns that remain as relevant for modern readers as they were for the first hearers.<sup>214</sup> Thomas emphasizes a theological appropriation of the text, contrasting the “history written in advance,” approach

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<sup>212</sup> Skaggs, *Revelation*, 166; and Archer, “Pentecostals and the Apocalypse,” 71.

<sup>213</sup> Thomas, *Revelation*. See also Archer, “Pentecostals and the Apocalypse,” 72; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 32.

<sup>214</sup> Thomas, *Revelation*; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 32—33.

employed by dispensationalists. Thomas does not intend to construct a systematic eschatological model, nor to determine the precise sequence of future “end times” events. Rather, highlighting the significance of the two witnesses (Rev 11:3—14), he focuses on the prominence of the church’s prophetic witness, calling the church to abandon its collusion with any world systems that could compromise that witness.<sup>215</sup> Thomas emphatically affirms the Pentecostal premillennial view, describing the millennium as a “literal earthly reign of Christ and his followers,” during which humanity will fulfill its calling to care for creation, and God will express his “abounding desire” for all nations to repent.<sup>216</sup> As Archer aptly recognizes, Thomas’ commentary is “the most extensive literary and theological work yet produced by a Pentecostal” on the book of Revelation.<sup>217</sup>

In addition to his commentary, Thomas has also contributed two essays in edited compilations. The first essay, published in *Passover, Pentecost & Parousia: Studies in Celebration of the Life and Ministry of R. Hollis Gause*, is entitled, “Pneumatic Discernment: The Image of the Beast and His Number – Revelation 13:11–18.”<sup>218</sup> His goal in this essay is to ascertain “the effect of the text upon the hearer” as it relates to pneumatic discernment.<sup>219</sup> Thomas argues that the beast of Rev 13 is a parody

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<sup>215</sup> Thomas, *Revelation*; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 33.

<sup>216</sup> Thomas, *Revelation*, 1, 12—13, 16, 22—23; and McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 33.

<sup>217</sup> Archer, “Pentecostals and the Apocalypse,” 73.

<sup>218</sup> John Christopher Thomas, “Pneumatic Discernment: The Image of the Beast and His Number,” in *Passover, Pentecost & Parousia: Studies in Celebration of the Life and Ministry of R. Hollis Gause* (eds. Steven J. Land, Rickie D. Moore, and John C. Thomas; JPTSup 35; Blandford Forum: Deo Publishing, 2010), 106–124.

<sup>219</sup> Thomas, “Pneumatic Discernment: The Image of the Beast and His Number,” 124.

of the Holy Spirit, and the work of the beast rivals that of the two witnesses (Rev 11).<sup>220</sup> Thomas maintains that the seal of God and the mark of the beast reveal “the identity of the worshipper, as well as the identity of the one worshipped.”<sup>221</sup> Thomas explains how the invitation to the hearers to calculate the number of the beast is an exercise in pneumatic discernment, and he resists equating the beast with any one human figure—whether historical or future. Thomas explains the purpose of this process of pneumatic discernment as follows,

The hearers’ pneumatic calculations do not serve to satisfy a sense of curiosity to understand history written in advance, but rather they arm them with discerning wisdom to prepare them for their next encounter(s) with him, both now and in the future.<sup>222</sup>

In other words, while the beast may have resembled for the original hearers a political figure such as Nero, the beast is not limited to any one person or time in history. Rather, the beast encompasses that which sets itself against God and the Lamb, demanding to be worshiped in His place. Thomas concludes that modern hearers of the Apocalypse must involve themselves in the same process of pneumatic discernment, particularly regarding “their relationship to economic and commercial systems” that may cause them to align with the beast and compromise their prophetic witness.<sup>223</sup>

Thomas’ second essay, “The Mystery of the Great Whore: Pneumatic Discernment in Revelation 17,” which was published in *Perspectives in Pentecostal Eschatologies: World Without End*, reflects a similar methodological approach to his

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<sup>220</sup> Thomas, “Pneumatic Discernment: The Image of the Beast and His Number,” 109—111.

<sup>221</sup> Thomas, “Pneumatic Discernment: The Image of the Beast and His Number,” 113.

<sup>222</sup> Thomas, “Pneumatic Discernment: The Image of the Beast and His Number,” 113.

<sup>223</sup> Thomas, “Pneumatic Discernment: The Image of the Beast and His Number,” 123.

first essay in prioritizing how the text's effect upon the reader relates to the process of pneumatic discernment.<sup>224</sup> Employing both narrative and intertextual analysis, Thomas analyzes how John's hearers may have understood both the identity and actions of the Great Whore of Revelation 17. The Great Whore is contrasted with the woman clothed with sun (Rev 12), whose offspring are those who are faithful to God and the Lamb. In addition, the Great Whore's identity with Babylon the Great ensures her impending demise, and although eventually the Beast will defeat the Great Whore in accordance with the divine plan, ultimately the Lamb will defeat all the forces of evil.<sup>225</sup>

Through his exhaustive commentary and his essays, Thomas addresses the text of the Apocalypse more extensively than does any other Pentecostal scholar. Therefore, he offers in a sense the greatest comprehensive interpretive alternative to dispensationalism yet to date, from the approach of biblical exegesis. Although Thomas does not tackle dispensationalism directly, his careful verse-by-verse analysis provides a fresh reading of the text that continually shifts the reader's viewpoint away from speculations about future cataclysmic events, and reorients the reader's focus toward hearing the Spirit's voice in the text and discerning what He is saying to the churches. This shift in perspective and approach results in a reading of the book of Revelation that is both pneumatic and prophetic, because the intent is not only to ascertain what the Spirit said to the original hearers, but also what the Spirit is still saying to the church today. By prophetic, I do not mean that its primary function is to provide a timeline for future "prophetic" events. Rather, I mean that Thomas calls his readers to

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<sup>224</sup> John Christopher Thomas, "The Mystery of the Great Whore: Pneumatic Discernment in Revelation 17," in *Perspectives in Pentecostal Eschatologies: World Without End* (eds. Peter Althouse and Robby Waddell; Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2010), 111—138.

<sup>225</sup> Thomas also notes the intertextual connection to graphic imagery of Ezek 23:1—49. See Thomas, "The Mystery of the Great Whore: Pneumatic Discernment in Revelation 17," 134—136.

hear the prophetic message of the book to them personally in their current circumstances, particularly in terms of rejecting world systems that compromise their prophetic witness. In this way, Thomas subtly dismantles a dispensational interpretation of the Apocalypse, perhaps without explicitly intending to do so. While technical enough for biblical scholars, the message of the commentary is also both accessible and relevant for pastors and laity, and I believe it is both groundbreaking and foundational for exposing dispensationalism's theological pitfalls and for building a constructive and hopeful Pentecostal eschatology. Thomas' essays echo the intent of his commentary, reinforcing the message to reject the seduction of worshiping the world's systems—whether pictured by the Beast, the ten kings, or the Great Whore—and to embrace a lifestyle of wholehearted and singular worship of God and the Lamb.

### 3.2.4 Summation of Prominent Themes in Contemporary Pentecostal Eschatology

Having reviewed the foremost contemporary scholars whose contributions to Pentecostal eschatology present viable alternatives to dispensationalism, I have identified four prominent themes characterizing their collective work. First, these scholars present eschatology that is pneumatological as opposed to fatalistic.<sup>226</sup> By pneumatological eschatology, I mean that it is focused on the present work of the Spirit in the kingdom of God, rather than focused upon speculations of future cataclysmic events. Althouse proposes a broadened view of eschatology, urging Pentecostals to view all of theology as eschatological in nature. For Macchia, eschatology is not primarily the study of “last days” events, but rather a central focus of theology based

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<sup>226</sup> Scholars who emphasize this perspective include Land, Macchia, Althouse, McQueen, Waddell, and Jurgensen.

upon the work of the Spirit, primarily in Spirit baptism as an eschatological event and in tongues as an eschatological sign. Similarly, Land's emphasis on the eschatological Trinity and the presence of the kingdom shifts the focus of eschatology away from a fatalistic view of the end and towards the work of the Trinity presently upon the earth. Waddell's eschatology also emphasizes the present work of the Spirit in the world now, instead of relegating the Spirit's eschatological work to the cataclysmic "end times" events dispensationalists anticipate.

Second, contemporary Pentecostal scholars describe eschatology that is both hopeful and inaugurated, characterized by a proleptic view of the kingdom that is both "now" and "not yet."<sup>227</sup> This type of eschatology contrasts both dispensationalism's pessimistic fatalism and belief that the kingdom is relegated to the future millennial reign of Christ. Drawing primarily from Moltsmann's hopeful eschatology and Ladd's "now" and "not yet" kingdom perspective, numerous Pentecostal scholars adhere to a hopeful, inaugurated, proleptic eschatology in which the presence of the kingdom now as demonstrated by the power of the Spirit brings hope for the coming future kingdom, creating an optimistic view of the future leading up to the kingdom's culmination at Christ's return.<sup>228</sup> In Macchia's inaugurated eschatology, the kingdom is "presently at work and still unfulfilled," demanding "patient action and active waiting." For Dempster, the presence of the "now and not yet" nature of the kingdom means that believers should demonstrate the values of the coming kingdom in the present.

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<sup>227</sup> Scholars who hold this view include Land, Macchia, Dempster, Hart, Althouse, Yong, Holman, and Martin.

<sup>228</sup> For example, Hart views hope as the unifying theme for all of Christianity, and especially for eschatology. His historic premillennialism reflects the work of Ladd, yielding an optimistic framework for the future.

Althouse coins the phrase “proleptic anticipation” to encapsulate his understanding of the “now and not yet” nature of the kingdom, emphasizing optimism and hope for the inbreaking of God’s coming kingdom both now and in the future. Similarly, Yong advocates a “proleptic anticipation of the inbreaking kingdom of the Spirit.”<sup>229</sup> Holman’s study of Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature reveals the two prominent themes of delay and imminence, aligning with a “now and not yet” kingdom perspective, and Martin accentuates both the present activity of the Spirit and hopeful expectation for the future.

Third, contemporary Pentecostal scholars promote eschatology that anticipates the world’s transformation instead of the world’s annihilation, reflecting concern for social justice, creation care, and pacifism. This drastically departs from dispensational eschatology, in which the future annihilation of the world, coupled with belief in an imminent “secret rapture,” robs the church of concern for environmental care or social ministries. In fact, Dempster specifically names dispensationalism as the theological root of Pentecostal disregard for social action, arguing that the Pentecostal theology of Luke-Acts emphasizes a strong social ethic based on the eschatological nature of God’s kingdom. Macchia concurs with Dempster, and names the dispensational doctrine of the pre-tribulational rapture as the main culprit in minimizing concern for social justice and creation care. He draws on the work of the Blumhardts to connect social justice intrinsically to eschatology. Land also believes the inbreaking of the kingdom presently must include attention to social justice, creation care and pacifism. In addition, Holman and Jurgensen argue that social activism reflects the reality of God’s inbreaking

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<sup>229</sup> Yong, *In the Days of Caesar*, 357—358.

kingdom. Dempster, Althouse, Thompson, Yong and Waddell are among the primary voices who urge attention to social action and creation care based upon the future expectation of the world’s transformation instead of the world’s annihilation. For example, Yong proposes “an eschatological politics of hope,” in which a hopeful outlook on the new heavens and new earth motivates the church toward creation care as an expression of God’s inbreaking kingdom. Similarly, Waddell’s inaugurated Pentecostal eschatology urges social activism and creation care as crucial aspects of gospel mission, particularly in light of the coming kingdom transformation of the earth. Likewise, Thompson argues that “creation is not destined for annihilation,” and therefore Pentecostals should reflect God’s nature in working toward the renewal of all things.

Fourth and last, contemporary Pentecostal scholars promote eschatology that is based in pneumatic biblical interpretation, demonstrating variety in their approaches to the text—including employment of various methodologies and emphases—which is also reflective of the ethos of early Pentecostals, whose eschatology allowed for different approaches and interpretations.<sup>230</sup> Such variety is indicative of the primary value of Pentecostal hermeneutics, which is an openness to the leading of the Spirit, or as Thomas and McQueen would say, the process of “pneumatic discernment.” For example, Thomas and Skaggs both employ a combination of literary analysis with Pentecostal hermeneutics, which is the approach I have taken in this study. Keener emphasizes the importance of understanding the original historical and cultural context of the book of Revelation to apprehend its meaning for modern readers. Both Hart and

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<sup>230</sup> Scholars who employ this approach include Althouse, Gause, Hart, Waddell, Archer, Keener, Skaggs, Thomas, Thompson, and Jurgensen.

Skaggs demonstrate openness to various understandings of the timing and sequence of “end times” events, and Hart believes that texts can have multiple applications and interpretations throughout history—reflecting the values of Pentecostal hermeneutics, which diametrically oppose dispensationalism’s dogmatism.

While emphases and methodologies may vary, the focus upon discerning the Spirit’s message in the text remains consistent for contemporary Pentecostal biblical scholars, allowing for creativity in approach to the text as well as multiple interpretations and applications. In the same vein, Althouse and Gause both explain how a Pentecostal literal hermeneutic considers the “plain meaning” of the text, but allows for the nuance of literary genre and devices, as well as for the Spirit speaking directly to the interpreter; aspects that distinguish it from a dispensationalist literalistic hermeneutic. Several contemporary Pentecostal scholars present textual interpretations that call into question classical dispensational interpretations of these texts. For example, Keener and Thompson challenge the dispensational concept of a pre-tribulational rapture based on Rev 4:1, and Jurgensen opposes the rapture doctrine based on 1 Thess 4:13—5:11, the classic dispensational proof-text for the rapture. In addition, Waddell deconstructs the dispensational idea of a seven-year tribulation, and Thomas and Archer present literary narrative analyses of the Apocalypse that emphasize resistance of the beast and worldly systems that oppose worship of God and the Lamb. All of these scholars deviate from an emphasis on speculations about “end-times” events, producing readings that are pneumatological in nature and Christ-focused in content.

### **3.3 Conclusion**

In conclusion, it seems to me that these four prominent theological themes culled from the work of scholars constructing contemporary Pentecostal eschatologies present a dramatic contrast to the previous chapter's dispensational interpretations of Ezek 36:16—39:29, Rev 19:11—21 and 20:7—10 adopted by numerous Pentecostals throughout history. However, the themes do broadly align theologically with the earliest non-dispensational Pentecostal readings of these texts, and with the non-dispensational readings that persisted throughout Pentecostal history. Therefore, as I approach my own literary analyses of these texts in light of both their predominantly dispensational interpretations among Pentecostals historically, and in light of how my analyses may relate to the four prominent theological themes in contemporary Pentecostal eschatology, I endeavor to produce a reading that remains faithful to the ethos of early Pentecostals and those who present non-dispensational readings, as well as relevant to the four theological themes I identified emerging in eschatology among Pentecostal scholars. However, first and foremost, I aim to remain faithful to the text itself, intentionally entering into the process of pneumatic discernment in order to hear what the Spirit may be saying through the text. To begin this task, and to lay the groundwork for my literary analyses, I will provide in chapter four a general overview of the book of Ezekiel, including a brief history of Ezekiel scholarship, theological motifs in the book of Ezekiel, a structure of the book of Ezekiel, and a structural argument in favor of reading Ezek 36:16—39:29 as a literary unit.

## 4. OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL

### 4.1 History of Ezekiel Scholarship

Before investigating the rhetorical purpose of Ezek 37:15—18 in the context of Ezek 36:16—39:29, it is necessary to consider the book of Ezekiel as a whole. The following section will address the most significant contributions to Ezekiel scholarship in the past 100 years. While numerous scholars have influenced contemporary Ezekiel studies, the following five stand out in my estimation as probably the most influential: Gustav Hölscher, Charles Cutler Torrey, Georg Fohrer, Walther Zimmerli, and Moshe Greenburg, and so I will consider and assess their contributions to the field of study in the following literature review.<sup>1</sup> Following this review, I will offer my perspective on reading the book of Ezekiel as a whole, as well as an overview of the book's historical setting and a summary of structural approaches to the book. This section will conclude by highlighting several relevant analyses pertaining to this study of Ezek 36:16—39:29, the text which comprises the particular focus of this thesis.

#### 4.1.1 Hölscher

Prior to 1900, most scholars maintained the authenticity of Ezekiel's authorship and the literary unity of the book. Mein notes the significance of Driver's statement in

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<sup>1</sup> For a more thorough review of the history of Ezekiel scholarship, see H.H. Rowley, "The Book of Ezekiel in Modern Study," *BJRL* 36 (1953): 146—190; William A. Irwin, *The Problem of Ezekiel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943); Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, "Ezekiel Among the Critics," *CurBS* 2 (1994): 9—24; Marvin A. Sweeney, "The Latter Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel)," in *The Hebrew Bible Today: An Introduction to Critical Issues* (eds. S. L. McKenzie and M.P. Graham; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998): 69—94; and Brevard Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979): 357—370.

1891, representing scholarly consensus at that time: “No critical question arises in connection with the authorship of the book, the whole from beginning to end bearing unmistakably the stamp of a single mind.”<sup>2</sup> However, at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, doubts arose regarding the book’s unity, principally due to apparent inconsistencies within the text such as the variation between poetry and prose. Some argued that rhetorical devices, such as the blending of poetry and prose or the use of repetition, demonstrated the existence of multiple sources underlying the text’s present form. In 1924, Gustav Hölscher blazed the trail of approaching Ezekiel diachronically by claiming that Ezekiel was fundamentally a poet, and that, therefore, later editors added all the prose material. Even of the poetic material, Hölscher attributed only 144 out of 1,273 poetic lines to Ezekiel. He specifically identified which poetic sections should be considered authentic to Ezekiel by classifying certain ecstatic utterances as undoubtedly oracular and therefore Ezekielian. Hölscher concluded that while some prophets may have been involved in recording their prophecies in written form, clearly their primary method of delivery was oral. He therefore attributed the rest of the material to a Zadokite redactor between 515—445 B.C., based on the presupposition that prophets delivered oracles only in the form of rhythmical poetry.<sup>3</sup> In my view, such narrow qualifications for Ezekielian authenticity rest on little concrete evidence.

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<sup>2</sup> S.R. Driver, *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (2d ed.; Clark: Edinburgh, 1891): 261; and Andrew Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile* (Oxford Theological Monographs; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006): 42.

<sup>3</sup> Hölscher argued that certain types of oracles were common to prophetic types of shamans throughout the world. Boadt argues that this approach fails to account for unique exilic oracular style, which became quite repetitive. It also included visions, announcement of judgments, motivational reflection and descriptions of audience reactions to prophetic words. See Gustav Hölscher, *Hesekiel: der Dichter und das Buch* (BZAW 39, Giessen: A.Töpelmann, 1924); Lawrence Boadt, “Book of Ezekiel” ABD 2: 715—720; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel* (IBC 26; Louisville: John Knox Press, 1990): 8; and Keith W. Carley, *Ezekiel Among the Prophets: A Study of Ezekiel’s Place in Prophetic Tradition, Studies in Biblical Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1975): 2.

While Hölscher notes Ezekiel's rhythmic, poetic style, he fails to offer convincing proof that all other styles must therefore come from other authors or redactors. For example, one could just as readily assert that Ezekiel's primary stylistic singularity is his effective use of prose; therefore, all poetic insertions must be secondary additions. On what basis does Hölscher argue for such a sharp delineation? From my perspective, his lack of compelling evidence renders his conclusions unconvincing. Hölscher felt that by freeing the prophet Ezekiel from the dry, prosaic redactions, scholars could uncover the brilliant and passionate rhetoric original to the prophet. According to Hölscher, the priestly influence upon the book, which he characterized as legalistic and ritualistic, buried the spirituality of the prophet, who he described as a "spiritual companion of the authentic Jeremiah."<sup>4</sup> In addition to the methodological inconsistencies previously noted, I find it ironic that the priestly characteristics of the book of Ezekiel, which Hölscher views as "legalistic and ritualistic," are the ones categorized as "inauthentic," since Ezekiel identifies himself as a priest. In my opinion, these Levitical allusions should be considered most authentic to this priestly prophet. Again, Hölscher provides no convincing explanation concerning his theory that prosaic text somehow diminishes the spirituality or vibrant rhetoric of poetic text. I would argue that Ezekiel employs varied styles to emphasize different theological themes and messages, and in fact the contrasting use of both poetic and prosaic material accomplishes his rhetorical purposes more effectively than would a singular stylistic approach. While few scholars accept every aspect of Hölscher's theory, his radical approach paved the way for other scholars to explore various conflicting and complex

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<sup>4</sup> See Hölscher, *Hesekiel: der Dichter und das Buch*, 5; and Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 1—24* (Hermenia; ed. Frank Moore Cross, et al.; trans. Ronald E. Clements; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979): 5.

diachronic analyses. While the precise details of various proposals differed vastly, most scholars during and closely following Hölscher's era agreed that the book of Ezekiel bore the sign of multiple authors and redactors.<sup>5</sup>

#### 4.1.2 Torrey

In 1930, Charles Cutler Torrey argued that Ezekiel the prophet was a fictitious creation, and that the book of Ezekiel originated in the post-exilic era. Torrey compared the book of Ezekiel to the book of Daniel, in that he identified both Daniel and Ezekiel as mythical rather than historical characters. He estimated the date of the book's composition to be sometime in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C., depicting Jerusalem during the time of Manasseh. Torrey proposed the idea that the "thirteenth year of Ezekiel" in Ezek 1:1 really referred to the thirteenth year of Manasseh.<sup>6</sup> In other words, he claims that a post-exilic author in approximately the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. wrote reflectively to address the historical setting of Manasseh in the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C. From my perspective, his theory requires a rather far-fetched interpretation of the inherently straightforward meaning of the historical superscript in Ezek 1:1. It seems that perhaps Torrey alters the plain sense of the text to make his theory work. Torrey's late dating of the book was revolutionary at the time, striking a drastic contrast to scholars such as Burrows and Smith, who advocated for a pre-exilic origin of the book. Although Burrows dated the composition of the book to the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C. rather than the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, he agreed

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<sup>5</sup> See Boadt, "Book of Ezekiel," 2:718—720.

<sup>6</sup> See C.C. Torrey, *Pseudo-Ezekiel and the Original Prophecy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930); Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of the Exile*, 43; David Noel Freedman, "The Book of Ezekiel," *Interpretation* 8 (1954): 454; Carley, *Ezekiel Among the Prophets*, 2; and Boadt, "Book of Ezekiel," 2:715.

with Torrey that the book of Ezekiel addressed the idolatry of Manasseh's reign.<sup>7</sup> Linguistic and philological arguments supporting Torrey's "late dating" theory included the use of Aramaisms, the mention of Persia, and the identification of Alexander the Great as the prototype of Gog in the book of Ezekiel. However, I would argue that these select few references alone do not justify Torrey's disregard of the clear historical dates mentioned in the book of Ezekiel.<sup>8</sup> Referring to the work of Feist, who supports Torrey's theory, Mein acknowledges that while the possibility of a pseudepigraphal author depicting the historical realities of the Hellenistic world cannot be disproven, neither does the text explicitly lead the reader to this conclusion.<sup>9</sup> In fact, accepting Torrey's theory requires disregarding numerous portions of the text with clear historical references in the book of Ezekiel.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, I conclude that his theory feels somewhat contrived in that he pre-supposes a particular historical scenario and

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<sup>7</sup> During this time, Millar Burrows advanced the theory that the book was written during the reign of King Manasseh in approximately 650 B.C., as a polemic against idolatry. James Smith placed the book's composition between 721 and 650 B.C. In 1941, Nils Messel concurred with Torrey regarding the dating of the book, but he viewed Ezekiel as a historical person who lived in the land of Palestine in approximately 400 B.C. Messel argued that the book of Ezekiel addresses concerns faced by the post-exilic community during the times of Ezra and Nehemiah. See Millar Burrows, *The Literary Relations of Ezekiel* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society Press, 1925); James Smith, *The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel: A New Interpretation*, (New York: Macmillan, 1931); Nils Messel, *Ezechielfragen* (Oslo: Jacob Dybwad, 1945); William A. Irwin, "Ezekiel Research Since 1943," *VT* 3 (January: 1953): 54; and Boadt, "Book of Ezekiel," 2:715.

<sup>8</sup> Berry is among those who does not find Torrey's evidence compelling; rather he views these sections as later additions, but he maintains the primary content of the book originated in the sixth century. See George Ricker Berry, "The Composition of the Book of Ezekiel," *JBL* 58 (1939): 163—166; Torrey, *Pseudo-Ezekiel and the Original Prophecy*, 44; and Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of the Exile*, 43.

<sup>9</sup> Mein concurs with Berry, who also finds Torrey's position too extreme. Mein suggests a sixth century setting during the time of Zedekiah as most probable. See U. Feist, *Ezechiel: Das literarische Problem des Buches orschungsgeschichtlich betrachtet* (BWA(N)T 138; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1995); Berry, "The Composition of the Book of Ezekiel," 163; and Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of the Exile*, 44.

<sup>10</sup> See Ezek 1:1, 1:2—3, 3:16, 8:1, 20:1, 24:1, 26:1, 29:1, 29:17, 30:20, 31:1, 32:1, 32:17, 33:21, 40:1. Greenberg provides a helpful table of dates listed in the book of Ezekiel along with their corresponding proximate historical events. See Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1—20*, 7—11.

then edits the text accordingly, dismissing or manipulating historical references in the text that do not fit his theory neatly. Ultimately, Torrey's ideas regarding the source and historical setting for the composition of the book rest on little more than creative conjecture, and consequently remain unconvincing. Mein rightly expresses the absurdity of Torrey's approach: "To deny Ezekiel to the sixth century would appear to be an example of what Hans Barstad has called 'the strange fear of the Bible' sometimes to the fore in contemporary scholarship."<sup>11</sup>

Torrey also held strongly to the opinion that the book was composed in Jerusalem, not in Babylon. He believed a later editor moved the locale from Jerusalem to the exile in Babylon in a few passages (Ezek 1:3, 3:11, 3:15, 8:3, 11:24—25, 33:21, 40:1). Torrey's primary reason for this idea is the book's consistent address to Judah and Jerusalem; he finds it a tremendous challenge for those who locate the book in Babylon. Torrey also argues that oracles for Judah and Jerusalem would not have dealt with the needs of an exilic community in Babylon.<sup>12</sup> Other scholars concur with Torrey regarding the location of Jerusalem as the setting of composition, even if they do not agree with his 3<sup>rd</sup> century pseudepigraphical theory.<sup>13</sup> For example, Herpnrich and Berry argued that Ezekiel's ministry occurred during the exile, but not in Babylon;

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<sup>11</sup> Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of the Exile*, 44; and H.M. Barstad, "The Strange Fear of the Bible: Some Reflections on the 'Bibliophobia' in Recent Ancient Israelite Historiography," in *Leading Captivity Captive: The Exile as History and Ideology* (JSOT 278; ed. L. L. Grabbe; Sheffield, 1998): 120—127.

<sup>12</sup> Torrey states, "One would not expect prophets to attract any attention among recently departed exiles, especially if their oracles concerned a far distant Jerusalem." See Torrey, *Pseudo-Ezekiel*, 35; and Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of the Exile*, 45.

<sup>13</sup> See Robert P. Carroll, "Deportation and Diasporic Discourses in the Prophetic Literature," in *Exile* (ed. James M. Scott; Leiden: Brill, 1997): 63—88; Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of the Exile*, 45; and Volkmar Herpnrich, *Ezechielprobleme* (BZAW 61; Giessen, 1932).

Ezekiel prophesied from Jerusalem.<sup>14</sup> The idea of Jerusalem as Ezekiel's primary location grew quite popular, and other scholars developed various theories as to how much time he spent there.<sup>15</sup> Torrey influenced this scholarship tremendously, since all of these ideas stemmed from Torrey's original claim that the book of Ezekiel originated in Jerusalem instead of Babylon.

However, I contend that arguments in favor of a Jerusalem locale remain suspect for several reasons. First, numerous passages clearly describe the Babylonian exile as the location for Ezekiel's prophecies and visions. In addition, Jerusalemites are referred to as "they" instead of "you."<sup>16</sup> Greenberg notes the failure of scholars who support a Jerusalem setting to explain the motivation of an editor to create a misleading Babylonian setting. Torrey argues that since so many of the oracles address Jerusalem, these would have been irrelevant to an audience of exiles in Babylon. However, his premise does not account for the fact that a vast number of the exiles would have been former Jerusalemites, and therefore intimately concerned about the fate of their beloved home. Second, the idea that Ezekiel must have been present in Jerusalem because he addresses Jerusalem directly in his oracles is logically inconsistent in the context of the vast corpus of prophetic literature. Following this argument, every prophet who uttered an oracle against a foreign nation certainly must have traveled to that nation to deliver

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<sup>14</sup> Herinrich, *Ezechielprobleme*; and Berry, "The Composition of the Book of Ezekiel," 166—175.

<sup>15</sup> See also R.H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (3d ed.; New York: Harper, 1941), 531—541; Herbert G. Mays, "The Book of Ezekiel" in *IB* 6 (ed. G.A. Buttricke, et al; New York: Abingdon, 1956): 41—338; and William Brownlee, *Ezekiel 1—19* (WBC 28; Waco: Word Books, 1986).

<sup>16</sup> See Ezek 1:3, 3:11, 3:15, 8:3, 11:24—25, 12:11, 14:22, 33:21, 40:1. Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1—20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 22; ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman; Garden City: Doubleday, 1983), 14—17.

it. Clearly, this is a ridiculous claim. Third, the descriptions of the circumstances of the exiles in Jer 29 accurately depicts the inferred setting in Ezekiel's prophecies.<sup>17</sup>

Therefore, I conclude that while Torrey broke ground in the field of biblical scholarship by assigning a different date, author and setting to the book of Ezekiel, ultimately his reasoning behind these ideas does not sufficiently substantiate his suppositions.

#### 4.1.3 Fohrer

In reaction to the widespread skepticism regarding the historical setting of the book's original composition, much of post-World War II scholarship sought to connect the book of Ezekiel to the exilic period. Georg Fohrer (1952) is one of the leading scholars who found dates, literary style, and content as evidence of exilic period origin.<sup>18</sup> While he acknowledged that the complete unity of the book of Ezekiel is not likely, he claimed that scholarly studies of the book must begin with the book's internal claims regarding time and place.<sup>19</sup> Fohrer argued that chronological data from

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<sup>17</sup> Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1—20*, 14—17; and Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*, 46—47.

<sup>18</sup> However, they allowed for the possibility of exilic and postexilic addition and redaction. Carl G. Howie also held this view. See Carl G. Howie, *The Date and Composition of Ezekiel* (SBLMS 4; Philadelphia: Society of Biblical Literature, 1950); Georg Forher, *Die Hauptprobleme des Buches Ezechiel* (BZAW 72; Berlin: 1952), and Georg Fohrer, *Ezechiel* (HAT 13; 2d ed.; Tübingen: 1955); and Boadt, "Book of Ezekiel" in AB, 715.

In support of Fohrer's work, Boadt concurs that specific predictions and themes only fit with a pre-exilic or an exilic setting. Boadt concludes that most likely the composition and redaction of the book of Ezekiel was finished before the postexilic period. He presents the following arguments to support this theory. First, the reconciliation and reunion of Israel and Judah did not take place in the postexilic period; however, there was unity during the final years of Josiah's reign. Also, a Davidic prince never ruled in the postexilic period and Egypt did not fall to Babylon. Ezekiel's temple bears more resemblance to the tabernacle and Solomon's temple than to the second temple of 520 B.C. In addition, Ezekiel's interest in the Zadokite priests never materialized in the postexilic period. Ezekiel's style of recording precise dates resembles that of Babylonian literature from the exilic period. Finally, Boadt sees the absence of condemnation for Babylon as evidence that the book was composed and edited while Babylon remained the dominant power. See Boadt, "Book of Ezekiel," 2:720.

<sup>19</sup> Forher, *Die Hauptprobleme des Buches Ezechiel*; and Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 8.

neighboring countries correlates with Ezekiel’s dates and with the historical situations he addresses in his prophetic oracles. In addition, he notes how comparative ANE literature corroborates the accuracy of known crises among various foreign nations.

Fohrer also emphasized the prominence of two-stress meter in Ezekiel’s recovered poetry, concluding that the prophet Ezekiel both spoke and wrote these oracles. While I appreciate Fohrer’s mention of Ezekiel’s two-stress meter, he fails to provide reasons explaining why the two-stress meter is uniquely Ezekielian, whereas differently metered poetry or prosaic material is not Ezekielian. In my view, Fohrer’s argument in favor of assigning only two-stress meter to Ezekiel remains circular in nature and therefore unconvincing.

While Fohrer advocated strongly for a traditional understanding of the setting of Ezekiel’s ministry, he also allowed for the possibility of significant addition and redaction.<sup>20</sup> According to Fohrer, the systematic organization and clear chronological ordering demonstrates an editor’s hand. Fohrer provided a detailed analysis of glosses throughout the book of Ezekiel by categorizing them into six major divisions with various sub-sections. In some instances, Fohrer claimed to discover original poetic material amid a larger section of “prose glossing.” He classified 25 percent of his glosses as some form of repetition, and 21 percent as phrases added to complete a thought, identifying five percent of glosses as editorial connectors, and 43 percent as explanatory or clarifying comments.<sup>21</sup> Irwin summarizes Fohrer’s methodology,

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<sup>20</sup> Fohrer acknowledges the poetic style of the oracles of Ezekiel; whether he finds some of the prose to be authentic to the prophet remains unclear. See Forher, *Die Hauptprobleme des Buches Ezechiel*; Fohrer, *Ezechiel*; Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of the Exile*, 48; and Irwin, “Ezekiel Research Since 1943,” 56.

<sup>21</sup> See Boadt, “Book of Ezekiel,” in AB, 718, and Fohrer, *Ezechiel*.

explaining that these authentic poetic passages can “...be recovered then only by a process of elimination of the glosses through astute recognition.”<sup>22</sup> Like Hölscher, Fohrer apparently somewhat arbitrarily determined which type of literature is authentic to Ezekiel, and then relegated all other forms to a secondary source or redactor. However, Hölscher’s radical approach discounted approximately nine-tenths of the material as authentic to Ezekiel, whereas Fohrer’s more conservative approach only discounted about one third of the material as original to the prophet.<sup>23</sup>

From my perspective, Fohrer failed to explain the rationale behind his criteria for authenticity. For example, why does repetition necessarily demonstrate evidence of redaction, and not an intentional rhetorical device employed for emphasis? Operating under the text-critical assumption that only shorter, terser phrases are original, Fohrer eliminated explanatory phrases or connecting words that render a smoother reading. Yet, he failed to demonstrate adequately why it would have been unlikely for Ezekiel to compose these words himself, or why the oracles would have been terse and difficult to follow in their original delivery. Certainly, the prophet would have desired his original audience to understand clearly his messages from Yahweh. While Fohrer’s arguments separating authentic from inauthentic material closely resemble Hölscher’s and remain circular, he did help establish a respect among the scholarly community for the authority of the text’s internal claims regarding the date and setting of the book. Fohrer helped shift the scholarly trend back toward considering an exilic origin and a Babylonian setting for the primary composition of the book, based on the historical and geographical evidence contained within it.

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<sup>22</sup> Irwin, “Ezekiel Research Since 1943,” 56.

<sup>23</sup> Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1—20*, 20—21.

#### 4.1.4 Zimmerli

Like Fohrer, Walther Zimmerli attributed a sizeable amount of the book of Ezekiel to the 6<sup>th</sup> century prophet in an exilic context. Zimmerli's most significant contribution is perhaps his elaborate redactional analysis separating Ezekiel's original words and thoughts, the *Grundtext*, from those of his "school" of disciples, the *Nachinterpretation*. Zimmerli believed members of this "school" acted as reformers with similar concerns as the Priestly Pentateuch redactors.<sup>24</sup> However, he proposes that since they wrote primarily in the exilic period, their primary concern was to echo and build upon Ezekiel's message. Mein describes Zimmerli's approach as "cautious radicalism," as he separates with scalpel-like precision the words of Ezekiel from the words of Ezekiel's "school."<sup>25</sup> Zimmerli followed Fohrer in classifying single lines or short sentences that are missing from the *Vorlage* of the LXX as late additions. He also considered repetitive phrases, or phrases linking sections of the book together as secondary. In addition, Zimmerli designated large sections of text as "theological reinterpretations" written by later disciples in his school.<sup>26</sup> Zimmerli stated, "Undoubtedly the present book of Ezekiel stems from the hand of the 'school.'"<sup>27</sup> He

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<sup>24</sup> See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 68—77, and Boadt, "Book of Ezekiel," 2:720.

<sup>25</sup> Boadt challenges future Ezekiel scholars to clarify precisely what constitutes a "school of disciples." According to Boadt, Zimmerli's unwavering commitment to form-critical methodology caused him to be more skeptical than necessary of which words and concepts were original to the prophet. See Boadt, "Book of Ezekiel," 2:715; and Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of the Exile*, 48—50.

<sup>26</sup> These passages include: Ezek 1:6–10, 14–21; 3:16–21; 7:20–24; 12:13–16; 16:16–23, 26–34, 42–63; 17:22–24; 20:27–29; 23:39–49; 24:25–27; 33:17–20; 36:16–38; 37:25–28; 38:10–23; 43:13–27; 45:1–25; 46:1–24. Boadt highlights the significance of viewing this material as secondary: not only do these texts comprise a vast amount of the book of Ezekiel, but they also leave out significant conclusions of the oracles. See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 68—77; and Boadt, "Book of Ezekiel," 2:719.

<sup>27</sup> Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 71.

finds the influence of the Ezekiel school a much more convincing solution than the possibility of a Deuteronomic editor, because members of the school would have been closer to Ezekiel and would have sought to preserve his message, whereas a priestly redactor may have endeavored to alter the prophet's original message to emphasize unique concerns for the post-exilic community. While attempting to describe in detail Ezekiel's complex redactional history, Zimmerli acknowledged, "In individual cases it is not often possible to define the borders at which the prophet's own work passes over into that of the school."<sup>28</sup> This admission by Zimmerli demonstrates the weakness of his theory: namely, if it is difficult to distinguish the prophet from the school, on what basis can one prove the existence of a school? Is it not more likely that since the "secondary" material so closely resembles the original, it could be in fact authentic to the prophet himself? Unfortunately, in all the extensive detail of his commentary on Ezekiel, Zimmerli did not address this most obvious of questions regarding his theory of the "school of Ezekiel." Like Fohrer, Zimmerli identified rhythmic sections of text—particularly "two-beat, hammer-like rhythm"—as originally oral, and therefore authentic to the prophet Ezekiel. As mentioned previously when evaluating Fohrer's analysis, the recognition of two-beat poetic sections designed for oral presentation does not necessarily negate the authenticity of other styles or poetic forms. In my view, neither Fohrer nor Zimmerli adequately justified their criteria for determining which material was authentic to the prophet, other than by maintaining the assumption that only those passages best suited for oral delivery should be considered original. For

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<sup>28</sup> Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 70—71.

Zimmerli, passages that sounded terse orally were most likely secondary additions.<sup>29</sup> I find this idea somewhat ironic, since typically redactors receive credit for smoothing out and elaborating upon shorter, terse original material. Again, Zimmerli did not explain why a redactor or a member of the school would complicate Ezekiel's otherwise clear and poetic oracles with terse additions. The most likely scenario, in my opinion, is that the majority of the book of Ezekiel can be attributed to the prophet himself, who employed dramatic and varied types of speech corresponding with his dramatic and varied sign-acts and oracles. Certainly, the words of a character as eccentric and unpredictable as Ezekiel cannot be expected to fit neatly into the confines of a two-beat poetic pattern of speech.

While Zimmerli presupposed a complex redactional history for the book, he acknowledged that the book of Ezekiel still preserves the “...peculiar characteristics of the prophet,” revealed through forms and traditions.<sup>30</sup> For example, he argued that Ezekiel’s repeated references to the נָסַר lifting him up demonstrate his connection to the tradition of the pre-classical prophets,<sup>31</sup> while Ezekiel’s emphasis on sign-acts and dramatic incitation sets him apart from the other classical prophets.<sup>32</sup> Like other scholars, Zimmerli also noted the close connection between Ezekiel’s oracles and the tradition of the Holiness Code in Leviticus. As in other classical prophetic books,

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<sup>29</sup> For example, Zimmerli views Ezek 40—48 as a separate section, perhaps even a separate book. He suggests that perhaps when Josephus mentioned the two books of Ezekiel, he could have been referring to Ezek 1—39 and Ezek 40—48. See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 68.

<sup>30</sup> Walther Zimmerli, “Special Form and Traditio-Historical Character of Ezekiel’s Prophecy,” *VT* 15 (1965): 515.

<sup>31</sup> Zimmerli, “Special Form and Traditio-Historical Character of Ezekiel’s Prophecy,” 517.

<sup>32</sup> Zimmerli compares Ezekiel’s sign acts to those of Elijah and Elisha. While Ezekiel does borrow themes from the classical prophets, he expounds them in much greater detail. See Zimmerli, “Special Form and Traditio-Historical Character of Ezekiel’s Prophecy,” 517—522.

Zimmerli argued that Ezekiel blended the Exodus tradition with the Jerusalem-David tradition. Thus, Zimmerli found connection between Ezekiel and the pre-classical prophets, as well as between Ezekiel and the classical prophets. However, for Zimmerli, Ezekiel remained unique in his “unprecedented sharp attack on the sins of his people,” as well as in his unique forms of speech, such as the repeated phrase וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי־אָנִי יְהוָה (then you will know that I am Yahweh), dubbed by Zimmerli, the *Erweiswort*.<sup>33</sup> In summation, Zimmerli offers perhaps one of the most thorough and detailed publications on the book of Ezekiel throughout the history of scholarship, and scholars who followed him remain indebted to his work, particularly in the area of redaction criticism.

#### 4.1.5 Greenburg

In comparison with Zimmerli, Greenburg swung the pendulum in the other direction by questioning the appropriateness of applying the redaction critical method to the book of Ezekiel. From a literary perspective, he found no firm evidence of redaction throughout the book. According to Greenburg, the homogeneity of the book of Ezekiel makes it unique among the other Major Prophets. He argued that approaches deeming only poetic, simplistic, or thematically unified sections as authentic to Ezekiel are unjustified.<sup>34</sup> Since the literary artistry, organization and coherence of the material

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<sup>33</sup> Boadt concurs with Zimmerli, arguing that the book of Ezekiel remains unique among other prophetic books due to its rare vocabulary and forms of address, the use of various genres within oracles, ecstatic language describing revelation, dramatic visual techniques and prophetic speech acts. See Zimmerli, “Special Form and Traditio-Historical Character of Ezekiel’s Prophecy,” 525—527; and Boadt, “Book of Ezekiel,” 2:716.

<sup>34</sup> Greenberg wrote, “Such prejudices are simply a prioris, an array of unproved (and unprovable) modern assumptions and conventions that confirm themselves through the results obtained by forcing them on the text and altering, reducing and reordering it accordingly.” See Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1—20*, 20.

is so apparent, Greenberg claimed the book of Ezekiel just as likely originated from the hand of Ezekiel as from the hand of later redactors or a school of disciples.<sup>35</sup> Greenburg critiqued the “widespread prejudice” of equating authenticity with simplicity of language and structure, or with thematic unity, especially since one’s perception of the text’s authenticity can affect one’s interpretation of the text. For example, the assumption that a later redactor added all passages regarding future restoration to the earlier oracles of impending doom leads the reader to the conclusion that the prophet’s original message did not include hope for restoration. While Greenberg’s point is well taken, originality to the prophet does not necessarily affect the reader’s perception of the importance of the text’s message in its final form. This issue is only relevant to those who interpret original material as more authoritative or more important theologically than secondary material. Since my approach in this study remains focused on literary criticism, my primary concern is the final form of the text; therefore, my position regarding various form and redaction critical theories should not influence my interpretation of the text. However, I find Greenberg’s view of the unity and authenticity of the text to the prophet Ezekiel in his Babylonian 6<sup>th</sup> century setting as the position that seems most clearly articulated and logically consistent among the milieu of other approaches evaluated thus far.

For Greenberg, both the consistent trend of thought and the distinctive literary style often expressed through repetition of key Hebrew words and phrases throughout the book of Ezekiel strongly suggest the work of an individual author. Greenberg

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<sup>35</sup> Even Zimmerli admits the difficulty of distinguishing between the prophet and his school. Mein claims that Greenberg goes too far in denying any substantial redactional activity to the book of Ezekiel. See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 70—71; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1—20*, 18—27; and Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*, 49.

claimed that Ezekiel's specific vocabulary evoked traditional Israelite and contemporary prophetic literature, such as the book of Jeremiah.<sup>36</sup> In addition, he argued that specific chronologies and their arrangements in the book of Ezekiel correspond to the realistic timeframe of a single lifetime. In terms of the historical setting, Greenberg found nothing in the text that suggests a date later than 571 B.C. In Greenberg's assessment, the data in the book of Ezekiel corresponds clearly with the political events that occurred in the Ancient Near East between 593 and 571 B.C. For example, the prophet Jeremiah describes the circumstances of the exiles in Babylon (Jer 29), which also corresponds with the picture painted by Ezekiel. Greenberg also argued that the restoration described in Ezek 34—38 does not fit with events that occurred after 538 B.C.: a Davidic king did not come to unify the northern and southern kingdoms, the temple was not rebuilt, and Zadokite priests were not reinstated. While many try to assign a later date to the restoration prophecies, Greenberg contended that they make the most sense historically as oracles of hope during the exile.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, Greenberg concluded that the book of Ezekiel provides a coherent vision of the world of the prophet Ezekiel in the sixth century, whether the words were written by Ezekiel himself or by contemporaries who sought to preserve his message accurately.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> For a more thorough discussion of connections between the text of the book of Ezekiel and the prophet Jeremiah, as well as between other prophets and the book of Leviticus, see Carley, *Ezekiel Among the Prophets*.

<sup>37</sup> Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1—20*, 14—17.

<sup>38</sup> Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1—20*, 18—27.

#### 4.1.6 Conclusion: Perspective on the Book of Ezekiel

While the preceding literature review by no means treats the vast history of Ezekiel scholarship thoroughly, I have intentionally focused my analysis on this comparatively restricted range of scholars for four primary reasons. First, their varied analyses represent the spectrum of radical and conservative approaches to source and redaction critical theories delineating precisely which material is authentic to Ezekiel. Second, they demonstrate the progression of scholarship historically in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, illustrating which ideas grew popular during various timeframes. Third, each of the scholars reviewed wielded significant influence among his contemporaries and generations following. Finally, they provide a helpful summation of the fundamental historical-critical issues that serve as the backdrop for my literary analysis of Ezek 37:15—28 and how its intentional literary placement shapes the theological message of Ezek 36:16—39:29. Of the scholars surveyed, my position is closest to that of Greenberg, in that I believe the contents of the book of Ezekiel reflect the message of the prophet himself, and most likely the vast majority of the book can be attributed to him. While some redaction remains a possibility, textual evidence does not demand acceptance of extravagant source and redaction theories such as those advocated by Hölscher, Torrey and Zimmerli. For reasons cited previously, neither do arguments for a Deuteronomistic source contributing large portions of material remain compelling. Whether the prophet himself penned the words personally, or whether contemporaries recorded and organized his oracles, or whether redactors sought to arrange and preserve the authenticity of his message, my conclusion remains the same: the book of Ezekiel records the life, ministry and message of the 6<sup>th</sup> century prophet who lived in Babylon during the exile. Although a literary analysis of the final form of the text remains my

methodological priority, the following constructed historical scenario may provide a helpful backdrop and context from which to understand Ezekiel’s oracles.

## **4.2 Historical Background and Setting**

The prophet Ezekiel and his family were most likely among the first group of exiles taken to Babylon in 598 B.C. (2 Kgs 24:16). While his age remains uncertain, he may have been 30 years old if the “thirtieth year” in Ezek 1:1 refers to his age. The majority of his ministry occurred between 598—586 B.C., but his latest oracle (Ezek 29:17) indicates that some of his oracles could be dated as late as 571 B.C. The superscription of Ezek 1:1 calculates the years of Jehoiachin’s reign even though he was in captivity, demonstrating that Zedekiah was viewed as merely a regent functioning in lieu of the king.

In this setting, Ezekiel echoed the message of Jeremiah from Jerusalem (Jer 29), urging Zedekiah to abandon his rebellion against Babylon (Ezek 12:1—15, 13, 17:1—22, 21:18—32). Although Jeremiah is never mentioned in the book of Ezekiel, he was the monarchical prophet who delivered oracles to kings. Since Ezekiel never had this direct political influence, scholars generally view Ezekiel as indebted to the message of Jeremiah. While Ezekiel never addressed a king of Judah formally, he did exert political influence among the exiles, as leaders sought audience with him and listened to his oracles (Ezek 8:1, 14:1—3, 20:1, 33:30—31). Ezekiel’s primary concern was not to demand loyalty to Babylon, but rather to reject the political ambitions of Judah’s leaders who believed they were acting in accordance with the will of Yahweh.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Boadt, “Book of Ezekiel,” 2:714.

Ezekiel also sought to persuade his listeners to reject the false prophecies of those promising independence and peace for Judah. During the rebellious attempts by Zedekiah, hopes for military and political deliverance from Egypt bolstered the messages from these false prophets. Ezekiel sharply rebuked King Zekediah's alliance with Egypt (Ezek 17), and he delivered oracles of doom to foreign nations following the military campaigns of Nebuchaddnezzar in the west. He also condemned the neighbors of Judah for their roles in Judah's demise.<sup>40</sup> The oracle against Tyre (571 B.C., Ezek 29) corresponds to the end of the Babylonian siege of Tyre and precedes the invasion of Egypt in 568 B.C., demonstrating how precisely Ezekiel's oracles fit into the geopolitical situation of the Ancient Near East in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Ultimately, then, on this interpretation of the historiography at least, it is likely that Ezekiel sought to convince his primary audience of Judean exiles in Babylon of the importance of fidelity to Yahweh, regardless of their location or of the current political situation.

### **4.3 Theological Motifs in the Book of Ezekiel**

To facilitate analysis of the theological significance of the primary passage of this study (Ezek 37:15—28), I must first review the primary theological motifs in the book of Ezekiel. This review will provide a theological context for an overview of Ezek 36:16—39:29 as a unit, and for the exegesis of Ezek 37:15—28. The unifying theological thread in the book of Ezekiel is undoubtedly the universal knowledge of Yahweh, demonstrated by repetition of “the recognition formula” (then they will know that I am Yahweh). The recognition formula is repeated in one form or another at least

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<sup>40</sup> Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1—20*, 14. See also Paul Joyce, *Divine Initiative and Human Response in Ezekiel* (JSOTSup 51; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989): 13—20.

50 times throughout the book of Ezekiel. On some occasions, “they” refers to Israel, and at other times “they” refers to the nations; thus the universal knowledge of Yahweh remains the primary theological focus of the entire book.<sup>41</sup> Zimmerli noted how the recognition formula often functions as a concluding statement in divine discourse.<sup>42</sup> The repetition of this formula also ties together various other theological motifs throughout the book, as I will illustrate. Among the numerous theological themes in the book of Ezekiel, in my estimation, the following four figure most prominently: the presence and holiness of Yahweh, impurity and infidelity to Yahweh, punishment for Israel and the nations, and promise of restoration for Israel and Judah.

#### 4.3.1 Presence and Holiness of Yahweh

Ezekiel 1 opens with a heavenly scene involving four living creatures and intersecting wheels, culminating in a revelation of the presence of God in the appearance of a figure like that of a man sitting on a throne.<sup>43</sup> Yahweh’s presence and his holiness remain intricately connected in the book of Ezekiel. According to Cooper, the account of Ezekiel’s call in this context emphasizes Yahweh’s holiness, glory and

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<sup>41</sup> See Richard Kraetschmar, *Das Buch Ezechiel* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1900), vi.; and Daniel Bodi, *The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra* (OBO 104; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz, 1991): 299.

<sup>42</sup> See Walther Zimmerli, *I Am Yahweh*, (trans. Douglass W. Stott; ed. Walter Brueggemann; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982): 35, “We can assert without qualification that the statement of recognition never appears in an isolated position. Instead, it frequently functions as a conclusion, is firmly anchored in the context of prophetic speech, and is always preceded by a statement concerning a divine act.” See also Bodi, *The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra*, 299.

<sup>43</sup> Tiemeyer accurately claims, “No other book of the Bible explores God’s absolute awesomeness and otherness in such lavish language. It opens with a vision account of God’s overpowering presence (Ezek 1), and the reader is reminded at regular intervals of God’s majesty (Ezek 8:2—5).” See Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, “Book of Ezekiel,” *Dictionary of the Old Testament Prophets* (ed. Mark J. Boda and J. Gordon McConville, Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2012): 220.

transcendence; divine characteristics that set Yahweh apart from the sin of Israel and the nations.<sup>44</sup> Yahweh's holiness is revealed as the core essence of his being, from which other aspects of his character emanate, such as his jealousy (Ezek 8:3, 23:25), mercy (Ezek 37:10), and wrath (Ezek 7:1—8, 15:7, 24:24).<sup>45</sup> In my estimation, Cooper rightly assesses the primacy of Yahweh's holiness in the book of Ezekiel, reflecting Ezekiel's priestly concern for the holiness of Yahweh and of Israel and Judah. Thus, the intrinsic holiness of Yahweh serves as the foundation upon which he demands holiness from Israel, Judah and the nations, a demand which Ezekiel—functioning as a priest—mediates dramatically and eloquently throughout the book.

Cooper then raises a valid question: if the Jerusalem temple is to be destroyed, as Ezekiel prophesies, where does Yahweh's presence reside?<sup>46</sup> Ezekiel's opening vision portrays Yahweh as transcendent above and reigning over not only Jerusalem, but also the entire world. The locale of Yahweh's presence is no longer contained by the Jerusalem temple; the mobility of his presence portrayed by the wheels of the four living creatures also reassures the exiles that Yahweh can move with them to a foreign land. Ezekiel's description of the glory of God departing from the temple (Ezek 10:18) and eventually Jerusalem (Ezek 11:22—25) inaugurates the shift from Yahweh's special locale to his dwelling among the exiles of his scattered people. To conclude the book, Ezekiel describes the vision of a future temple replacing the destroyed Jerusalem

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<sup>44</sup> See Cooper, *Ezekiel*, 40—41. Block also notes the primacy of Yahweh's holiness, "The attribute of Yahweh's holiness is high in his mind. From the form and radiance of the inaugural vision to the concentric gradations of holiness built into the design of the temple in the final vision (chs. 40—43), everything about Yahweh's character and actions proclaims, 'Holy! Holy! Holy!'" Daniel Block, *Ezekiel 1—24* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 47—48.

<sup>45</sup> Cooper, *Ezekiel*, 41.

<sup>46</sup> Ezekiel prophesies Jerusalem and Judah's impending doom in Ezek 14:12—23, 15:1—8, 16:1—63, and 17:1—24. See Cooper, *Ezekiel*, 41—42.

temple. This temple signifies the presence and holiness of God once again dwelling in Jerusalem with the restored nation of Israel (Ezek 40—48). Just as the glory and presence of God departed from the Jerusalem temple, so Yahweh’s presence will return to the new temple (Ezek 43:1—5).<sup>47</sup>

The pervasive theme of Yahweh’s presence and holiness also reveals a unique aspect of his character: he desires to make himself known. Zimmerli calls this “the self-revelation of Yahweh,” explaining, “Yahweh wills to be known, not in his being, but in his action.”<sup>48</sup> Block similarly states, “Yahweh is by definition a God who acts. .... knowledge of his person and character is gained by observing his performance.”<sup>49</sup> In the book of Ezekiel, the agent of this revelation and action often is the Spirit, a word used by Ezekiel 13 times to emphasize the presence of God in action. These actions include the Spirit coming into or on Ezekiel (Ezek 2:12, 3:24, 37:1) the Spirit lifting Ezekiel up and bringing him to a new location (Ezek 3:12, 3:14, 8:3, 11:1, 11:24, 43:5), and the Spirit giving Ezekiel visions (Ezek 11:24).<sup>50</sup> Yahweh urges the people to get a

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<sup>47</sup> McKeating affirms similar ideas about the presence of God in relation to the Jerusalem temple: “The temple is certainly not exclusively the place where God can be met. Ezekiel 1 makes the point emphatically that his presence can be encountered wherever his people happen to be. Nevertheless, Jerusalem with its temple is the place which is appointed for meeting God, and the return of the ‘glory’ to Jerusalem is a sign that normality has been restored, and that God’s relationship with his people has once more been regularized.” See Henry McKeating, *Ezekiel* (OTG; ed. R.N. Whybray; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 89.

<sup>48</sup> Zimmerli argues that the self-revelation of Yahweh remains prominent; whether through judgment or restoration, God’s purpose is that the nation of the world would know that He is Yahweh. See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 53. For further explanation, see Zimmerli, *I Am Yahweh*, 29—39. Cooper also affirms the redemptive purposes of Yahweh through self-revelation, “The motive for God’s actions always was redemptive even when he brought acts of judgment against his own people.” Cooper, *Ezekiel*, 44.

<sup>49</sup> Block, *Ezekiel 1—24*, 49.

<sup>50</sup> Block states, “But Ezekiel not only spoke of the power of the Spirit; he embodied the Spirit’s power in his own person.” See Block, *Ezekiel 1—24*, 50.

new heart and a new spirit (Ezek 18:31), and then he promises to give them a new heart and place his Spirit within them (Ezek 11:19, 36:26—27, 37:14). The Spirit makes Yahweh’s presence and holiness known first to the prophet Ezekiel and then to the people.<sup>51</sup>

This divine revelation given to Ezekiel while in a foreign land sets the tone for the rest of the book; while Yahweh has judged and chastened his people, he has not abandoned them, and he will surely restore them and restore his presence to the land of Israel and the temple in Jerusalem. These ideas remain unique to Ezekiel; he is the only prophet who describes the glory of Yahweh departing from the Jerusalem temple and then returning to the new temple, while in the meantime residing with the exiles in Babylon. Yahweh’s presence with his people in a foreign land provides hope for the coming restoration Ezekiel describes.

#### 4.3.2 Impurity and Infidelity to Yahweh

The primacy of Yahweh’s holy presence explains Ezekiel’s emphasis on the severity of sin and ensuing judgment; a holy God cannot tolerate any impurity or sin.<sup>52</sup> Cooper rightly identifies the spiritual root of Israel and Judah’s sins as the violation of Yahweh’s holiness.<sup>53</sup> Having established the primacy of Yahweh’s holiness, Ezekiel employs numerous metaphors for the sins and impurities of Israel and Judah, urging

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<sup>51</sup> Block notes the following ways the Spirit of Yahweh serves as the “signature of divine presence” in Ezekiel: as an agency of conveyance, as an agency of animation, as an agency of prophetic inspiration, and as the sign of divine ownership.” See Block, *Ezekiel 1—24*, 50.

<sup>52</sup> Tiemeyer, “Book of Ezekiel,” 220.

<sup>53</sup> Cooper, *Ezekiel*, 45.

them to turn from their sin and demonstrate fidelity to Yahweh through purity. The word used most commonly to describe these sins is **תֹּעַבָּה** (abominations or vile images), a predominantly cultic term. Two frequently employed priestly terms in regard to sin and impurity are **חַלֵּל** (to defile or profane) and **טָמֵא** (to become unclean or to defile). The sins of the people defile or profane Yahweh's great name and reputation.<sup>54</sup> The two primary sins for which Ezekiel chastises the people are idolatry and bloodshed. In Ezekiel 36:17—18, the prophet uses **טָמֵא** twice to describe how the sins of Israel (idolatry and bloodshed) have defiled the land. Then in Ezek 36:20—21, the prophet employs **חַלֵּל** twice to emphasize how these sins have profaned the holy name of Yahweh. Throughout the book of Ezekiel, metaphors for the sins of the people include images of harlotry/adultery (Ezek 16:1—63) which represents idolatry (6:1—14, 8:5—17, 14:3—5, 16:15—22, 20:30—31, 22:3—7, 23:30—49, 33:25, 36:18, 44:10—12), and the metaphor of menstruation (Ezek 36:16), which represents violence and bloodshed (Ezek 7:23, 8:17, 9:9, 16:36—28, 22:3—9, 12—13, 23:37, 45, 24:6—9, 33:25, 35:6, 36:18, 45:9). According to Levitical law, the sins of bloodshed and idolatry would have designated individuals in the community as ceremonially unclean and in certain cases, punishable by death. Ezekiel draws the analogy that the entire nation is now unclean, and must necessarily suffer the consequences of her actions. In chapter 16, Ezekiel personifies Israel and Judah as a young child who Yahweh rescued and raised, only to reject him and instead prostitute herself as a harlot and adulteress to the nations.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, in chapter 23, Ezekiel tells the story of two sisters representing

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<sup>54</sup> See McKeating, *Ezekiel*, 86—87.

<sup>55</sup> Cooper, *Ezekiel*, 41. For other passages in which Ezekiel focuses on the impurity and sin of the people, see Ezek 8:1—18, 20:1—44, and 23:1—49.

Israel and Judah, who pursue other nations in sexual promiscuity. In both illustrations, these adulterous women lack repentance and gratitude for Yahweh, who cared and provided for them their entire lives.<sup>56</sup> Ezekiel also refers to Israel as a “rebellious family,” whose evil actions are worse even than those of pagan nations (Ezek 2:3, 5:5—7, 16:44—53).<sup>57</sup> Block effectively demonstrates how the violation of Yahweh’s holiness results in the defilement of Yahweh’s temple (Ezek 5:11, 8:5—18, 23:38—39), his land (Ezek 36:16—18), his people (Ezek 20:7, 31, 43), his Sabbaths (Ezek 20:13, 21, 24), and most significantly, Yahweh’s name (Ezek 20:39).<sup>58</sup>

#### 4.3.3 Punishment for Israel and the Nations

Ezekiel’s priestly concern for Yahweh’s presence and holiness comes to the fore through Yahweh’s rebuke of humanity’s sinfulness (Ezek 44:23) and echoes through the oracles of judgment against Israel and the nations. False prophets arose to comfort the people, offering hope for the salvation of Jerusalem (Ezek 13:1—14:23).<sup>59</sup> As a rebuke of the prophets and a declaration of punishment for the sins of Israel and Judah, Ezekiel warns repeatedly of the impending destruction of Jerusalem and Judah (Ezek 14:12—23, 15:1—8, 16:1—63, 17:1—24). Ezekiel also condemns the leaders of Judah as wicked shepherds, holding them accountable for the sins and ensuing judgment of the people (Ezek 34:1—24). Even though the people of Judah are

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<sup>56</sup> See McKeating, *Ezekiel*, 78—79.

<sup>57</sup> Ezekiel employs the term “rebellious house” more than 15 times throughout the book. See McKeating, *Ezekiel*, 87; and Block, *Ezekiel 1—24*, 48—49, 53.

<sup>58</sup> Block, *Ezekiel 1—24*, 48.

<sup>59</sup> Cooper, *Ezekiel*, 42.

Yahweh's covenant people, they will be held accountable for their sins through judgment (Ezek 6:8—10, 34:17—22, 36:31), just as the other nations of the world are held accountable. By exacting this judgment on his people, Yahweh is not breaking his covenant of faithfulness to them. Rather, he is enacting the covenant curses of which he warned his people in Lev 26 and Deut 28.<sup>60</sup> The destruction of the temple and Jerusalem is the pinnacle of judgment for the people of Judah, and particularly for Ezekiel, a priest functioning as a prophet. The destruction of Jerusalem and its temple does not signify a defeat of Yahweh by foreign gods. Sweeney rightly identifies the destruction of the temple as an action of Yahweh in purging Judah of sins and impurities in order to renew the temple, the nation, and creation itself.<sup>61</sup> Ezekiel 10:18—19 describes the departure of the Spirit from the Jerusalem temple. Following this account in Ezek 11:1—13 is the judgment of Yahweh upon the people of Jerusalem for the sins of violence, bloodshed and disobedience to his laws. He warns them that they will die by the sword because of the many who were killed in the streets of Jerusalem (Ezek 11:6,10). However, following this warning of impending judgment comes Yahweh's promise to restore the people of Jerusalem and return them to the land. This judgment for Judah (Ezek 4:1—24:27) and the nations (Ezek 25:1—32:32) serves one primary purpose—the revelation of Yahweh in the world. This self-revelation of Yahweh repeated throughout the book of Ezekiel in the recognition formula explains the purpose for and result of this judgment. Block argues that even

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<sup>60</sup> Block explains, "According to Ezekiel, Yahweh's present and imminent judgment of the nation should not be interpreted as abandonment of the covenant, but as strict adherence to its fine print. Israel has brought on herself the covenant curses by trampling underfoot the covenant grace of Yahweh (16:15—43)." See Block, *Ezekiel 1—24*, 48—49.

<sup>61</sup> For a more thorough explanation, see Sweeney, *Reading Ezekiel*, 18—20.

Yahweh's coming judgment of the nations is so that they may know that He is Yahweh: "His primary goal in bringing down foreign powers is not to destroy the enemies of Israel but to manifest his greatness, glory, and holiness."<sup>62</sup> Through the careful arrangement of these oracles, Ezekiel is building his case against all the nations of the world: humanity's sinfulness and impurity violates the holiness of Yahweh and therefore demands divine judgment. Block rightly affirms the ultimate purpose of judgment, "Indeed, this collection of prophecies leaves the impression that when Yahweh acts in judgment against his people it is not primarily to punish them but that they and the world might know him."<sup>63</sup>

#### 4.3.4 Promise of Restoration for Israel and Judah

Just as the oracles of judgment correspond to the covenant curses, so Ezekiel's words of hope and restoration align with the covenant blessings (Lev 26:40—46, Deut 4:30—31, 30:1—20).<sup>64</sup> Following Ezekiel's oracles of judgment for Judah and the nations are hopeful promises of future restoration (Ezek 33—48), which Ezekiel had hinted at previously (Ezek 20:33—44). This restoration includes a return from exile (Ezek 36:1—15), reformation of a new heart and a new spirit (Ezek 36:16—18), resurrection of dry bones (Ezek 37:1—14), reunification of Israel and Judah (Ezek 37:15—28), restoration of the Davidic kingship and initiation of the covenant of peace (Ezek 34:23—31, 37:24—28), the establishment of a temple, and new boundaries in the land (Ezek 40—48). New land boundaries include ethical injunctions to include the

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<sup>62</sup> Block, *Ezekiel 1—24*, 49.

<sup>63</sup> Block, *Ezekiel 1—24*.

<sup>64</sup> Block, *Ezekiel 1—24*, 55.

alien and foreigner among the people of Israel by granting them equal land ownership (Ezek 47:22—23). Just as all nations (including Israel) will experience judgment, so all nations (including Israel) may experience restoration and incorporation into the covenant people of God. The emphasis of this restoration is peace for the people of Israel and Judah, epitomized by a return to the prosperity of the garden of Eden (Ezek 36:25)<sup>65</sup> The theme of Yahweh’s holiness underlies this restoration, as Ezekiel makes it clear that the restoration was not for Israel and Judah’s sake, but for the sake of the holiness and renown of Yahweh’s great name (Ezek 36:16—32).<sup>66</sup> Brueggemann writes, “Ezekiel is not preoccupied with hope but with holiness. Perhaps hope will follow when holiness is rightly discerned.”<sup>67</sup> Brueggemann rightly emphasizes the recognition of Yahweh’s holiness as a precedent to the restoration of hope. These two concerns are intimately related: Yahweh wants his name to be made holy so that the nations will know that he is Lord.<sup>68</sup> Repetition of the recognition formula delineates the nations—rather than Israel and Judah—as the ones who will know the Lord after he proves his holiness to them (Ezek 36:23). Joyce rightly observes that God reveals himself to Israel through both her judgment and her restoration.<sup>69</sup> In conclusion, the following motifs provide a theological framework and context for the book of Ezekiel:

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<sup>65</sup> Cooper, *Ezekiel*, 43.

<sup>66</sup> See Block, *Ezekiel 1—24*, 49.

<sup>67</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination: Prophetic Voices in Exile* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987): 71.

<sup>68</sup> John B. Taylor, *Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary* (London: The Tyndale Press, 1969), 231.

<sup>69</sup> Joyce observes that whenever “the nations” are the subject of the recognition formula in the book of Ezekiel, the actions preceding that knowledge are either the blessing and restoration of Israel, or the judgment of the nations. In no instance does the revelation of Yahweh to the nations come through the restoration of the nations, or through the judgment of Israel. See for example Ezek 11:9—10, Ezek 25:17, Ezek 38:1—39:29. See Joyce, *Divine Initiative and Human Response in Ezekiel*, 93—95.

the presence and holiness of Yahweh, impurity and infidelity to Yahweh, punishment for Israel and the nations, and promise of restoration for Israel and Judah. Recognition of these themes is crucial to understand how they function in the primary passage of this study. Having established a theological grid for interpretation, I will now examine the literary structure and organization of the book of Ezekiel.

#### 4.4 Structure of the Book of Ezekiel

Two major views of the division of the book of Ezekiel remain pre-dominant among scholars: a bipartite structure and a tripartite structure. Among those who divide the book into two units, criteria for this division differs. Freedman designates chapters 1—24 as “The Basic Book” and chapters 25—48 as “Miscellaneous Additions.” Freedman believes the second half of the book lacks cohesion and clear organization; therefore, in his estimation, it is most likely a collection of later oracles and visions.<sup>70</sup> While he acknowledges the chronological order in the book, ultimately, he finds it incomplete and therefore relies on a diachronic organization of the material.<sup>71</sup> Brueggemann, Bandstra, and Harrison are among those who maintain a bipartite division of the book as Freedman does, but for different reasons. Brueggemann separates chapters 25—48 as a separate unit based on theme and content. The first section of the book contains oracles of judgment, while the second half of the book contains oracles of hope. Tuell uses the same reasoning for his division, but he

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<sup>70</sup> Freedman, “Book of Ezekiel,” 461; and Tyler D. Mayfield, *Literary Structure and Setting in Ezekiel* (FAT Reihe 43; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010): 18—19.

<sup>71</sup> Mayfield notes the contradiction in Freedman’s admission of a clear chronological organizational schema while maintaining a bipartite division. See Mayfield, *Literary Structure and Setting in Ezekiel*, 19; and Freedman, “Book of Ezekiel, 461.

separates chapters 1—33 as the first section, and chapters 34—48 as the second section.<sup>72</sup>

Greenberg refers to the Babylonian Talmud and the writings of Josephus as evidence of an ancient bipartite structure.<sup>73</sup> Since Josephus mentions two books of Ezekiel, Greenberg concludes these “two books,” could be Ezek 1—24 and 25—48.<sup>74</sup> He also connects the chronological organization of the book to the bipartite division of judgment and consolation. For example, he notes that all prophecies between Ezekiel’s call in July 593 B.C. and the siege of Jerusalem in 588 B.C. (chapters 1—24) are oracles of judgment.<sup>75</sup> However, Greenberg acknowledges the oversimplification of this traditional bipartite division, since chapters 26—32, dated between winter of 588 to summer of 586 during the siege, are also oracles of judgment against the nations. In addition, the first half of the book includes calls to repentance (Ezek 14:6, 18) and restoration prophecies (Ezek 16:60—62; 17:22-24) mingled amongst the oracles of judgment. Therefore, he divides the book into three thematic sections: dooms (Ezek 1—24), prophecies against the nations (Ezek 25—32), and consolations (Ezek 33—

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<sup>72</sup> See Mayfield, *Literary Structure and Setting in Ezekiel*, 19; Walter Brueggemann, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003): 192; Barry Bandstra, *Reading the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Belmont: Wadsworth, 1995): 343; Ronald Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1969): 822; and Steven Tuell, *Ezekiel* (NICOT; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2009): 4.

<sup>73</sup> Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1—20*, 3; and Mayfield, *Literary Structure and Setting in Ezekiel*, 19—20.

<sup>74</sup> Mayfield challenges both of these assertions, arguing that the Tannaitic tradition in the Babylonian Talmud merely states that the book of Ezekiel begins with doom and ends with consolations, but does not infer that these two types of oracles supply a framework for literary organization. Likewise, he believes that Josephus refers to a separate book, rather than two separate sections of one book. While the information regarding this second book is absent, Mayfield mentions Block’s theory that the second book could be referring to the Apocryphon of Ezekiel. See Mayfield, *Literary Structure and Setting in Ezekiel*, 20; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1—20*, 3—4; and Block, *Ezekiel 1—24*, 43.

<sup>75</sup> Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1—20*, 3—5.

48).<sup>76</sup> However, he maintains that the final editor of the book did not believe that Ezekiel only prophesied within particular themes during certain times; this editor had no problems with Ezekiel's oracles of hope before the fall, or his oracles of judgment after the fall. Thus, Greenberg seeks to maintain both the presence of three loosely defined thematic sections and the intrinsic chronological organization of the book as a whole supplied by the prophet.<sup>77</sup>

Classical bipartite traditions notwithstanding, the majority of scholars agree with Greenberg in opting for the following thematic tripartite division: punishment against Israel and Jerusalem (Ezek 1—24), punishment against the nations (Ezek 25—32), and restoration of Israel and Jerusalem (Ezek 33—48).<sup>78</sup> Notable scholars who advocate this structure include Fohrer, Zimmerli, Eichrodt, Allen, Mays, and Boadt.<sup>79</sup> Eichrodt's theological perspective yields the conclusion that the purpose of the progression from judgment to restoration is to reveal "the movement of history of salvation."<sup>80</sup>

Despite the popularity and predominance of bipartite and tripartite structures, not all analyses fit neatly into these packages. Wevers, Block, and Collins all divide the

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<sup>76</sup> Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1—20*, 6.

<sup>77</sup> Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1—20*, 3—6.

<sup>78</sup> Mayfield, *Literary Structure and Setting in Ezekiel*, 24.

<sup>79</sup> Zimmerli asserts, "...the three major sections can be clearly separated from one another," and he compares the tripartite structure of the book of Ezekiel to the similar structures of Isaiah, Nehemiah, and the Greek texts of Jeremiah. See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel*, 1—2; Mayfield, *Literary Structure and Setting in Ezekiel*, 26—27; Walther Zimmerli, *The Fiery Throne: The Prophets and Old Testament Theology* (ed. K.C. Hanson, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003): 37—38; Forher, *Ezechiel*, 1—2; Walther Eichrodt, *Ezekiel: A Commentary* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), 22; Leslie Allen, *Ezekiel 1—19* (WBC 28; Dallas: Word, 1994): xxiv—xxxvi; James L. Mays, *Ezekiel, Second Isaiah* (Proclamation Commentaries; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978): 22; Boadt, "Book of Ezekiel," 711—722; and Mayfield, *Literary Structure and Setting in Ezekiel*, 24

<sup>80</sup> Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 22, and Mayfield, *Literary Structure and Setting in Ezekiel*, 25.

book into four sections based on the content and the date of composition.<sup>81</sup> Others such as Blenkinsopp and Sweeney resist classifying material based on content; rather, they see organization marked by chronological formulas. Blenkinsopp states, “Perhaps the most obvious structural feature is the system of dating important points in the autobiographical record.”<sup>82</sup> While he relies on dates for structural markers, he also notes the significance of Ezek 24, which announces the beginning of the siege, and Ezek 33, which declares the destruction of Jerusalem. Blenkinsopp sees the fall of the great city as the central fulcrum of the entire book. While structure is determined by dates, significant historical events also help to provide shape and significance to the structure.<sup>83</sup> The following chronological chart highlights the major structural markers and concurrent events:

**Table of Dates<sup>84</sup>**

<b>Text</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Proximate Events</b>
Ezek 1:2	June/July 593	Throne and vision call	Anti-Babylon conclave in Jerusalem; Hananiah’s prophecy of Jehoiachin’s restoration “in two years;” Zedekiah’s mission to Babylon.
Ezek 8:1	August/Sept. 592	Vision of idolatry in the temple	Egypt’s Psammetichus II tours Kharu (Palestine-Phonecia).
Ezek 20:1	July/August 591	Religious history of Israel	End of the two-year term set by Hananiah for fulfillment of the restoration prophecy.

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<sup>81</sup> Wevers divides Ezekiel into the following sections: 1—24, 25—32, 33—39, 40—48. Block organizes the material as follows: 1—3, 4—24, 25—32, 33—48. Finally, Collins delineates these four sections: 1—11, 12—24, 25—32, 33—48. See John William Wevers, *Ezekiel* (Century Bible 26; Nashville: Nelson Publishers, 1969); 1—2; Block, *Ezekiel 1—24*, 23; John Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003): 353; and Mayfield, *Literary Structure and Setting in Ezekiel*, 25.

<sup>82</sup> Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel in Interpretation: A Biblical Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990): 3—4.

<sup>83</sup> Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel*, 4—8.

<sup>84</sup> This table of dates was constructed by combining the chronological tables provided by Blenkinsopp and Greenberg. Blenkinsopp notes that the months are missing in the Hebrew text of Ezek 26:1 and 32:17, and that the year 586 in Ezek 33:21 is based on a “very probable emendation. See Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel*, 4; and Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1—20*, 8—9.

Ezek 24:1	January 588	Beginning of Jerusalem's siege	II Kings 25:1 confirms this date as the beginning of the siege.
Ezek 26:1	January/Feb. 586	Oracle against Tyre	Beginning of Nebuchadnezzar's 13-year siege of Tyre.
Ezek 29:1	January 587	Oracle against Egypt	Pharaoh Hophra's unsuccessful effort to relieve Jerusalem's siege.
Ezek 29:17	March/April 571	Tyre's doom amended, conquest of Egypt predicted	End of Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Tyre.
Ezek 30:20	March/April 587	Pharaoh's broken arm	Futile Egyptian campaign begins.
Ezek 31:1	May/June 587	Oracle against Pharaoh	Futile Egyptian campaign continues.
Ezek 32:1	Feb./March 585	Lament for Pharaoh	
Ezek 32:17	Feb./March 585	Pharaoh in the underworld	
Ezek 33:21	July 586 January 585	Jerusalem falls Fugitives arrive in Babylon	II Kings 25:8, Jer 52:12 place these events in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, which overlaps with the eleventh year of Zedekiah.
Ezek 40:1	March/April 573	Vision of the restored temple	

Like Blenkinsopp, Sweeney sees chronological markers as the primary structural elements of the book. He follows Greenberg in arguing that the book of Ezekiel should be read as a cohesive whole, rather than as a collection of various separate parts. Sweeney sees the tripartite division as indicative of Christian theology suggesting that Israel and the nations must suffer punishment before they can receive eschatological salvation.<sup>85</sup> Sweeney argues that judgment and restoration co-exist throughout the book of Ezekiel; relegating one to the first half of the book and the other to the second as a progressive concept oversimplifies the nuance of the text. Therefore, thematic organization of the material inadequately addresses the structure of the book.

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<sup>85</sup> Marvin A. Sweeney, *Reading Ezekiel: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Reading the Old Testament; Macon: Smyth and Helwys Publishing, 2013): 5—6.

Sweeney posits that chronological formulas outline the primary structure of the book, and prophetic word formulas designate the subunits.<sup>86</sup> He also correlates the 20-year period of Ezekiel's prophecies with the prophet's 20-year career as a Zadokite priest. Significantly, Sweeney explains that Kohathite priests served in the temple from the ages of 30 to 50. Ezekiel's mention of his thirtieth year in Ezek 1:1 connects the initiation of his prophetic ministry to the beginning of his priestly role. Groomed and prepared to serve in the Jerusalem temple, Ezekiel instead witnessed the destruction of the temple at the beginning of this ministry and viewed a visionary temple restoration at the end of his ministry.<sup>87</sup>

I find the literary perspective of viewing the book as a whole, cohesive unit most consistent with the internal claims of the text, the chronological markers, and the repeated word formulas. Therefore, I concur with Blenkinsopp, Sweeney, and those who view the primary organization of the book's material as designated by chronological formulas rather than overly simplistic topical organization that fails to account for the nuanced presence of judgment and restoration oracles side-by-side throughout the book. The frequently repeated prophetic word formula, "This is the word of Yahweh unto me saying" (*וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֲלֵי*) separates Ezekiel's oracles as smaller units and subunits within the overall chronological structure.

These chronological markers and word formulas directly influence the primary focus of this thesis, specifically regarding how the intentional literary placement of the "two sticks" pericope (Ezek 37:15—28) between the "dry bones" pericope (Ezek

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<sup>86</sup> Sweeney, *Reading Ezekiel*, 8.

<sup>87</sup> Sweeney, *Reading Ezekiel*, 7—8.

37:1—14) and the “Gog and Magog” texts (Ezek 38—39) informs the reader’s understanding of the message of Ezekiel 36:16—39:29 as a whole.

Ezekiel 37:15—28 begins with the prophetic word formula, so it is important to consider not only the meaning of the pericope in light of the entire message of Ezekiel, but also specifically in its proximate textual context. To do this, the immediate textual subunit must be identified clearly to ascertain how Ezek 37:15—28 informs the reader’s understanding of the subunit first and then the book as a whole. In the following section, I argue that the immediate subunit is Ezek 36:16—39:29, identified by prophetic word formulas within the chronological markers established in Ezek 33:21 and Ezek 40:1.

#### **4.5 Reading Ezekiel 36:16—39:29 as a Unit**

Ezekiel 33:21—39:29 stands clearly as a structural unit identified by chronological markers in Ezek 33:21 and Ezek 40:1. Ezekiel 33 describes Ezekiel’s role as a watchman, warns the people of Israel of judgment, and records the announcement to the exiles of the fall of Jerusalem and ensuing desolation of Judah. In Ezekiel 34, the prophet confronts and chastises the irresponsible shepherds of Israel, contrasting them with Israel’s one true shepherd, Yahweh, and his servant David. Ezekiel 35 follows with judgment for Edom, and Ezek 36:1—15 prophesies blessing for Israel in contrast with the judgment against the nations who caused her destruction.

The prophetic word formula נִיחַי דְבָרֵי יְהוָה אֲלֵי לֹא מֵרָא (this is the word of Yahweh unto me saying) in Ezek 36:16 marks the beginning of a new subunit that continues through 37:14. A second subunit begins with the same prophetic word formula in 37:15—28, and then a third subunit is marked by the same word formula in 38:1—

39:29. Sweeney classifies 36:16—37:14 as an oracle concerning the purification of the land of Israel. He gives a similar title to 38:1—39:29: an oracle concerning the purification of the land of Israel from Gog and Magog. The oracle wedged between these two purification oracles is the primary pericope of this study: Ezek 37:15—28, concerning the restoration of Israel.<sup>88</sup> While structurally they remain separate oracles, the intentional placement of the restoration oracle between the purification oracles serves as a hinge joining the three oracles together as a cohesive message. Of the numerous word formulas in the book of Ezekiel, the most significant is the “recognition formula,” containing two parts: “that you (or they) may know,” and “that I am the Lord.” Boadt defines this as “... a formula of divine self-revelation used in a theophany to establish divine authority.”<sup>89</sup> Used at least 54 times in the book of Ezekiel, this formula accompanies declarations of God’s intent to act on behalf of His people or in judgment against them.<sup>90</sup> Frequent repetition of this phrase throughout Ezek 36:16—39:29 also unifies the three oracles. In addition, the priestly concern with purification both preceding and following the restoration joins all three oracles together.

Ezek 36:16—39:29 can also be identified as a structural unit by the clear *inclusio* to Ezek 36:16—23 provided by Ezek 39:25—29. Repetition of certain key words and themes designates the beginning and end of this structural unit within the larger unit of Ezek 33:21—39:29. While the order in which these themes are listed varies, both

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<sup>88</sup> Sweeney, *Reading Ezekiel*, 167—186.

<sup>89</sup> Boadt sees a connection between the first half and legal proceedings presenting evidence in favor of the accused, such as in the case of Joseph’s brothers (Gen 42:34). He also notes the similarity of the second half of this phrase to “because I am the Lord” in the Holiness Code (Leviticus 19). Zimmerli calls this phrase a “proof saying.” See Boadt, “Book of Ezekiel,” 2:718, and Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 277.

<sup>90</sup> Boadt, “Book of Ezekiel,” 2:718.

“bookends” contain the following: a prophetic word formula, Israel’s unfaithfulness and shame, Yahweh’s promise to gather them into land following exile, the sanctification of Yahweh’s holy name, and the recognition formula (that you [or the nations] will know that I am the Lord).

In addition to repetition of word formulas, themes, and the use of inclusio, Ezek 36:16—39:29 can also be identified as a structural unit based on two primary traditions that permeate the text: the priestly tradition and the “divine warrior” tradition as seen in creation narratives.<sup>91</sup> In Ezek 36, the prophet speaks in priestly language of purity from uncleanness, sprinkling of water for cleansing, and creation of a new heart and a new spirit. Additionally, intrinsic to the priestly tradition is “a strong cultic vision of the land.”<sup>92</sup> In Ezek 36, God commands the prophet to prophesy not to a nation or to a people, but to the land itself. Scholars find a direct correlation between Ezekiel’s concerns and the “Holiness Code” (Lev 17—26).<sup>93</sup> Both focus on the separation between holy and unholy, and both emphasize the importance of a community worshiping Yahweh. Prophecies of the new land, new city and new temple epitomize the “cultic-legal vision.”<sup>94</sup> While Ezek 38—39 also reflect the priestly tradition with a concern for purifying the land from Gog and Magog, these chapters also demonstrate the “divine warrior” tradition, namely Yahweh as divine warrior destroying the

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<sup>91</sup> Texts demonstrating priestly concerns include Ezekiel’s oracles addressing defilement of the sanctuary (Ezek 5:11), idolatry (Ezek 8:7—9, 14:3—5), unfaithfulness and uncleanness of the people (Ezek 16, 10:30—31, 22:26, 36:18). Boadt, “Book of Ezekiel,” 2:717.

<sup>92</sup> References to the defilement of the land by the people include Ezek 6 and 36. See Boadt, “Book of Ezekiel,” 2:717.

<sup>93</sup> Most scholars located the origin of the Holiness Code in the pre-exilic era. However, some argue that it was not finalized until after the exile. See Boadt, “Book of Ezekiel,” 2:717.

<sup>94</sup> Boadt, “Book of Ezekiel,” 2:717.

enemies of Israel. Many scholars classify these two chapters as later insertions due to the strong use of apocalyptic imagery and language. However, Boadt sees the “divine warrior” tradition as rooted in creation narratives depicting cosmic battles of the gods.<sup>95</sup> Therefore, he argues that the apocalyptic material in the book of Ezekiel should not be identified with the later apocalyptic tradition; rather, later writers perhaps were influenced by the work of Ezekiel.<sup>96</sup> Similarly, Ezekiel 36—37 also demonstrates strong verbal allusions to the creation narrative, using verbs such as עזָה, הַלְקָה, יִדְעָה, רַבָּה, and פֶרֶה.

Numerous scholars who employ different structural and organizational approaches to Ezek 33—39 argue in favor of the text’s composite nature.<sup>97</sup> However,

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<sup>95</sup> Boadt mentions “mythological themes of creation,” including the cosmic tree (Ezek 17, 31), and the chaos monster (29, 32). Both are used rhetorically to underscore the absolute lordship of Yahweh. Boadt also suggests, “Ezekiel may have combined legal and creation language to reestablish the symbol power of the covenant for his day. See Boadt, “Book of Ezekiel,” 2:717.

<sup>96</sup> Boadt locates creation tradition in the use of “mythopoetic language from ANE creation stories,” evoking Baal or Marduk as the divine warrior winning victory over the cosmos. He sees a correlation between the construction of Ezekiel’s temple (Ezek 40—48) and the tradition of the divine warrior building a palace for himself following his victory. Boadt also finds echoes of the Priestly tradition of construction the tabernacle in the wilderness following the victory over the Egyptian army in the Red Sea. In Ezekiel, Yahweh has victory over the enemies of Israel (Ezek 38—39) and then constructs the temple (Ezek 40—48). See Boadt, “Book of Ezekiel” 2:720.

<sup>97</sup> Clements is among the majority of scholars who view Ezekiel 33—37 as an original unit. However, they separate 38—39 as a later section added by redactors due to its apocalyptic nature. Clements introduces ten subdivisions within the larger structure of the three primary divisions of the book. See and Ronald Clements, *Ezekiel* (Westminster Bible Companion; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996). Blenkinsopp uniquely groups 34—37 as a unit, excluding chapter 33. According to Blenkinsopp, the logical sequence would have been to place Ezekiel 38—39 before Ezekiel 34—37, so that the full restoration of Israel would follow the destruction of her enemies. He cites the Scheide papyri, a late LXX manuscript in which the Gog and Magog passages precede the restoration passages. He proposes the reason for the placement of Ezek 38—39 is that the narrative describes a return to the land, yet there is no mention of a temple. Therefore, these events precede the rebuilding of the temple described by Ezekiel in chapters 40—48. Blenkinsopp acknowledges that all theories about the placement of Ezekiel 38—39 are somewhat speculative. He also presents the alternative that Ezekiel 40—48 may be the second book of Ezekiel described by Josephus. See Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel*, 180.

I find both of these suggestions lacking substantive evidence, particularly because numerous scholars love to use the “two books” quote from Josephus to justify their particular structural analysis and bipartite division of the book. Should this theory of Ezek 40—48 as the second book of Ezekiel prove true, Blenkinsopp proposes, chapters 38—39 were most likely added to the end of the first book (Ezek 1—37) as an appendage. Many scholars view Ezek 38:1—39:29 as a secondary addition to the text

many others concur with Greenberg, who reads the book of Ezekiel as a literary whole, rather than as a conglomeration of various sources. These scholars view Ezek 38—39 as an essential part of the book, despite its seemingly apocalyptic features, and especially as an important aspect of the restoration of Israel.<sup>98</sup> Sweeney argues effectively that it functions indispensably in the context of the literary unit, Ezek 33:20—39:29, as the “culmination of the restoration and purification of the land of Israel.”<sup>99</sup> Indeed, I follow Sweeney in seeing the destruction of Israel’s enemies and purification of the land by the burial of their bodies as a necessary conclusion to the specific literary unit that remains the focus of this study, Ezek 36:16—39:29. However, as argued above, chronological markers, repetition of the prophetic word formula and the recognition formula, and clear use of priestly and divine warrior traditions, connected by creation allusions, provide ample evidence suggesting that Ezekiel 33—39 should be viewed as a unit, with Ezekiel 36:16—39:29 as a sub-unit.

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due to its apocalyptic or proto-apocalyptic nature, or due to its apparent disruption of what would otherwise be a natural flow from Ezek 37:28, referring to God’s sanctuary dwelling among his people forever into Ezek 40—48 describing the temple. These scholars include Hitzig, Herrmann, Hölscher, Taylor, Cody, Cooke, and Eichrodt, among others. Joyce cites the following apocalyptic features in Ezek 38:1—39:29: “radical eschatology, a strong emphasis on divine agency, and dualism, not only between present and future but also between good and evil.” Cooke also adds, “The scale of the events, the vague outlines, the loosely-strung sequence of ideas, recall at once the features which belong to apocalyptic writings. See Aelred Cody, *Ezekiel: With Excursus on Old Testament Priesthood* (Old Testament Message 11; Wilmington: Glazier, 1984), 182—185; Sweeney, *Reading Ezekiel*, 186; Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel*, 407—408; Taylor, *Ezekiel*, 241—242; and Joyce, *Ezekiel*, 212—213.

<sup>98</sup> These scholars include Allen, Klein, Block, Odell, Joyce, Carley, and Sweeney. In favor of this view, Joyce mentions the following features that characterize material of Ezekiel: address to the “son of man” (38:2, 39:1, 17, quotations (38:11, 13)), the “recognition formula” (38:23, 39:6—7, 22—23, 28), and the motif of divine holiness (38:16, 23; 39:27). See Sweeney, *Reading Ezekiel*, 186; and Joyce, *Ezekiel*, 212—213.

<sup>99</sup> Sweeney, *Reading Ezekiel*, 187.

## **4.6 Ezekiel 36:16—39:29: Primary Theological Themes**

As previously established, repetition of word formulas, themes, and traditions, in addition to the presence of an *inclusio*, designate Ezek 36:19—39:29 as a literary unit within the larger section of Ezek 33:21—39:29, delineated by chronological markers. Before expounding the primary pericope of this study, Ezek 37:15—28, I will begin by considering the theological narrative of Ezek 36:16—39:29, the larger literary unit containing the “Two Sticks” oracle. A classical dispensational interpretation of Ezekiel 36:16—39:29, which this thesis attempts to challenge, focuses on the progression of the following primary theological themes: restitution for bloodshed, reformation of heart and spirit, resurrection of dry bones, restoration of the Davidic kingship, and the ruination of Yahweh’s enemies. Each theme builds upon the previous one, all tied together by the repetition of the recognition formula. In the following section, I will summarize these major theological themes contained in Ezek 36:19—39:29, as they are presented most frequently by numerous scholars, including proponents of dispensationalism.

### **4.6.1 Restitution for Bloodshed**

The oracle to Ezekiel opens with the prophetic word formula, first rehearsing the past and then anticipating the future.<sup>100</sup> The first issue addressed is how the sins of the people of Israel and Judah defiled the land; the land itself suffered the consequences of the unfaithfulness of the people. The land was holy because it belonged to Yahweh,

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<sup>100</sup> Paul M. Joyce, *Ezekiel: A Commentary* (New York: T&T Clark, 2009): 203.

yet it was defiled by the people's impurity.<sup>101</sup> According to the law, the following sins may cause the land to be impure: bloodshed, (Num 25:34), sexual impurity (Lev 18:25—28, Deut 24:4), and overnight exposure of a criminal's body (Deut 21:23).<sup>102</sup> So repulsive to Yahweh were the actions of the people, that he compares them to the putrescent nature of a woman's monthly uncleanness (Ezek 36:17). Throughout the book of Ezekiel, the prophet delivers oracles rebuking the people for violence and bloodshed (Ezek 7:11, 7:23, 8:17, 9:9, 12:19, 16:38, 22:2—12, 23:37, 24:7, 33:25—26). Although references to the sin of idolatry appear even more frequently throughout the book, the mention of bloodshed precedes idolatry in Ezek 36:18, establishing the primacy and significance of this particular sin in the context of the larger literary unit (Ezek 36:16—39:29). Yahweh's repulsion for violence and bloodshed applies not only to the people of Israel and Judah, but to all the nations, as attested by his rebuke of Edom, "Since you did not hate bloodshed, bloodshed will pursue you" (Ezek 35:6).

The divine wrath for the bloodshed committed by the people of Israel and Judah was dispersion among the nations, where they profaned Yahweh's name (Ezek 36:20—21). They have profaned God's name not just because of their sin, but because the nations ascribed weakness to their God who could not or would not save them from the hands of their enemies.<sup>103</sup> Yahweh's motivation for restoring the people of Israel is not

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<sup>101</sup> D.M.G. Stalker, *Ezekiel: Introduction and Commentary* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1971): 252—253.

<sup>102</sup> Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21—37: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 23; ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman; Garden City: Doubleday, 1997), 727.

<sup>103</sup> Wevers states, "In the eyes of the nations, the ancient triad of God, people and land has been broken." Repeated use of the word *וְיָהּוָה* reveals the strongly theocentric character of these oracles: Yahweh's chief concern is for the holiness of his name. As Cooke states, "Now Israel is to be gathered and brought home; and this act of power will convince the nations that Yahweh is no mere tribal deity, but the only supreme and holy God." Cooke continues, "Underlying the argument are the great conceptions that the revelation of the true God is conveyed through the history of Israel, and that God's

love, mercy or forgiveness, but rather it is concern for the holiness of his name and the revelation of his power to the nations that moves him to act.<sup>104</sup>

#### 4.6.2 Reformation of Heart and Spirit

Yahweh promises to gather the exiles of Israel and Judah from the nations where they were scattered and to bring them back into their own land. Again, this restoration serves two primary purposes, neither of which directly involve the exiles themselves: to reveal the holiness of Yahweh’s name, and to reveal Yahweh as sovereign Lord to the nations (Ezek 36:23—24). Priestly imagery is evidenced by Yahweh’s promise to cleanse the people from impurities (most likely bloodshed, following the parallel phrasing of Ezek 36:18) and idolatry through the sprinkling of clean water (Ezek 36:25).<sup>105</sup> Yahweh is reversing the personal impurity of the people, acting as a priest to cleanse them from their sins.<sup>106</sup> He will then perform a divine heart

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ultimate purpose is to reveal Himself to all the world.” Greenberg offers this definition for the sanctification of Yahweh’s name, “Win for it the awe and dread due to the holy name of God, made great through his mighty acts.” He refers to Josh 7:9, “If we are defeated, what will you do about your great name?” Joyce elaborates, “We have found evidence of a distinctive emphasis on the absolute centrality of Yahweh and his self-manifestation, a radical theocentrism which is of an order difficult to parallel anywhere in the Old Testament.” See John W. Wevers, *Ezekiel* (NCB; London: Thomas Nelson, 1969), 272; G.A. Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1936): 388—389; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21—37*; 728—729; and Joyce, *Divine Initiative and Human Response in Ezekiel*, 104—105.

<sup>104</sup> Joyce develops this argument more thoroughly, citing the following instances in the book of Ezekiel when Yahweh either acts for the sake of the holiness of his name, or expresses concern for the holiness of his name: Ezek 20:9, 14, 22, 44; 36:21, 22; 39:7, 25. See Joyce, *Divine Initiative and Human Response in Ezekiel*, 97—105; and Wevers, *Ezekiel*, 272.

<sup>105</sup> Carley suggests this verse could have impacted the thought of later religious communities regarding baptism, as reflected by the Dead Sea Scrolls of the Qumran Community and in NT concepts of baptism. See Keith W. Carley, *The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel* (CBC; eds. P.R. Ackroyd, A.R.C. Leaney, and J.W. Packer; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 244.

<sup>106</sup> According to Greenberg, these terms are reminiscent of Lev 16, reminding the reader of the purification that occurs on the Day of Atonement. Cooke identifies this as the spiritual purification of the people internally, reminding the reader of Psalm 51:4, 9. Fisch notes that this reminds the reader of the cultic impurity spoken of metaphorically in Ezek 36:17. See Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21—37*, 730; Wevers,

transplant, removing their heart of stone and replacing it with a heart of flesh (Ezek 36:26), imagery borrowed from an earlier text (Ezek 11:19—20).<sup>107</sup> Flesh is soft, shapeable, and responsive, whereas stone is stubborn and unchanging. This heart of flesh will enable the covenant people to respond tenderly to the word of Yahweh. In addition to the new heart, the people will also receive Yahweh’s spirit internally, which will motivate them toward obedience (Ezek 36:27).<sup>108</sup> God replaces their rebellious spirit with his perfect spirit, implanting in their beings the desire to live righteously before God.<sup>109</sup> Through this transaction, Yahweh empowers the people to do what previously had been impossible for them.<sup>110</sup> Now they possess a renewed internal vigor and strength as a nation, illustrated by the new heart and spirit imagery.

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*Ezekiel*, 274; Rabbi Dr. S. Fisch, *Ezekiel: Hebrew Text and English Translation with an Introduction and Commentary* (Soncino Books of the Bible; ed. Rev. Dr. A. Cohen; London: The Soncino Press, 1950), 243; and Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel*, 390.

<sup>107</sup> Ezek 18:31 presents a contrast, “Make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit.” However, in Ezek 11:19—20 and Ezek 36:26, the action of creating a new heart and a new spirit is performed by Yahweh. Joyce sees between these two texts the two poles of theology in the book of Ezekiel: “the responsibility of Israel and the gift of Yahweh.” Cooke claims that the pouring out of the Spirit of God is a principle feature in the hope of the coming age. See Joyce, *Divine Initiative and Human Response in Ezekiel*, 128; Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel*, 392; and Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21—37*, 730.

<sup>108</sup> Defining the Hebrew concepts of heart and spirit, Taylor writes, “The heart includes the mind and the will, as well as the emotions; it is in fact the seat of the personality, the inmost nature of man. The spirit is the impulse which drives the man and regulates his desires, his thoughts, and his conduct.” See Taylor, *Ezekiel*, 232.

<sup>109</sup> According to Greenberg, the phrase, “That you will follow my laws” is reminiscent of the language of Lev 26:3, “If you follow my laws and carefully observe my commandments...” See Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21—37*, 730; and Taylor, *Ezekiel*, 232.

<sup>110</sup> Joyce explains the significance of the new heart and the new spirit: “In 36:26 two important senses of בַּשְׁר converge, the heart as the locus of the moral will and as the symbol of inner reality as distinct from mere outward appearance. The “new spirit” (*הַשְׁׁלֵמָה רִוח*) in vs. 26 refers to the renewal of ‘the moral will.’” See Joyce, *Ezekiel*, 204; and Joyce, *Divine Initiative and Human Response in Ezekiel*, 110—111.

#### 4.6.3 Resurrection of Dry Bones

The oracle continues in the form of a dramatic vision portraying restoration from death. The Spirit of the Lord carries Ezekiel to a valley of dry bones, where the prophet receives a command from Yahweh to speak the word of the Lord to the dry bones (Ezek 37:1—4).<sup>111</sup> Just as the purpose of the restitution for bloodshed and the reformation of heart and spirit was so that the nations would know that Yahweh is Lord, so the resurrection of the dry bones is so that the whole house of Israel, most likely meaning both the northern and the southern kingdoms, will know that Yahweh is Lord.<sup>112</sup> As he speaks the word of the Lord, Ezekiel hears a rattling sound and watches in awe as the dry bones reform into human bodies, as muscle and ligaments then cover the bones, and as skin covers the muscles and ligaments (Ezek 37:1—8).<sup>113</sup> This dramatic action happens as a direct response to the word of the Lord delivered through the prophet; as in Genesis, God's word acts as a creative agent.<sup>114</sup> While the bodies have been formed, they have not yet come to life. Joyce sees in this two-phase restoration similarity to the two phases of creation in Gen 2:7—first the forming of Adam's body, and second the breath, which brings life.<sup>115</sup> Ezekiel then receives a

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<sup>111</sup> Joyce sees in this imagery the model set by Jer 8:1—3, which describes the bones of kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem laid out before “the sun and the moon and all the host of heaven.” See Joyce, *Ezekiel*, 208.

<sup>112</sup> See Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21—37*, 744; and D.S. Russell, *Two Refugees: Ezekiel and Second Isaiah* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1962): 89.

<sup>113</sup> Cooke suggests that this rattling noise could have been a gloss on the word “shaking,” perhaps even indicating an earthquake. See Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel*, 399.

<sup>114</sup> Howie, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 73.

<sup>115</sup> Joyce, *Ezekiel*, 209; and Carley, *The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, 249.

second command from Yahweh to speak the word of the Lord to the lifeless bodies, and as he does, Yahweh breathes upon them and they come to life, standing upon their feet as “a great army” (Ezek 37:10).<sup>116</sup> While the Hebrew word לִפְנֵי is most frequently translated “army,” it can also be translated “strength, force, or power.”<sup>117</sup> Whether or not military overtones predominate the translation of this word, this vast assembly of resurrected people clearly presents an image of power, force and strength.<sup>118</sup> This is the first time military imagery is hinted at in Ezek 36:16—39:29, and it is the first time such imagery is associated with the restored nation. Since this pericope transitions from a picture of death to a picture of a restored nation and a restored army, many interpreters see in it geopolitical, national and military strength.<sup>119</sup> Yet this is more than the restoration of a nation; it is the restoration of the exiles’ hopes for the future (Ezek 37:11), to be reunited as a living nation once again.<sup>120</sup> Only when they experience freedom from the bondage of hopelessness can they dare to envision the dream of

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<sup>116</sup> Ezekiel is instructed to declare Yahweh’s words to the whole house of Israel, which undoubtedly means both the northern and southern kingdoms. See Fisch, *Ezekiel*, 248.

<sup>117</sup> J. Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Aramaic (Old Testament)*, (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., Brown, F., Driver, S. R., & Briggs, C. A., 2000); *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems); Koehler, L., Baumgartner, W., Richardson, M. E. J., & Stamm, J. J., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1999).

<sup>118</sup> In the immediate context, this resurrection symbolizes the restoration of Israel, the exiles who will return to the land of their ancestors and rebuild the nation. This is the restoration of a nation to existence as a people. While this text may have influenced later Jewish understandings of the resurrection of the dead in the age to come, that is not the primary meaning of this passage. See Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary of the Book of Ezekiel*, 397; Taylor, *Ezekiel*, 236; Stalker, *Ezekiel*, 256—257; and Wevers, *Ezekiel*, 297.

<sup>119</sup> Regarding the fulfillment of the “Dry Bones” prophecy, Ellison states, “In just over fifty years from the first Zionist conference an independent Jewish state existed for the first time since 63 B.C. All it needs is the Spirit of God.” Presumably, Ellison sees the formation of the state of Israel as fulfilling the first half of Ezekiel’s vision, but the second half, when Yahweh breaths his spirit of life into them, is yet to occur spiritually. See Ellison, *Ezekiel: The Man and His Message*, 131.

<sup>120</sup> Fisch, *Ezekiel*, 248—249.

rebuilding the nation under the Yahweh's rule.<sup>121</sup> Yahweh's breath is the source of their new life, but this life can only be made tangible by a geographical move back to the land of their ancestors.<sup>122</sup> This miraculous feat cannot be accomplished by human endeavor, but only by the power of the God's Spirit.<sup>123</sup> Yahweh promises to return this "army" to their own land, so that they will know that he is the Lord, once again sealing the promise with the recognition formula. Yahweh then repeats the promise to put his Spirit in them, echoing Ezek 36:27 and 37:9—10.<sup>124</sup>

#### 4.6.4 Restoration of Davidic Kingship

This resurrected army will need a military and political leader, and who could lead this army better than the idealized messianic king, David? Historically, David conquered Israel's surrounding enemies and extended the territory of Israel's kingdom. Known for his military might and prowess, David epitomizes the image of a national conquering hero. Such a strong figure would appeal to exiles who had suffered extreme devastation and loss through the destruction of the temple and the deportation to Babylon. In this context, Ezekiel offers hope to the exiles by prophesying that a new Davidic king will arise to lead this restored and resurrected nation that has once again returned to the land of promise (Ezek 34:23—34, 37:22—25). Block argues that the establishment of a human king solidified the relationship between the people, the land

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<sup>121</sup> Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary of the Book of Ezekiel*, 397.

<sup>122</sup> Wevers, *Ezekiel*, 279—280.

<sup>123</sup> Fisch, *Ezekiel*, 249.

<sup>124</sup> Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21—37*, 746—747.

and the deity in ancient near eastern culture.<sup>125</sup> In this light, according to Block, the reign of the new Davidic king can be seen as the culmination of the restoration of Israel and Judah; he inherits and perpetuates the covenant promises made by Yahweh to David (2 Sam 7).<sup>126</sup> The divine selection of this new monarch grants him religious and political authority over the restored nation and people. In Ezek 34:23—34, this Davidic leader contrasts the wicked shepherds of Israel who used and abused the people for their own selfish gain (Ezek 34:1—22).

Two primary terms are used for this leader. The first is נֶשֶׁר (ruler, prince, or “head of state”), signifying one who leads at the head of his people as opposed to an abusive leader ruling over them. The second is מֶלֶךְ (king), which in this context emphasizes his royalty and ability to unify the people.<sup>127</sup> Under the leadership of the historic David, the kingdom remained unified and strong both religiously and militarily. Likewise, under the leadership of the new David, the restored nation will be free from division and internal weaknesses that causes destruction and dissolution. This Davidic ruler will lead the unified people of the restored nation into authentic worship of Yahweh; clearly, Ezekiel contrasts this fidelity with the gross adultery and unfaithfulness perpetrated by both Israel and Judah throughout the history of the divided kingdoms (Ezek 20). This new David, both ruler and king, will lead the people into an age of unprecedented faithfulness to Yahweh and prosperity in their land.

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<sup>125</sup> Block makes this claim by drawing a parallel to the Prophetic Speech of Marduk, Esarhaddon’s account of rebuilding Babylon, the Prayer of Adad-guppi’ and the Cyrus Cylinder. See Block, *Ezekiel 1—24*, 58; and Pritchard, *ANET*, 315, 560—562,

<sup>126</sup> See Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 1—24*, 58.

<sup>127</sup> Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 1—24*, 58.

#### 4.6.5 Ruination of Yahweh's Enemies

Ezekiel 38:1 opens with the prophetic word formula נִיחַי לְבָרֵךְ הָנָה אֶלְיָהוּ לְאֹמֶר (this is the word of Yahweh unto me saying), clearly indicating the initiation of a new oracle. While the first two oracles of chapters 36 and 37 are directed toward the people of Israel, this final oracle is directed toward the enemies of Israel, identified here as גּוֹג אֶרְץ הַמָּגוֹג (Gog of the land of Magog). Yahweh seems to initiate this conflict, as he leads Gog and surrounding allied nations into battle against the peaceful, restored nation of Israel (Ezek 38:3—6).<sup>128</sup> The restored nation, with a new heart and spirit, led by their king David, must again face an external military threat from foreign nations. While the identities of these nations remain somewhat unclear, it is interesting to note that none of Israel's traditional surrounding enemies participate in this attack; Gog and his allies are from distant places.<sup>129</sup> Although Yahweh is against Gog in these oracles, he also calls him and directs his actions.<sup>130</sup> Yahweh definitively wins the victory over

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<sup>128</sup> Sweeney provides a helpful overview of scholarly debate regarding the identity of Gog and his allied armies. Generally, scholars believe Gomer may refer to the Cimmerians of central Asia Minor, Beth-Togarmah may be Armenia, Javan may signify Greece, Madai may be the Medeans, Meschech, Tubal and Tiras may represent non-Semitic peoples in Asia Minor. Some attempt to connect Gog of Magog with the Gagu of northern Assyria or with 7<sup>th</sup> century King Gyges of Lydia in Asia Minor. Others see "Gog" as a reference to Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians. Joyce argues that this is a weak view. Some view Gog as a symbolic representative of all the enemies of Israel; they argue he is not to be identified with a single historical figure. Cody argues that Ezek 38—39 are "detached from actual history, past, contemporary, or future." In summation, the identity of Gog remains unknown. The way he functions in these oracles, the way the people of Israel function in relation to him, and the way Yahweh interacts with and acts upon Gog are much more significant to the interpretation of these oracles than is the identity of Gog. Regarding the dangerous tendency of some to identify Gog and allies with contemporary nation states, Taylor cautions, "...attempts to read too much into the incidentals of the prophecy betray the ingenuity of the speculator rather than the sobriety of the exegete." He then mentions "such fancies" as the Scofield Reference Bible identifying Gog with Russia, and Meshech and Tubal as Moscow and Tobolsk. See Cody, *Ezekiel*, 184; Joyce, *Ezekiel*, 214; Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25—48*, 433—435, 489—493; Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel*, 408—410; Wevers, *Ezekiel*, 284; Sweeney, *Reading Ezekiel*, 186—187; and Taylor, *Ezekiel*, 243.

<sup>129</sup> Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel*, 406.

<sup>130</sup> This may remind the reader of Isaiah 10, in which Yahweh uses Assyria as a rod in his hand, but then condemns Assyria for its pride and sins against the people of Israel (Is 10:5, 7—19). See Joyce, *Ezekiel*, 214.

Gog, and the people of the restored nation spend months burying bodies in order to cleanse the land from the corpses of Yahweh’s enemies. This cleansing of the land is the final step in the restoration of the nation of Israel. Block argues persuasively that the role of Gog in this battle is not to punish or attack Israel, as Babylon had already fulfilled that role in judging the southern kingdom of Judah for its sins. Rather, the primary purpose of Gog is to display the holiness of Yahweh so that all nations may know that he is the Lord.<sup>131</sup> The timing of this battle remains unclear, but it is described as “after many days,” “in latter days,” or “in the distant future.” While this may be an apocalyptic or eschatological formula (Hos 3:5, Jer 30:24), it could also be referring to an actual historic setting to occur “many days” after the original delivery of this oracle.<sup>132</sup>

#### 4.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, the primary theological narrative in Ezekiel 36:16—39:29 is the restitution for bloodshed, reformation of heart and spirit, resurrection of dry bones, restoration of the Davidic kingship, and the ruination of Yahweh’s enemies. These sequential themes tell the story of restoration from Ezekiel’s perspective, all tied together by the repetition of the recognition formula. Ezekiel first explains why the nations of Israel and Judah suffered destruction and exile: infidelity to Yahweh expressed primarily through the sins of bloodshed and idolatry. Ezekiel then offers

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<sup>131</sup> Block, Odell, Joyce, *Ezekiel* 215.

<sup>132</sup> Taylor argues in favor of an apocalyptic or eschatological reading of these oracles, suggesting that Ezekiel is echoing the language of other prophets who construct “last days” or “day of the Lord” scenarios. Taylor makes the following textual connections to Ezek 31:1—39:29: Jer 4:5—6:26, Joel 2:20, Joel 2:28—32, Amos 5:18—20, Zeph 1:14—18, Is 29:5—8, 66:15, Zech 12:1—9, 14:1—15. See Taylor, *Ezekiel*, 242—243, and Joyce, *Ezekiel*, 214.

hope in Yahweh's promise to give them a new heart and a new spirit, enabling them to walk faithfully according to the stipulations of his covenant. This new heart and new spirit involves the rebirth of a nation, pictured most dramatically by Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones coming to life and forming an army. This nation, once destroyed beyond hopes of restoration, will now rise from the ashes with a new heart and a new spirit as an army of Yahweh. Led by "King David," Israel's historical religious and military ideal monarch, this restored nation will rise in spiritual and physical strength. When Israel's remaining enemies, led by Gog of Magog, press their attack, Yahweh will win the victory and establish His presence permanently among His people in the land. The restoration of the kingdom reaches fulfillment when Yahweh's enemies are finally defeated.

It is my observation that this generally accepted summary of theological themes, while not entirely inaccurate, remains incomplete and unsettling on two levels. First, this summary generates theological and ethical problems, prompting the following questions. Why, for instance, would Yahweh resurrect an army from death—which was his punishment for their sins of idolatry and violence—only to prepare them to commit possibly more battlefield violence? Why would Yahweh install David as their leader, when he was known for his excessive bloodshed in battles, if bloodshed is a sin for which Yahweh had allowed Israel and Judah to suffer destruction? How can Yahweh condemn Israel and Judah for bloodshed and then seemingly contradict the ethical impetus behind his own judgment by shedding the blood of Israel's enemies united by Gog? The answers to these questions require careful consideration and reflection, as they do not appear immediately evident in the text.

Second, this generally accepted theological reading summarized above generates textual problems. The primary argument of this thesis is that such a reading vastly ignores the “Two Sticks” reconciliation and the covenant of peace described in Ezek 37:15—28. My research question is as follows, “How does the message of reconciliation and peace in Ezek 37:15—28 fit with the seemingly violent images of a resurrected army and battles against Gog and other enemies?” The implicit contradictions in the text invite me to reinterpret it. Now that I have explored the history of scholarship on Ezekiel, the historical background and setting, theological motifs in the book of Ezekiel, the structure of the book of Ezekiel, the establishment of Ezek 36:16—39:29 as a literary sub-unit, and the most significant theological themes within Ezek 36:16—39:29, I will undertake an in depth literary analysis of the primary pericope of this study, Ezek 37:15—28. This literary analysis will include a translation of the text, a delimitation of the pericope, a structural analysis, and a rhetorical analysis.

## 5. LITERARY ANALYSIS OF EZEKIEL 37:15—28

### 5.1 Text and Translation

*Ezekiel 37:15—28*<sup>1</sup>

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים לֵאמֹר:

And this is the word of Yahweh unto me saying:

וְאַתָּה בֶן-אָדָם קְח־לְךָ עַז אֲחֵד וְכַתֵּב עַל־יְדֵךְ לְיְהוָה וְלַבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל חֶבְרוֹן  
וְלֹקַח עַז אֲחֵד וְכַתֵּב עַל־יְדֵךְ לְיְסָד עַז אֲפְרִים וְכָל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל חֶבְרוֹן:

<sup>1</sup> BHS: *With Westminster Hebrew Morphology* (electronic ed.; Stuttgart; Glenside PA: German Bible Society; Westminster Seminary, 1996, c1925; morphology c1991), Ezek 37:15—28. This is the primary Hebrew text used throughout this paper (unless noted otherwise).

<sup>2</sup> *אָמֵן* is not attested by the LXX. See *Septuaginta: With Morphology* (electronic ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979), Ezek 37:16; and Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 267.

<sup>3</sup> Although *אָמֵן* is missing from the LXX, Zimmerli argues that it should remain as a contrast to the following *אָמֵן*. See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 267.

<sup>4</sup> Allen and Zimmerli identify (יְהוָה) *ל* as *lamed inscriptionis*, which serves to introduce the wording of an inscription or a title. However it may also signify possession, meaning “for or belonging to.” See Allen, *Ezekiel 20—48*, 190; and Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 267.

<sup>5</sup> Multiple manuscripts suggest the spelling *חֶבְרֵי*. See the apparatus for BHS, *Ezekiel 37:16*.

<sup>6</sup> In the second half of verse 16, the form *וְלֹקַח* is a rare combination of the imperative *לֹקַח* with a conjunction. Greenberg argues that the long form indicates that the underlying Hebrew text did not show the same word twice. Zimmerli mentions the possibility of the infinitive absolute *לֹקַח* or replacing it with another *לֹקַח* as proposed by scholars such as Herrmann and Fohrer. Cornhill suggests *וְלֹקַחַת*. See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 267—268; and Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21—37*, 754.

<sup>7</sup> In comparison with the LXX, Syr., and Vulg., the MT apparatus suggests *אַחֲר* (another) due to the Greek translation δευτέραν (second). Allen finds this emendation counterproductive on the basis of Zimmerli’s idea that *אָמֵן* functions as a sectional keyword. See Allen, *Ezekiel 20—48*, 190; and Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 268.

<sup>8</sup> According to Allen, the phrase *עַז אֲפְרִים* was most likely an early gloss in the MT and other ancient manuscripts, as it spoils the parallelism. It was probably added to explain the uncommon use of “Joseph” as a moniker for the northern tribes. Allen claims the addition of “Ephraim” may be due in part to the reunification promises in Jer 31:9, 18. Zimmerli views it as an explanatory interpretive element. See Allen, *Ezekiel 20—48*, 190; and Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 268.

<sup>9</sup> Instead of *וְכָל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל* (and all the house of Israel), Greek manuscripts suggest perhaps *וְכָל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל* (and all the sons of Israel), following the LXX καὶ πάντας τοὺς νιοὺς Ἰσραὴλ. See the MT apparatus for BHS, *Ezekiel 37:16*, LXX, *Ezekiel 37:16*; and Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 268.

“And you son of man, take unto yourself one stick and write on it, ‘To Judah and to the sons of Israel, his friends.’ Then take another<sup>10</sup> stick and write on it ‘To Joseph, stick of Ephraim, and all the house of Israel, his friends.’

**וְקָרַב אֲתֶם אֶחָד אֶל־אֶחָד לְעֵץ אֶחָד וְהִיוּ לְאֶחָדים<sup>11</sup> בִּידְךָ:**

Then join them for yourself near to one another as one stick, and they will be as one in your hand.

**וְכֹאשֶׁר<sup>12</sup> יֹאמְרוּ אֶלְيֶיךָ בְּנֵי עַמֹּךָ לְאָמַר הַלּוֹא־תָגִיד לְנוּ מַה־אָלֶה לְךָ:**

Then [it will be] when the sons of your people will speak unto you saying, ‘Behold, will you not declare to us what these are to you?’

**דָּבָר<sup>14</sup> אֶלְהָם כִּיה־אָמַר אֶדְנִי<sup>15</sup> יְהוָה הַנֶּה אָנִי לְקַח אֶת־עֵץ<sup>16</sup> יוֹסֵף אֲשֶׁר  
בִּיד־אֶפְרַיִם<sup>17</sup> וּשְׂבִطִי יִשְׂרָאֵל חֶבְרוֹן נִתְחַתֵּי אֶזְתָּם עַלְיוֹן<sup>18</sup> אֶת־עֵץ יְהוָה**

<sup>10</sup> Literally “one.”

<sup>11</sup>The MT apparatus suggests the singular **לְאֶחָד** instead of the plural **לְאֶחָדים**. According to Allen, the use of **לְאֶחָדים** “seems to be a case of grammatical assimilation to the verb. See Allen, *Ezekiel 20–48*, 190. According to Zimmerli, **לְאֶחָדים** has been misunderstood by the translator of the LXX as a verbal form, resulting in the translation: *τοῦ δῆσας αὐτάς*. This translation has caused the independence of the conclusion: *καὶ ἔσονται ἐν τῇ χειρί σου*. Zimmerli disagrees with Driver, who transposes the order of the wording in the Hebrew phrase: *לְךָ לְאֶחָדים יְהִי לְעֵץ אֶחָד בִּידְךָ*. Zimmerli argues for the preservation of the MT in this case. See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 268.

<sup>12</sup> The MT apparatus offers the possibility of an alternative **וְהִנֵּה כִּי** (and it will be when) to reflect the LXX translation *καὶ ἔσται ὅταν*. Allen argues that the LXX represents a more idiomatic Hebrew style, and Zimmerli concurs with the primacy of the LXX in this case, claiming the **וְהִנֵּה** provides the fuller Hebraizing introduction. See Allen, *Ezekiel 20–48*, 190; and Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 268.

<sup>13</sup> Zimmerli suggests that since **לְאָמָר** is missing from the LXX and from other similar counter-questions posed to Ezekiel by the people, it may represent a later addition. See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 268.

<sup>14</sup> The MT apparatus suggests the possibility of **דָּבָר** (you will say) instead of the imperative **דָּבַר** (say!) to reflect the LXX *καὶ ἔσται* (and you will say). See also Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 268.

<sup>15</sup> The MT apparatus suggests that **אֶדְנִי** was added to reflect the LXX *κύριος*.

<sup>16</sup> Instead of “stick,” the LXX uses *τὴν φυλὴν* (the race or tribe) of Joseph. According to Allen, the Greek translator uses “tribe” instead of “stick” in order to replace the metaphor with the reality. See Allen, *Ezekiel 20–48*, 190. Greenberg finds the mixture of tribes and sticks problematic. See Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21–37*, 754.

<sup>17</sup> Allen sees the phrase **אֶשְׁר בִּיד־אֶפְרַיִם** as an early gloss on “stick” in the MT and other ancient versions. He surmises the use was primarily grammatical, in order to emphasize the possession indicated by **בִּיד**. See Allen, *Ezekiel 20–48*, 190; and Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21–37*, 754.

וְעַשֵּׂיתֶם לְעֵץ אֶחָד<sup>19</sup> וְהִי אֶחָד בְּיָדֵיכֶם:<sup>20</sup>

Say unto them, “This is what the Lord Yahweh says, ‘Behold I will take the stick of Joseph which [is] in the hand of Ephraim and the tribes of Israel, his friends, and I will give them [it] to him, [with?] the stick of Judah and I will make them into one stick, and they will be one in my hand.”

וְהִי הַעֲצָם אֲשֶׁר-תִּכְתֹּב עֲלֵיכֶם בְּיָדְךָ לְעֵינֵיכֶם:<sup>20</sup>

And the sticks upon which you will write will be in your hand in their sight.<sup>21</sup>

וְדִבֶּר אֲלֵיכֶם כִּי-אָמַר אֶלְيָהוּ הִנֵּה אָנָּי לְקַח אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִבֵּין הַגּוּם אֲשֶׁר הַלְּכוּ שָׁם וְקִבְצָתִי אֶתְכֶם אֶל-אֶרְזָתָם:<sup>22</sup>

Then say unto them, “This is what the Lord God says, ‘Behold I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they went, and I will gather them from all around, and I will bring them into their land.’

<sup>18</sup> The LXX uses ἐπὶ (upon) in place of the Hebrew עַל (unto), which could result in the translation, “...and I will give [or establish] them *upon* the tribe of Judah.” According to Allen, אָוָתָם is an early gloss in the MT relating to וְעַשֵּׂיתֶם אֶתְכֶם (and I will make them) in verse 22. Zimmerli and Allen note that the LXX (or its *Vorlage*) were most likely secondary to the MT. The LXX translator transforms “with it the stick” to “with the stick” for a smoother reading. Greenberg notes the difficulty of the plural object “them,” in that the object most likely refers to the stick of Joseph rather than to the tribes of Israel. See Allen, *Ezekiel 20—48*, 190; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 269; and Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21—37*, 754.

<sup>19</sup> Some manuscripts add לְאַחֲרֵי, transforming the singular אַחֲרֵי to the plural לְאַחֲרִים. The MT apparatus compares this to the plural לְאַחֲרִים employed in verse 17.

<sup>20</sup> In place of the Hebrew עַשֵּׂיתֶם לְעֵץ אֶחָד וְהִי אֶחָד בְּיָדֵיכֶם (I will make them as one stick, and they will be one in my hand), the LXX reads καὶ συντάσσεις εἰς ράβδον μίαν ἐν τῇ χειρὶ Ιουδα (and they will be one rod [in] the hand of Judah). The picture shifts drastically from Yahweh holding the stick to Judah holding the stick. Interestingly, the Vul. reads בְּיָדוֹ (in his hand), aligning more closely with the LXX. Allen cites this as “interesting evidence for the practice of abbreviation in Hebrew manuscripts.” Zimmerli sees the shift as an accent in the LXX on Judean messianism over the emphasis on the unity of the nation of Yahweh in the MT. See Allen, *Ezekiel 20—48*, 190; and Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 269.

<sup>21</sup> Literally “before their eyes.”

<sup>22</sup> Allen argues that the unity between this section and the previous one must be taken seriously, since vs. 21 answers the question of the exiles from the previous section. He sees a structural flow in vs. 16—22 with the repetitive use of the verb לְקַח. See Allen, *Ezekiel 20—48*, 191—192.

<sup>23</sup> In place of אֶל-אֶרְזָתָם (into their land), the LXX reads εἰς τὴν γῆν τοῦ Ισραὴλ (into the land of Israel). See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 269.

<sup>22</sup> וְעַשֵּׂיתִי אֶתְכֶם לְגָוי אֶחָד בְּאֶרֶץ <sup>24</sup> בְּהָרִי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמֶלֶךְ <sup>25</sup> אֶחָד יִהְיֶה לְכֶם  
לְמֶלֶךְ וְלֹא יִהְיֶה <sup>26</sup> עַזְזָב <sup>27</sup> לְשָׁנִים וְלֹא יִחְצֹזֶעֶד לְשָׁתִי מִמְּלָכֹות עַזְזָב:

And I will make them into one nation in the land, in the mountains of Israel, and one king will be their king, and they will never be as two nations, and they will never be divided as two kingdoms again.

<sup>23</sup> וְלֹא יִטְמָאוּ עוֹד בְּגָלוּיָהֶם וּבְשָׁקוֹצִיָּהֶם וּבְכָל פְּשָׁעֵיהֶם <sup>29</sup> וְהוֹשְׁעָתִי אֶתְכֶם  
מִכָּל מַזְשְׁבָתֵיכֶם <sup>30</sup> אֲשֶׁר חָטָאוּ בָּהֶם וְטָהָרָתִי אֶתְכֶם וְהַיְלִי לְעַם וְאֲנִי  
אֲהֵיה לְהָם לְאֱלֹהִים:

<sup>24</sup> The MT apparatus offers an alternate reading בְּאֶרְצִי based on the LXX ἐν τῇ γῇ μου καὶ (in my land). Zimmerli and Allen find the translation “in my land” inappropriate here, noting the probable influence of Ezek 36:5: אֲשֶׁר נָתַנְתִּיאת-אֶרְצִי (who gave my land to themselves). Allen cites other cases of LXX assimilation to other passages in this context. Zimmerli also sees בְּאֶרְצִי as the “unemphatic resumption” of אֶרְצָתֵם in verse 21. See Allen, *Ezekiel 20—48*, 190; and Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 269.

<sup>25</sup>In the LXX, the word used here is ἄρχων (ruler) rather than king. Compare also with verse 24. Allen notes possible LXX assimilation to Ezek 34:24. Zimmerli suggests that the LXX points to a נָשָׁא in the original. Zimmerli and Greenberg both argue that the parallelism of לְגָוי וּמֶלֶךְ (nation and king) with גָויִם וּמֶלֶכֹות (nations and kingdoms) supports the MT. See Allen, *Ezekiel 20—48*, 190; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21—37*, 756; and Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 269.

<sup>26</sup> In the LXX, the word used here is λέπλε (for/as king) is absent. Again, Zimmerli argues that the construction of verse 22b favors the MT use of לְמֶלֶךְ. See Allen, *Ezekiel 20—48*, 190; and Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 269—270.

<sup>27</sup> Multiple manuscripts read יִהְיֶה (they will be) instead of יִהְיָה (he will be). The use of יִהְיֶה is preferred due to the grammatical and parallel construction of the phrase (22b). Greenberg suggests a scribal error influenced by יִהְיָה four words before. See Greenberg *Ezekiel 12—37*, 756; and Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 270

<sup>28</sup> This second use of עַזְזָב is not attested in the LXX. Zimmerli views the repetition of this word twice in one verse as a “superfluous overinterpretation.” See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 270.

<sup>29</sup> The phrase וּבְשָׁקוֹצִיָּהֶם וּבְכָל פְּשָׁעֵיהם is not attested in the LXX. According to Zimmerli, this phrase “...gives the impression of being a secondary overloading.” See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 270.

<sup>30</sup> The latter two noun phrases are absent in the LXX *Vorlage*, but Allen (citing Levin) supports the priority of the MT with reference to Ezek 14:11. Some manuscripts substitute the word מַשְׁוֹבְתָּהָם (their backslidings) for מַזְשְׁבָתֵיכֶם (their dwellings). Allen suggests that perhaps the MT was influenced by the repetition of וְיִשְׁבֹו (and they will dwell) in verse 25, and by the association of “dwelling places” (Ezek 6:14) with “idols” (Ezek 6:13). “Backslidings” seems to fit the context better than “dwellings.” Greenberg notes the similarity to Ezek 36:29, “I will deliver you from all your impurities.” He concurs that the most appropriate translation is “defections” or “backslidings.” See Allen, *Ezekiel 20—48*, 190—191; Greenberg *Ezekiel 12—37*, 756; and Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 270.

<sup>31</sup> The LXX adds κύριος (Lord) after ἐγώ (I). See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 270.

And they will never again defile themselves with their idols and with their vile images and with all their offenses. And I will save them from all their dwelling places [backslidings?] in which they sinned, and I will cleanse them, and they will be my people, and I will be their God.

**וְעַבְדִּי דָוד מֶלֶךְ עַלֵּהֶם וּרֹאֶה אֶחָד<sup>32</sup> יְהִי לְכָלָם וּבְמִשְׁפָטִי יֵלְכוּ וְחַקְתִּי  
יִשְׁמְרוּ וּשְׁעֻשׂו אֹתָם:**<sup>24</sup>

And my servant David will be king over them and one shepherd will be for all of them, and they will walk in my judgments, and my statutes they will guard, and they will do them.

**וַיֵּשְׁבוּ עַל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לְעַבְדִּי לִיעַלְבָב אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁבּוּ־בָה אֶבֶןִתִיכֶם<sup>34</sup>  
וַיֵּשְׁבוּ עַלְיהָ הַמֶּה וּבְנֵיהֶם וּבְנֵי בְּנֵיהֶם עַד־עוֹלָם<sup>35</sup> וְדָוד עַבְדִּי נְשִׁיאָה לָהֶם  
לְעוֹלָם:**

And they will dwell in the land which I gave to my servant, to Jacob, which your fathers dwelled in it. And they will dwell upon it, they and their sons, and the sons of their sons forever. And David my servant [will be] a leader for them forever.

**וְכָרַתִּי לָהֶם בְּרִית שָׁלוֹם בְּרִית עוֹלָם יְהִי אֹתָם וּגְתָתִים<sup>36</sup> וְהַרְבִּיתִי אֹתָם  
וּגְתָתִי אֶת־מִקְדָּשִׁי בְּתוֹכָם לְעוֹלָם:**

<sup>32</sup> The LXX substitutes ἄρχον (ruler) for מֶלֶךְ (king).

<sup>33</sup> Allen also sees intentionality with the repetition of the word אֶחָד through verse 24a. See Allen, *Ezekiel 20—48*, 191—192.

<sup>34</sup> Other manuscripts such as the LXX imply “their,” which is most likely a secondary reading since it is easier and smoother. See Allen, *Ezekiel 20—48*, 191, and Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 270.

<sup>35</sup> While the phrase וּבְנֵיהֶם וּבְנֵי בְּנֵיהֶם עַד־עוֹלָם (and their sons and the sons of their sons forever) is absent in the LXX, the marker for the beginning of the phrase הֵאָה (they) remains in the LXX (αὐτοί). The awkwardness of αὐτοί, καὶ Δαυὶד (they, and David), leads Zimmerli to believe that the rest of the omitted phrase must have been left out accidentally. See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 270.

<sup>36</sup> The phrase “I will establish” or “I will give” (וּמְתַقִּים) is missing in the LXX. Allen believes this is an addition to the MT, and the LXX is likely an earlier, shorter reading. For an explanation of how the Hebrew text evolved with the addition of the extra phrase, see Allen, *Ezekiel 20—48*, 191; and Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21—37*, 757. Zimmerli argues that אֹתָם וּגְתָתִים is a “slight textual corruption of a marginal catchword.” This error eventually ended up in the primary text as a doublet of אֹתָם וּגְתָתִי. See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 271.

And I will cut with them a covenant of peace, it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will establish them and make them numerous, and I will place my sanctuary in their midst forever.

**וְהִי מַשְׁבֵּנִי עַל־יָמָם**<sup>37</sup> **וְהִי תִּהְיֶה לְאֱלֹהִים וְהַמֶּה יְהִי־לִי לְעָם:**<sup>27</sup>

And my dwelling place will be with them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.

**וַיַּדְעֻ הַגּוֹיִם כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה מֶקְדֵּשׁ אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּהִזְבֵּחַ מֶקְדֵּשִׁי  
בְּתוֹכָם לְעוֹלָם:**<sup>28</sup>

And the nations will know that I am Yahweh, the one who makes<sup>38</sup> Israel holy. My sanctuary will be among them forever.

## 5.2 Delimitation of Pericope

Ezekiel 37:15—28 stands as a clearly marked unit for several reasons. First, verse 14 closes with a פ, marking the end of a paragraph. Second, verse 15 begins with the prophetic word formula (וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אָלֵי לֵאמֹר) and this is the word of Yahweh unto me saying), unmistakably initiating a new prophetic oracle.<sup>39</sup> This divine speech continues through verse 28, as Yahweh alternates between giving Ezekiel acts to perform and words to declare. Third, the restoration oracle concludes in v. 28 with divine promise and reaffirmation of the covenant, with repetition of the covenant formula (וְהִי תִּהְיֶה לְאֱלֹהִים וְהַמֶּה יְהִי־לִי לְעָם) (I will be their God and they will be my people). The closing verse includes the nations as well as the people of Israel in the knowledge of Yahweh and his holiness. In the MT, verse 28 closes with a ס, marking

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<sup>37</sup> Allen notes that **עליהם** is literally “over or above,” indicating the position of the temple on a hill. He cites Ezek 40:2 in support of this idea. See Allen, *Ezekiel 20—48*, 191.

<sup>38</sup> Literally “the one making.”

<sup>39</sup> See Allen, *Ezekiel 20—48*, 191.

the end of the chapter as well as the end of the pericope. Finally, the prophetic word formula in Ezek 38:1 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים (and this is the word of Yahweh unto me saying) indicates a new oracle and clearly marks Ezek 37:28 as the end of the previous one.<sup>40</sup> This oracle can be divided into a number of subsidiary sections as is outlined in the following structural analysis.

### 5.3 Structural Analysis

- I. Prophetic word formula (Ezek 37:15)
- II. Instruction to perform a prophetic act (Ezek 37:16—17)
  - A. Take unto yourself one stick and write on it
    - 1. To Judah
    - 2. To the sons of Israel, his companions
  - B. Then take one stick and write on it
    - 1. To Joseph, stick of Ephraim
    - 2. And all the house of Israel, his companions
  - C. Then bring them near to one another
    - 1. To yourself as one stick
    - 2. They will be as one in your hand
- III. Result of prophetic act: inquiry for interpretation (Ezek 37:18)
- IV. Response to inquiry: instruction to declare prophetic speech (Ezek 37:19)
  - A. Instruction: Say unto them
  - B. Declaration: This is what the Lord Yahweh says
    - 1. Behold I will take the stick of Joseph
      - a. Which [is] in the hand of Ephraim
      - b. And the tribes of Israel, his companions
    - 2. And I will give them to him with the stick of Judah
    - 3. I will make them as one stick

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<sup>40</sup> See Allen, *Ezekiel 20—48*, 191.

*They will be one in my hand*

V. Instruction to perform a prophetic act and to declare prophetic speech (Ezek 37:20—28)

A. Prophetic Act (vs. 20):

1. And the sticks upon which you will write
2. Will be in your hand before their eyes

B. Prophetic Speech (vs. 21-28):

1. Instruction: Then say unto them
2. Declaration: This is what the Lord God says

a. Divine Action 1 (vs. 21—22a)

- 1) Behold I will take the sons of Israel
  - a) From among the nations
  - b) Where they went
- 2) And I will gather them  
From all around
- 3) And I will bring them  
Into their land
- 4) And I will make them into one nation
  - a) In the land
  - b) In the mountains of Israel

b. Result of Divine Action 1 (vs. 22b—23a)

- 1) And one king will be their king
- 2) And they will never be as two nations
  - a) And they will never be divided
  - b) As two kingdoms again
- 3) And they will never again defile themselves
  - a) With their idols
  - b) And with their vile images
  - c) And with all their offenses.

c. Divine Action 2 (vs. 23b)

- 1) And I will save them
  - a) From all their dwelling places [backslidings?]
  - b) In which they sinned
- 2) And I will cleanse them
- 3) And they will be my people and I will be their God

d. Result of Divine Action 2 (vs. 24—25)

- 1) **And my servant David will be king over them**  
*And one shepherd will be for all of them*
- 2) And they will walk in my judgments
  - a) And my statutes they will guard
  - b) And they will do them

- 3) And they will dwell in the land
  - a) Which I gave to my servant, to Jacob
  - b) Which their fathers dwelled in it.
- 4) And they will dwell upon it
  - a) They and their sons
  - b) And the sons of their sons forever.
- 5) And David my servant [will be] a leader for them forever.**
- e. Divine Action 3 (vs. 26—27)
  - 1) And I will cut with them a covenant of peace  
*It will be an everlasting covenant with them*
  - 2) And I will establish them and make them numerous
  - 3) And I will place my sanctuary in their midst forever  
*And my dwelling place will be with them*
  - 4) And I will be their God, and they will be my people
- f. Result of Divine Action 3 (vs. 28)
  - 1) And the nations will know
    - a) That I am Yahweh
    - b) The one making Israel holy
  - 2) My sanctuary will be among them [Israel] forever

This structural analysis demonstrates the consecutive connection between Ezekiel's prophetic acts and the coming divine actions of Yahweh on Israel's behalf. As Ezekiel performs prophetic acts and declares prophetic speech, Yahweh reveals his purposes by disclosing coming divine actions; Ezekiel acts first, and then through Ezekiel's actions Yahweh reveals the divine actions which Ezekiel's actions symbolized. The structural pattern of the pericope begins with an instruction to perform a prophetic act and is followed by prophetic speech, which reveals both the nature and results of coming divine action.

This pericope opens with a prophetic word formula, followed by sets of instructions for prophetic action and prophetic speech. The prophetic act of Ezekiel in taking, writing on and joining the two sticks together represents Yahweh's divine

action. In verses 16—19, the prophetic sign is converted into divine metaphor.<sup>41</sup> Significantly, Ezekiel does not issue any imperatives to the people of Israel and Judah. Rather, Yahweh promises the transformation of their actions in response to His. Yahweh's intervention is organized and divided into three cycles of divine action, each of which is followed by the results of His divine action.

The first set of divine actions involves re-gathering the scattered exiles, returning them to the land, and reunifying the two nations into one. These divine actions result in a two-part pattern: a political establishment (the Davidic king unifies them) followed by a spiritual transformation (they will repent from their idols and offenses). The second set of divine actions is primarily spiritual in nature: Yahweh will save them from their backsliding and sin, and he will cleanse them. The purpose of this spiritual transformation is presented in the covenant formula: they will be my people and I will be their God. The second set of results echoes the same two-part pattern as the first: a political establishment (the Davidic king rules over them) and spiritual transformation (they will walk in Yahweh's judgments and guard his statutes). The results of Yahweh's actions intensify in this second cycle; the king goes from unifying to ruling, and the people go from repenting to walking in obedience. This obedience brings with it the restoration of the inheritance of the land, whereas the first set of results merely involved returning to the land. The second set of results closes with another promise of a Davidic ruler, forming a chiastic pattern. Verse 24 opens with "And my servant David will be king over them," and verse 25 closes with "and David

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<sup>41</sup> Allen, *Ezekiel 20—48*, 191.

my servant will be a leader for them forever.” These two bookends of Davidic servant leadership enclose and mark this second set of results following the divine action.

In Yahweh’s third action cycle, he makes a covenant of peace with the people of Israel and Judah. This covenant involves the establishment of the reunified nation, the multiplication of descendants, and the promise that Yahweh will dwell among them eternally. Again, the covenant formula is employed, this time stating Yahweh’s relationship to the restored nation first: I will be their God and they will be my people. The third set of results breaks the pattern of the first two. First, the nations will know that Yahweh makes Israel holy. The results of Yahweh’s actions in rescuing, reunifying and restoring Judah and Israel now extend to all the nations of the world experiencing a knowledge of God. The prophetic oracle closes with a repetition of the promise that the sanctuary of Yahweh will be among the people of Israel and Judah forever.

## 5.4 Rhetorical Analysis

### 5.4.1 Ezekiel 37:15—16

In verse 15, Ezekiel employs a common introductory phrase for a prophetic oracle indicating divine speech. This frequently repeated prophetic word formula indicates the beginning of a new pericope. This divine speech is personal, as Ezekiel indicates, “This is the word of Yahweh unto *me* saying.”<sup>42</sup> Greenberg rightly notes how the imperative נָשַׁׁלְתָּ (take for yourself) possesses a subtle reflexive nuance, which

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<sup>42</sup> For example, *Young’s Literal Translation* disregards the vav consecutive and translates the verbs with past tense or completed action. It could also be translated “This was the word of Yahweh to me” with the use of the vav consecutive and prophetic perfect.

focuses the attention on the actor. He alone is responsible to perform this prophetic act.<sup>43</sup> The strength for me in Greenberg's argument lies in the symbolic implications of this reflexive nuance—just as Ezekiel will perform this action independently and volitionally, so will Yahweh solely perform the action of reunifying the two estranged nations into one. As Allen notes, Ezekiel had received such commands previously, as in the instance with the death of his wife symbolizing the coming destruction of the temple (Ezek 24:15—24).<sup>44</sup> Just as Ezekiel acts alone, he represents the actions of Yahweh, who also acts alone on behalf of reunifying, reconciling and restoring the exiles of his covenant people into one nation. This emphasizes the point that the miraculous restoration of the people of Israel and Judah has nothing to do with their actions; it is a sovereign work performed solely by Yahweh alone. Lest the people believe it was due to their human efforts or performed on their behalf, the repetition formula, which ties the book of Ezekiel together thematically, closes the oracle and reveals Yahweh's purpose in the restoration: "Then *the nations* will know that I am the Lord" (Ezek 37:27).

While the text remains unclear as to precisely how Ezekiel is to join the two sticks as one, it seems highly likely to me that joining the two sticks by holding them together end-to-end, so they appear as one long stick, may create imagery with the strongest rhetorical value.<sup>45</sup> Some suggest that perhaps they were to be held side-by-side in his hand, while others suggest the binding together of two flat pieces of wood,

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<sup>43</sup> Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21—37*, 753.

<sup>44</sup> See Allen, *Ezekiel 20—48*, 192.

<sup>45</sup> Cooke and Taylor are among those who support this reading. See Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel*, 401; and Taylor, *Ezekiel*, 238—239.

analogous to sewing together two pages of a book.<sup>46</sup> While these side-by-side images present a picture of strength, they may fail to portray fully the concept of unity—two becoming one in a united kingdom. Side-by-side imagery still presents two separate sticks or two separate kingdoms lying adjacent to one another. It also fails to convey the restoration of the kingdom to its original condition, whereas the end-to-end joining of two sticks into one long stick represents the restoration of the stick to its original condition before the division between the northern and southern kingdoms. They are no longer two peoples, but now they are joined as one and restored to the unity they shared in the Davidic Empire. The first part of the command is to take **וְאֵלֶיךָ** **יַחַד** (one stick).

Greenberg rightly recognizes the significance of the repetition of the key word **וְאֵלֶיךָ** (one) in this pericope, which serves to underscore the theme of unity in the restoration of the Davidic kingdom.<sup>47</sup> Zimmerli notes that while the word **יַחַד** (stick) usually represents a tree in the book of Ezekiel (Ezek 6:13, 17:24, 34:27), it can also refer to a single stick of wood (Ezek 15:3).<sup>48</sup> This verbal parallel strengthens the likelihood of the visual image of a single stick of wood being restored to its original condition as one long stick. Ezekiel never employs the word **יַחַד** to denote two separate flat pieces of wood, such as sheaves or tables. Therefore, in my view, the interpretation in the Aramaic Targum of two separate leaves or tablets joined together, seems unlikely.<sup>49</sup> In addition, the LXX translation **πάβδον** literally means “staff,” corresponding more

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<sup>46</sup> Carley, *The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, 252; and Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21—37*, 753.

<sup>47</sup> Greenberg notes how the word **וְאֵלֶיךָ** is repeated 11 times in this oracle. See Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21—37*, 753.

<sup>48</sup> See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 2, 273.

<sup>49</sup> Carley, *The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, 252.

closely to the translation and visual imagery portrayed by the word “stick.”<sup>50</sup> These staffs or rods could allude to the tribal leaders as in Num 17:16—26, reminiscent of the time when Yahweh commanded them to inscribe each leader’s name upon his rod.

The preposition **לְ**, as in **לִיהוּדָה**, indicates possession (belonging to Judah).<sup>51</sup> The writing on the sticks designates one stick as belonging to “Judah” (the southern kingdom), and one stick as belonging to “Joseph” (Ephraim and Manasseh, representing the northern kingdom).<sup>52</sup> It is interesting that Ezekiel refers to the northern kingdom as “Joseph” rather than as “Israel.” Typically, Ezekiel reserves the name “Israel” for references to the entire covenant nation, including both northern and southern kingdoms. By using “Joseph,” Ezekiel is stating explicitly that survivors of the ten northern tribes of Israel will be reunited with the survivors of the two southern tribes of Judah. Once again, following their destruction and dispersion, they will be restored and reunified as one people and one nation. Therefore, the following phrase **וְכָל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל** (and all the house of Israel) should be understood in this context to refer to the entire nation (Israel and Judah) restored.<sup>53</sup> Significantly, both Joseph and Judah

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<sup>50</sup> Zimmerli compares this picture of wooden tablets to Is 8:1 and Hab 2:2. Allen and Greenberg cite G.R. Driver and Steinmann for developing this idea of tablets indicated in the Targum. Greenberg explains that although writing on a tablet is much easier, the two tablets carry no association with a king or a kingdom, nor do they present as clear a picture of unity as the two sticks combined into one do. Allen views the single stick imagery as most viable. See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 2, 273; Allen, *Ezekiel* 20—48, 193; and Greenberg, *Ezekiel* 21—37, 753.

<sup>51</sup> Greenberg, *Ezekiel* 21—37, 753.

<sup>52</sup> Greenberg views Judah as the historical rival of Joseph based on the competition for the best blessing (Gen 49) and the primogeniture (1 Chron 5:1—2). Other tribes associated with Judah include Simeon, parts of Benjamin, the Calebites, Kenizzites, and Jerahmeelites. Ephraim is often the moniker used to refer to the northern kingdom since Jeroboam, the first to rebel against Solomon and the Davidic dynasty, was an Ephraimite. Other prophetic texts refer to the northern kingdom as “Ephraim” (Is 7:2, 5, 8, 11:13; Hos 4:17, among others. See Greenberg, *Ezekiel* 21—37, 753—754; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 2, 274; and Martin Noth, *The History of Israel* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1960), 55, 76.

<sup>53</sup> See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 2, 274; and Joyce, *Ezekiel*, 210.

are to identify with the “house of Israel” and the “sons of Israel” as their friends and companions. “Israel” describes the entire unified nation, and both Joseph and Judah will identify as “Israel,” once they are rejoined and reconciled together.

The imagery of royal scepters correlates nicely with the emphasis on possession, following the tradition of the tribal princes carving marks of ownership upon their staffs. Just as leaders bore their insignias on their scepters, so Yahweh writes his mark of ownership on these sticks.<sup>54</sup> According to Zimmerli, these staffs or rods should not be associated with two shepherds’ staffs as pictured in Zech 11:4—17, but rather as royal scepters. Repeated references to kingdoms and kings in Ezek 37:22, as well as focus on kingship in verses 22, 24, and 25, seems to strengthen Zimmerli’s view and reinforce such governmental imagery.<sup>55</sup> However, the textual connection between the Davidic king of Ezek 37:24—25 to the Davidic shepherd of Ezek 34:23—31 allows for the possibility of the dual allusion to Yahweh and David’s leadership roles over the reunified nation as both king and shepherd. Therefore, I believe the reunified stick possesses a double entendre, representing both Yahweh’s royal scepter and a shepherd’s staff, since the Davidic king will both rule and shepherd the reunified nation.

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<sup>54</sup> Greenburg also compares this to the staff donated by Rameses II to the god Amun, which bore an inscription with a dedication to Amun, as well as the name and epithets of the king. See Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21—37*, 753.

<sup>55</sup>Zimmerli also correlates Ezek 19:11 with the mention of royal scepters to this text. See Allen, *Ezekiel 20—48*, 193; and Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 273.

#### 5.4.2 Ezekiel 37:17

Yahweh then commands Ezekiel to join the sticks together as one. Greenberg sees the use of the word **בָּרַק** (join) as an intentional verbal connection to the previous oracle in Ezek 37:7b, in which Yahweh declares that the bones will be joined (**וְתִקְרְבֹּו**) together.<sup>56</sup> I concur with Greenberg, since the imagery in both oracles portrays a divine “joining together,” which will replace separation and death with unity and life. First, Yahweh promises to perform the action of joining dry bones together into a reconstituted army. Next, he commands Ezekiel to join two sticks together into a reunified kingdom. As the bones are joined together to revive life, so the sticks will be joined together to revive national unity and covenant faithfulness.<sup>57</sup> Since Ezekiel’s actions represent the actions of Yahweh, Ezekiel’s hand represents the hand of Yahweh in this prophetic sign-act. The two unified nations are now one as a royal scepter and shepherd’s staff in the hand of Yahweh, their king and shepherd (Ezek 34:11-31, 37:24).

#### 5.4.3 Ezekiel 37:18

Yahweh commands Ezekiel to perform the prophetic act in public so that the Judean exiles will inquire as to its meaning. As Ezekiel joins the two sticks in his hand, he rouses the curiosity of onlookers. The inquiry and response in verse 18 prepares the way for the divine oracle, through which Ezekiel transforms the prophetic act into

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<sup>56</sup> Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21—37*, 754.

<sup>57</sup> Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 274.

divine metaphor. The prophetic act of bringing the two sticks together both enacts and reveals Yahweh's purpose.<sup>58</sup>

#### 5.4.4 Ezek 37:19

As in verse 16, Greenberg argues that the two sticks correspond to the scepters of the kings of both respective nations.<sup>59</sup> While this interpretation is possible, the point of the imagery is not to emphasize the human leadership of either nation, but rather to pronounce the divine rule of Yahweh as he unites the royal leadership and the people of both nations. Each of the elements from verse 16 are repeated in verse 19, but the emphasis this time is on Yahweh's word and action; He alone will unify the two sticks and the two nations. The only other unique addition to verse 16 is the mention of וְשָׁבֵת (the tribes of Israel, his companions).<sup>60</sup> The movement of the stick from the hand of Ephraim to the hand of Yahweh is highly significant. Previously, the scepter of rulership was in human hands, throughout the history of the nation of Israel. This is reminiscent of the Deuteronomistic History in which the prophet Samuel urged the people of Israel not to request a human king, but to recognize Yahweh as their king. The desire of Yahweh revealed through the prophet was for the scepter of leadership to remain in his hand. However, the people persisted in their pleas for a human king, and

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<sup>58</sup> This inquiry of perplexed people is reminiscent of Ezek 12:9, 21:5, 12, and 24:19. See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 274; and Allen, *Ezekiel 20—48*, 193.

<sup>59</sup> Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21—37*, 755.

<sup>60</sup> Zimmerli finds it curious that no companions or other tribes associated with Judah receive recognition, and he therefore concludes that this phrase was likely a secondary addition to the text. While that is possible, I do not see it as likely since the function of verse 19 is to explain and expound upon verse 16. Therefore, even in its original form, it likely contained additional elements to verse 16. See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 275.

eventually Yahweh granted their request. At this point, the royal scepter moved from the hand of Yahweh to the hands of men. The ensuing history of the kings of Israel and Judah can be understood as providing a larger didactic narrative, illustrating how the corruption of human kings eventually destroys both kingdoms.<sup>61</sup> Ezekiel artfully constructs the ideal of one kingdom ruled by one king, pictured by the stick moving from the hand of Ephraim to the hand of Yahweh.<sup>62</sup>

#### 5.4.5 Ezekiel 37:20

Verse 20 provides a summary of Ezekiel's sign action, clarifying that the sign took place "in their sight" or literally "before their eyes," referring to the people watching and inquiring about Ezekiel's prophetic act.<sup>63</sup> In the joining of the two sticks, Ezekiel demonstrates the nationalistic ideal of a united kingdom.<sup>64</sup> This miracle involves the restoration and reunification of both the northern and the southern kingdoms, emphasizing the return of the people to their land. Ezekiel's visible actions represent the future visible actions of Yahweh. These are not merely esoteric or eschatological ideals of unity; they are promise for real divine action in human history.

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<sup>61</sup> For example, see 1 Sam 8:10—18.

<sup>62</sup> The prophet Ezekiel also addressed the corruption of leadership using a sheep and shepherd metaphor in Ezek 34, which is echoed in Ezek 36:37—38 and 37:24. Finally, Yahweh is the divine monarch, with David as the prince and shepherd (37:24—25).

<sup>63</sup> Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 2, 275.

<sup>64</sup> As Greenberg aptly explains, "The visual, concrete union of the sticks promises realization of the verbal message." See Greenberg, *Ezekiel* 21—37, 755.

#### 5.4.6 Ezekiel 37:21

Verse 21 explicitly states that Yahweh will bring the sons of Israel from the nations where they have been scattered and return them to the land, echoing the words of Yahweh in Ezek 36:24.<sup>65</sup> However, this promise in Ezek 37:21 refers specifically to the former northern kingdom of Israel.<sup>66</sup> The prophet Jeremiah also foretold the return of the lost northern tribes (Jer 30, 31). While Ezekiel follows this tradition of hope for restoration, Greenberg claims, “A realistic basis for this expectation is not given; nor is there a sign that either prophet was in touch with north Israelites.”<sup>67</sup> Greenburg concludes that these are ideal, not necessarily historically realistic, expressions of restoration. However, in my view, the primary picture portrayed by Ezekiel remains one of reconciliation and restoration, which must literally involve both the exiles of the northern and southern kingdoms to retain any significance. The prophetic message communicated by both speech and act is one of reunification and the mending of old rifts and relational wounds. Reconciliation with Yahweh and fidelity to His covenant necessitates reconciliation among the members of the divided kingdoms. Yahweh will reunite former enemies as a family in one covenant and one kingdom under one king. To follow Greenberg in dismissing this prophetic ideal as historically unrealistic misses the point of the message. The reunification is a miraculous action performed by Yahweh, and therefore is not dependent upon a particular geo-political solution to

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<sup>65</sup> Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 2, 275.

<sup>66</sup> In the Deuteronomistic History, King Josiah’s reform in Samaria and later in an Assyrian province (2 Kings 23:15—20) demonstrate the real hope of the Davidic kings to regain the lost northern tribes.

<sup>67</sup> Eighth century documents from Assyrian cities with “yahu” endings may suggest the deportation of north Israelites to remote regions of the Assyrian empire. However, evidence of any contact with the people of Judah remains lacking. See Greenberg, *Ezekiel* 21—37, 759.

achieve attainment. When and how this restoration and reunification may reach fulfillment remains a mystery, but one thing is clear: the prophetic ideal is for the people to reconcile, to mend broken relationships, and to unify. In that sense, the message for the people is a moral and ethical call to transcend the trauma of past tragedies and divisions, and to pursue together a peaceful and unified future.

#### 5.4.7 Ezekiel 37:22

In verse 22, the divine promise, “I will make them into one nation...one king” explains verse 19b, “I will make them into one stick.” The purposeful employment of parallelism in the mention of גּוֹי אֶחָד (one nation) and אַלְקָד אֶחָד (one king) in 22a, followed by שְׁנֵי גּוֹיִם (two nations) and שְׁנֵי מְדֻלָּכֹות (two kingdoms) in 22b, strongly supports the retention of the אַלְקָד (king) in the MT.<sup>68</sup> The stick serves as a metaphor for both nation and king, and the use of the word אַלְקָד signifies the full restoration of the reunified kingdom as a nation.<sup>69</sup> The king’s role in this restoration is to represent both the unity of the people and the rule of Yahweh.<sup>70</sup> The Deuteronomistic History describes similar hope for reconciliation between the northern and southern kingdoms as being central themes of the reign of King Josiah (2 Kgs 22—23).<sup>71</sup> They will be one

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<sup>68</sup> See text and translation notes on verse 22.

<sup>69</sup> See Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25—48*, 413—414.

<sup>70</sup> The king’s responsibilities include serving as guardian of the people’s worship and way of life, as well as acting as a defender of the faith. See Allen, *Ezekiel 20—48*, 193.

<sup>71</sup> This also reflects the hopes of the prophet Jeremiah (Jer 3:18). Ezekiel’s oracle here may have reflected such hopes that still survived from the time of Josiah approximately one generation earlier. See Joyce, *Ezekiel*, 211; and Stalker, *Ezekiel*, 258. Cooke acknowledges that this prophecy was never fulfilled historically in the way Ezekiel had most likely hoped. After the exiles returned to the land, they never had a king who was a descendant of David ruling over them. The short-lived Hasmonean dynasty (165—63 B.C.) was a “brief and disappointing copy of Israel’s monarchy in the old days.” Cooke states, “The fulfillment of Ezekiel’s prophecy must be looked for in something larger than the literal fulfillment of his language.” See Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel*, 402.

nation in the land and on the mountains of Israel. This phrase (בְּהָרִי יִשְׂרָאֵל) (on the mountains of Israel) reminds the reader of Ezek 36:1—15, in which the oracle from Yahweh through the prophet Ezekiel is directed to the mountains. In warfare, the “ancient heights” (Ezek 36:2) were key military strategic points to be captured by the enemies of Israel. Now, these mountains will be places of residence for the newly reconciled, reunified and restored kingdom. This residence upon the land and the mountains is eternal; never again will there be two nations and two peoples. Yahweh’s action of reconciling and establishing one kingdom under one king is everlasting.

#### 5.4.8 Ezekiel 37:23

According to Allen, Ezek 37:15—28 and the previous section Ezek 37:1—14 both function as commentary on Ezek 36:27, which states, “Then I will place my Spirit in your midst. I will do this so that you will walk in my statutes and keep my judgments and do them.”<sup>72</sup> A divinely instituted monarch will prevent the people from repeating their pre-exilic failures by leading them in faithfulness to the worship and covenant of Yahweh. These sins are identified in Ezek 36:18 as עַל־דָּם אֲשֶׁר־שִׁפְכוּ עַל־הָאָרֶץ וּבְגִלְעָדִים טָמֵאָת (the blood which they shed upon the land the idolatries with which they defiled themselves). Turning away from these sins will require an inner transformation of the peoples’ hearts (Ezek 36:25—27), enabling them to live in covenant faithfulness with Yahweh. In previous literature, the prophet has condemned the שְׁקָוֹצִים (vile images or detestable things); now he offers hope that the people of Israel and Judah will be free from these sins.<sup>73</sup> Since the people have been unable or unwilling to cease the worship

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<sup>72</sup> Allen, *Ezekiel 20—48*, 195; and Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21—37*, 755.

<sup>73</sup> Compare with Ezek 5:11, 7:20, 11:18, 21; 20:7, 30. See also Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 275.

of idols and detestable things, Yahweh promises to deliver them (הָשַׁעֲרִי אֶת). The use of the שׁוֹרֵד word is significant, in that it often refers to Yahweh's deliverance of his people from Egypt or from the oppression of other nations. Here we see the prophet expressing the need of the people for internal deliverance from their unfaithfulness every bit as much as they need external deliverance from their enemies and expulsion to foreign lands. Zimmerli rightly sees a notable shift from the emphasis of Ezek 37:15—19 on reunification to the focus in Ezek 37:21—24a on the divinely appointed monarch and the inner renewal of the people.<sup>74</sup> In vs. 15—19, the prophetic sign-act of Yahweh reuniting and restoring the divided kingdom is the emphasis, revealing the macrocosm of the entire pericope's message. Ezek 37:21—24 follows with the microcosm of how Yahweh will achieve this unity and reconciliation: it will require leadership from a divinely chosen monarch and inner transformation of the hearts of the people, which will free them from their sins of backsliding and from their enmity toward one another.

#### 5.4.9 Ezekiel 37:24

The progression of themes moves from reunification (Ezek 37:15—19) to Davidic rule, spiritual renewal, and restoration to the land (Ezek 37:20—28). The theme of Davidic rule gains prominent attention in verse 24 as the prophet connects the ability of the people to live in covenant faithfulness under the rule of the Davidic leader.<sup>75</sup> Ezekiel's mention of David as the leader of a restored kingdom is consistent

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<sup>74</sup> Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 2, 276.

<sup>75</sup> Based on the use of the term "king," Zimmerli attributes this section to a time earlier than the following section, in which "prince" replaces "king." Zimmerli defines the style of vs. 24b—28 as "bipartite proof-saying." Allen contests this classification, arguing that the content is unrelated to the first

with other Hebrew prophets who often designate David as the ideal future king (Hos 3:5, Jer 30:9).<sup>76</sup> The title “my servant” clearly constitutes a messianic reference to this new leader.<sup>77</sup> The parallel imagery of shepherd and king paints the picture of a king who guides and serves the flock of Yahweh’s people by leading them to obey all of Yahweh’s laws and statutes.<sup>78</sup> It is in fact reminiscent of the young boy David, the shepherd, before the power of kingship corrupted him.<sup>79</sup>

In the context of the larger literary section (Ezek 33:21—39:29), the mention of a shepherd may remind the reader of Ezekiel’s rebuke of the wicked shepherds who led Israel astray (Ezek 34:6). In Ezek 34, after Yahweh condemns the wicked shepherds, he designates himself as the shepherd (Ezek 34:11—16). Then, he appoints “his servant David” as the shepherd (Ezek 34:23—24). David is referred to in this context as

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part of the oracle. Zimmerli notes the linguistic connections between 24b and 27a to Lev 26 and Ezek 28:25, suggesting the same redactor responsible for Ezek 28:25 also expanded this final section of the pericope. Ezekiel 37:15—28 demonstrates close relation to Lev 26:2—13, especially vs. 23, in which the blessings of the restoration echo the covenant blessings in Leviticus. Zimmerli associates the Jeremianic tradition with the introduction of the “single shepherd” in Ezek 34:23, contrasting the wicked shepherds and leaders of Israel. This reference seems to correlate with the shepherd leader identified in Ezek 37:20—23, who represents the re-establishment of Israel’s unity. See Allen, *Ezekiel 20—48*, 191—192; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2, 272—273, 278*; and Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21—37*, 760.

<sup>76</sup> Greenberg suggests this ruler will be a moral and perhaps a physical duplicate of the idealized David in late biblical literature. See Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21—37*, 760. I respectfully disagree with his conclusions, because even the idealized David was known for his sins of abuse of the people, bloodshed, violence, rape and adultery in his own house. This new David will lead the people away from the sins and moral failings of the historic David.

<sup>77</sup> See Taylor, *Ezekiel*, 240.

<sup>78</sup> Allen argues that Ezek 37:15—28 serves as a commentary on Ezek 36:27, and he notes the insertion of Ezek 37:24b as a clear reference to Ezek 36:27b. See Allen, *Ezekiel 20—48*, 194; and Block *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25—48*, 418.

<sup>79</sup> For a profound study of how the power of kingship corrupted David’s heart as is evidenced by his treatment of the women in his life, see April D. Westbrook, “*And He Will Take Your Daughters...*”: *Woman Story and the Ethical Evaluation of Monarchy in the David Narrative* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark: 2015).

“shepherd” and “prince,” the same terms used to describe him in Ezek 37:24—25.<sup>80</sup>

Similarly, Yahweh designates himself as king through the prophetic sign-act already discussed (Ezek 37:15—21), but then in 37:24, David is king and shepherd.<sup>81</sup>

Therefore, this Davidic leadership is both spiritual and political.<sup>82</sup> Just as the bad shepherds led Israel into sin, so the good shepherd—the new messianic Davidic king—will lead Israel into covenant faithfulness.<sup>83</sup>

Ezekiel 37:24b also echoes Ezek 36:27b, yet the divine actions prompting covenant faithfulness differ. In Ezek 36, Yahweh places his Spirit in the midst of them, whereas in Ezek 37, he places a king to rule over them. The spiritual renewal of verse 23 increases in verse 24; not only do the covenant people cease from their idolatry and backsliding, but now they follow the judgments and statutes of Yahweh.

#### 5.4.10 Ezekiel 37:25

Submission to Yahweh under the leadership of the messianic Davidic shepherd-king (37:24b) is what enables the people to dwell safely in the land (37:25a). The intentional juxtaposition of obedience to God’s laws (37:24b) with dwelling in the land (37:24a) echoes Lev 26:1, 5 and Ezek 26:27—28, reminding the readers or hearers of the timeless connection between faithfulness to Yahweh’s covenant and prosperity and

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<sup>80</sup> See Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel*, 398; and Joyce, *Ezekiel*, 211.

<sup>81</sup> According to Zimmerli, this “prince” and “shepherd” is merely a servant; the climactic event is the dwelling of Yahweh among his people in the sanctuary. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 278.

<sup>82</sup> According to Fisch, in some Jewish traditions, the Messiah will fulfill and combine both offices of shepherd and king, taking on both political and spiritual leadership. See Fisch, *Ezekiel*, 251.

<sup>83</sup> Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21—37*, 757.

safety in the land. In Ezek 37:25b, Ezekiel replaces **מלך** (king) from 37:24 with **נְשִׁיאָן** (ruler or “head of state”),<sup>84</sup> the term which he continues to use throughout chapters 40—48 to describe the royal leader. Allen convincingly argues that **נְשִׁיאָן** could imply the subjugation of this leader to the true divine king, Yahweh. This leader acts as a vice regent or “prince,” and therefore in his own authority does not wield absolute autocracy or tyranny, reinforcing the concept that Yahweh is monarch and ultimate shepherd, while “David” rules as prince, under-shepherd, and servant, in order to fulfill the will of Yahweh.<sup>85</sup>

The key word used to confirm the permanence of this promised salvation is **עולם** (forever). It seems most likely that this idealized “shepherd, king, and prince” must not be merely a human leader, because he will be “their prince forever” (Ezek 37:25). Zimmerli identifies four eternal elements of the promise in verses 25—26: the people will dwell in the land forever, the Davidic king will rule forever, the covenant of salvation will last forever, and Yahweh’s sanctuary will dwell among His people forever.<sup>86</sup> In the first of the four elements, God abolishes any future threats of expulsion from the land. The permanence of this restoration will enable the people to dwell in peace. Second, this Davidic king who is now called a ruler or a prince (**נְשִׁיאָן**) will have eternal dominion to lead the covenant people into everlasting faithfulness to Yahweh. The precise language used to describe this ruler designates him as a messianic figure

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<sup>84</sup> This was an archaic title used for “an elected tribal chieftan or intertribal president.” See Allen, *Ezekiel 20—48*, 194.

<sup>85</sup> Allen, *Ezekiel 20—48*, 194.

<sup>86</sup> Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 276.

with everlasting leadership, as opposed to a historic monarch with a temporal political kingdom.<sup>87</sup>

#### 5.4.11 Ezekiel 37:26

The third eternal element is an everlasting “covenant of peace” between Yahweh and the people. Greenberg translates it, “a covenant of well-being,” seeking to convey the full meaning of the word. While I appreciate Greenberg’s intention, the translation “peace” (**שָׁלוֹם**) remains crucial for conveying not only well-being, but also the cessation of bloodshed and violence.<sup>88</sup> Zimmerli, Block and Allen note how Ezekiel joins the Davidic tradition with the Abrahamic tradition by employing this phrase **בְּרִית עוֹלָם**, which borrows language from both covenants (2 Sam 23:5, Gen 17:7, Ps 105:10).<sup>89</sup> This allusion to covenant tradition highlights the significance of this new covenant of peace—it will be just as eternal and just as transformational for the reunified kingdom as the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants were for the ancient Israelite nation. I propose that this covenant of peace serves as the theological climax

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<sup>87</sup> Wevers states to the contrary, “David is not a reference to a particular prince but to the Davidic dynasty. There is no thought of a Messiah living forever.” However, Wevers offers no compelling rationale for this interpretation. Taylor argues that Ezekiel is not referring to a line of Davidic kings, but to a “supernaturally kingly being” endowed with the qualities expected of the anointed one. Similarly, Rabbi Fisch sees “prince” as a clear designation for the Messiah. Taylor cautions against viewing individual aspects of this restoration too literally: “An over-literal interpretation of one aspect of this future hope prevents one from seeing that the prophet is mainly concerned with the ideal of unity in the Messianic kingdom, i.e. a spiritualized pattern of the future Israel based on the historical precedent of David’s united monarchy, which was the golden age of the past.” See Wevers, *Ezekiel*, 282; Taylor, *Ezekiel*, 240; and Fisch, *Ezekiel*, 252.

<sup>88</sup> The promised “everlasting covenant” is also found in Ezek 16:60, 55:3, 61:8. Isaiah 54:10 also mentions a “covenant of peace.” Zimmerli also connects the **בְּרִית עוֹלָם** (everlasting covenant) with the **שָׁלוֹם בְּרִית** (covenant of salvation) in Ezek 34:25. According to Fisch, this everlasting covenant “indicates that the prophecy of the restoration and the reunion of the kingdoms relates to the Messianic era.” See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 2, 276; Fisch, *Ezekiel*, 252; and Greenberg, *Ezekiel* 21—37, 757.

<sup>89</sup> Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 2, 276; Allen, *Ezekiel* 20—48, 194; and Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 25—48*, 418—421.

and primary message of the entire pericope. Fidelity to this new covenant, possible only through the inner transformation led and effected by the rulership of the Davidic leader, will establish this one kingdom faithfully and eternally in the land and under the sovereignty of Yahweh.

First, this covenant of peace brings relational reconciliation between the reunified northern and southern kingdoms. No longer can they carry offenses from the past; this new covenant establishes peace as the cultural norm and the greatest evidence of their transformed hearts of flesh in place of their hearts of stone (Ezek 11:19—20, 36:26). Second, this covenant of peace will affect their relationships with other nations around them. In the ensuing oracle, the restored kingdom is described as a “land of unwalled villages...a peaceful and unsuspecting people” (Ezek 38:11). So strong is their trust in the faithfulness of Yahweh that they no longer feel the need to defend themselves. Their hearts have been transformed through this covenant of peace, resulting in the transformation of the entire society. Hearts of stone (Ezek 36:26) corresponded to the Sinai covenant in which God’s laws were etched into stone, whereas transformed hearts of flesh (Ezek 36:26) correspond to a new covenant of peace in which His laws will be etched onto hearts. Perhaps the reader can hear echoes of the words of the prophet Jeremiah’s description of the “new covenant,” in which Yahweh says, “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts.”<sup>90</sup>

Such covenant language also reminds the reader of Leviticus, continuing the priestly tradition demonstrated in Ezek 36:16—38. As established previously, Ezek 36:16—39:29 as a literary unit perpetuates the priestly theme of purification and

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<sup>90</sup> Jeremiah 31:33, NIV.

cleansing of the land. Allen effectively elucidates in Ezek 37:26—27 the following new priestly elements of this purification that correlate precisely with Lev 26:4—13 as “deliberate echoes” of the text; making a covenant of peace (Lev 26:6, 9b), increasing Israel’s population (Lev 26:9), setting his dwelling place in their midst (Lev 26:11), and giving the covenant formula (Lev 26:12).<sup>91</sup> However, marked differences remain between Ezek 37 and Lev 26. Greenberg notes three primary differences: first, he observes that Leviticus promises military victories, while Ezekiel does not mention war. I concur strongly with the significance of Greenberg’s observation and propose further that the allusion to the Sinai covenant intentionally emphasizes by contrast the blatant absence of war or violence in Ezekiel’s covenant of peace. Under the Sinai covenant and modeled through the Deuteronomistic History, Israel achieved security via military victories led by human kings. Now, in Ezekiel’s covenant of peace, security is achieved through the transformation of the people’s hearts as they fully submit themselves to Yahweh’s sovereignty. No longer do they need to gain their own territorial and geo-political success; they trust in the promises of an eternal kingdom in this covenant of peace. In addition, the increase of numbers does not come from protecting themselves through military conquest and financial gain, but rather by making peace with Yahweh, with one another and then with the nations around them. The increase in population is part of the abundant benefits associated with this new covenant, which is enacted single-handedly by Yahweh. The second contrast Greenberg mentions is that Leviticus does not mention a king and Ezekiel does. In my view, this contrast is also highly significant because in Ezekiel’s covenant of peace, the

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<sup>91</sup> See Allen, *Ezekiel 20—48*, 194; and Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 25—48*, 419—420.

Davidic king—under the rule of Yahweh—will lead the people into the righteous obedience that will allow them to live as a reconciled community at peace with one another, with the other nations, and with Yahweh. The role of the Davidic leader for Ezekiel is a key factor in enabling the people to walk faithfully in obedience to Yahweh. Greenberg’s third contrast is God’s presence dwells in a tabernacle in Leviticus, but in Ezekiel the “sheltering presence” of God is in the temple.<sup>92</sup> I agree with Greenberg, and add that Yahweh’s presence is also among his people during the exile. This remains compelling, because the presence of God is no longer limited to a geographical space of a physical tabernacle or temple; God will be with them in their exile, He will be with them in their restoration, and He will dwell with them eternally in the temple pictured by Ezekiel in Ezek 40—48. This sanctuary among the people is now eschatological and eternal; it is no longer subject to the dangers of political conquest and greed of other nations.

The final eternal element in Ezek 37:15—26 is the eternal presence of Yahweh’s sanctuary in the midst of his people. Greenberg proposes that by using the word **בְּמִצְבָּה**, Ezekiel “spiritualizes the antique priestly term for the desert tabernacle.”<sup>93</sup> Ezekiel now transforms the archaic term to take on new meaning; he associates the sanctuary with the divine cloud that covered it during the wilderness wanderings. Ezekiel uses the word **בְּמִצְבָּה** (in their midst) to convey a permanent sanctuary. According to Zimmerli, Davidic unity symbolized by centralized worship in the Jerusalem temple constitutes the future ideal of the restored and reunified nation. While

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<sup>92</sup> Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21—37*, 760.

<sup>93</sup> Yahweh promises to set his tabernacle in their midst in Lev 26:11. Greenberg also mentions how the cloud evolves into the image of a protective tent in Isa 4:5f. See Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21—37*, 757—758.

I agree with this statement in principle, Ezekiel here is transforming the ancient view of the sanctuary as a static physical location into an eternal and spiritual dwelling of Yahweh among his people through the covenant of peace, with or without a tabernacle or temple. He makes this promise to dwell among them before Ezekiel describes the future temple (Ezek 40—48).<sup>94</sup>

#### 5.4.12 Ezekiel 37:27

The term מִשְׁכָנִי (my dwelling place), unique to Ezekiel, is, according to von Rad, connected to “presence theology associated with the ark.”<sup>95</sup> In Israel’s history, the ark and the tabernacle moved when the presence moved. This indicates that the dwelling place of God is among his people wherever they go. His presence is not limited to the structure of the now destroyed Jerusalem temple. This presence of God is not limited to an ark, a tabernacle, or a physical temple. The idea of mobility carries through from the ark imagery. This corresponds nicely to the mobility images of the four living creatures in Ezek 1. The permanent presence of Yahweh among his people guarantees their identity as the people of the covenant.<sup>96</sup> According to Allen, Ezekiel uses the phrase מִשְׁכָנֵם עַל־יִהּוָה (my dwelling place) will be with/over/upon them) to help the people visualize a restored temple on a hill towering over them “...as the capstone of the new divine-human constitution that time would not decay.” Yahweh’s presence

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<sup>94</sup> See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 276.

<sup>95</sup> See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 276; Joyce, *Ezekiel*, 211; and Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology: The Theology of Israel’s Historical Traditions* (vol. 1; trans. D.M.G. Stalker; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1962), 235.

<sup>96</sup> See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 276.

with His people confirms the covenant formula of this new covenant of peace, “I will be their God, and they will be my people” (Ezek 37:27).

#### 5.4.13 Ezekiel 37:28

This temple will function as sign to the nations of Yahweh’s relationship with his people.<sup>97</sup> This hint at a new sanctuary introduces the theme of Ezek 40—48, in which the details and realities of this coming temple are revealed. Focus on a sanctuary of worship reinforces the priestly tradition, which permeates this pericope and the larger sub-unit of 36:16—39:29. <sup>98</sup> Wevers emphasizes how the presence of the sanctuary in the midst of the people makes them holy, set apart from the common.<sup>99</sup> I concur with Wevers, since this aspect of being “set apart” indicates Yahweh’s election of his holy people, regardless of their behavior or faithfulness to him. He has chosen them and demonstrated the everlasting nature of this commitment through the covenant of peace, evidenced by his dwelling among them.<sup>100</sup> Cooke explains how this sanctuary expresses OT hopes, “According to Old Testament ideas of the blessed future, man is not translated to dwell with God, but God comes down to dwell with man, and His presence transforms earth into heaven.”<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Joyce notes that this closing verse specifically reflects Lev 26. See Joyce, *Ezekiel*, 212; and Allen, *Ezekiel 20—48*, 194.

<sup>98</sup> Early church father Jerome connected this sanctuary to the dwelling place of God in the church rather than in the temple, since the Romans destroyed the temple built under Zerubbabel. See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 271.

<sup>99</sup> Wevers, *Ezekiel*, 283.

<sup>100</sup> Taylor, *Ezekiel*, 241.

<sup>101</sup> Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel*, 404.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

In conclusion, in chapter five I have conducted a literary analysis of Ezek 37:15—28, including my translation, justification for delimitation of the pericope, structural analysis, and rhetorical analysis. In chapter six, I will proceed by examining the theological message of the larger subunit of Ezek 36:16—39:29, specifically considering how the intentional literary placement and theological message of Ezek 37:15—28 transforms the overall meaning of the primary theological themes identified in Ezek 36:16—39:29.

## 6. THE TWO STICKS: TRANSFORMING AND SUBVERTING METAPHORS

As noted already, it is my hypothesis that the intentional literary placement of the “Two Sticks” pericope (Ezek 37:15—28)—centered theologically on the covenant of peace—between the “Dry Bones” vision (Ezek 37:1—14) and the “Gog of Magog” (Ezek 38:1—39:29) oracles—which both contain militaristic and violent imagery—transforms the entire message of Ezek 36:19—39:29, and should transform our reading of the passage. I will now proceed by examining how the following primary theological themes, as summarized in chapter 4.6 of this thesis, are subverted and transformed by the “Two Sticks” pericope.

### 6.1 Subverting the Bloodshed Metaphor

Ezekiel’s oracle depicting the “two sticks” reconciliation and the covenant of peace dramatically contrasts the division and bloodshed portrayed by Ezekiel previously as he explains the reason for Yahweh’s anger at the people of Israel for their sin and ensuing judgment (Ezek 36:16—21). The covenant of peace, serving as the climax and theological fulcrum (Ezek 37:26) of Ezek 36:16—39:29, stands as Yahweh’s divine reversal of the two most prominent sins for which Israel and Judah suffered his punishment: bloodshed and idolatry. The covenant of peace contrasts and reverses these sins by demanding peace in human relationships and fidelity in relationship to Yahweh. As established previously, the mention of bloodshed precedes idolatry in Ezek 36:18, establishing the primacy and significance of this particular sin in the context of the larger literary unit (Ezek 36:16—39:29). This bloodshed undoubtedly refers to acts of child sacrifice committed in pagan idolatrous rituals (Ezek 16:36). However, it could also include bloodshed among citizens of Israel and Judah, as

well as bloodshed between the two nations that caused the division in the first place.

These sins cause both the defilement of the land and the desecration of Yahweh's holy name (Ezek 36:18, 20). To demonstrate the significance of the former, Block asserts, "Given the prominence of the land in Ezekiel's oracles, it is remarkable that this is the only time he speaks of the land as defiled."<sup>1</sup>

This comparison between bloodshed and menstrual blood clearly echoes the Holiness Code, separating the clean from the unclean. In Levitical law, the menstruating woman is separated from society and is considered "untouchable" (Lev 15:19—24, Num 19).<sup>2</sup> This metaphor reemphasizes Ezekiel's priestly obsession with cultic purity; Israel's sin is both cultic and ethical in nature.<sup>3</sup> According to Milgrom, menstrual impurity is here "a metaphor for extreme pollution, ultimate revulsion."<sup>4</sup> Yahweh poured his wrath out on the people for these two specific sins, which resulted in the defiling of the land: bloodshed and idolatry. The comparison between the

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<sup>1</sup> According to Block, the two ways that land could be defiled in the Hebrew Bible are by the invasion or pagan foreigners (Ps 79:1), or by the land's inhabitants violating Yahweh's will (Num 35:33—34, Jer 2:7). The defilement of the land by the original inhabitants of Canaan is one of the reasons Yahweh promises to bring Israel into the land (Deut 9:4—5). Block elaborates, "Deut. 18:9—12 warned Israel that if they adopted the moral and spiritual standards of the Canaanites, they would face the same kind of pollution and should be prepared for the same fate as the original population." See Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25—48*, 344—345.

<sup>2</sup> Cooke and Taylor see in this metaphor a figure for idolatry. See Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel*, 389; Taylor, *Ezekiel*, 230; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21—37*, 727; and James Milgrom, *Leviticus 1—16: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary* (AB 3; ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman; New York: Doubleday, 1991): 952.

<sup>3</sup> Joyce, *Ezekiel*, 203.

<sup>4</sup> See Milgrom, *Leviticus 1—16*, 952; and Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21—37*, 727. While Milgrom's view represents the vast scholarly consensus, a feminist reading would debate the validity of equating menstrual blood with revulsion. From at least some feminist perspectives, menstrual blood represents feminine strength, power and life. However, Milgrom's view is arguably more in line with what would have been the dominant understanding in the patriarchal cultures of the ancient near eastern historical context in which these texts were originally constructed.

impurity of menstrual blood and the sin of bloodshed dramatically illustrates Yahweh's repulsion at the violence of the people.<sup>5</sup>

The metaphor of the "two sticks" and the inauguration of the covenant of peace polemicizes against the bloodshed described in Ezek 36:17 by contrast. In the context of Israel's military history, the metaphor of bloodshed represented strength, victory, power, dominance and virility. For example, the people of Israel celebrated their most revered monarch, King David, as the one who killed "tens of thousands" (1 Sam 18:7). To solidify his bloody fame, David proved his worth to Saul and thus won the hand of the king's daughter in marriage by slaughtering the Philistines and returning with the twice the number of required foreskins (1 Sam 18:24—27). Ezekiel subverts the bloodshed metaphor from a symbol of masculine strength into a symbol of feminine weakness and ritual impurity. Menstruation occurs in the absence of pregnancy; perhaps the image of menstrual blood implies both ceremonial exclusion from the community as well as the social exclusion associated with barrenness. While the people valued the spilled blood of their enemies with delight as a sign of strength, Yahweh views this bloodshed with revulsion as a sign of weakness.

To re-emphasize Yahweh's love for peace and reconciliation and his hatred for bloodshed and division, Ezekiel introduces the "two sticks" metaphor and explains how the covenant of peace reveals the will of Yahweh for reconciliation, forgiveness, and unity between his people. Ezekiel employs an intentional literary contrast to the sins described in Ezek 36:16—21: only through reconciliation among peoples (rejecting

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<sup>5</sup> Greenberg mentions the "silver lining" to this metaphor constructed by some medieval interpreters who compare Israel to "God's wife" during the state of her menstruation; while she is pushed away for a period of uncleanness, God draws her near when her uncleanness has finished. See Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21—37*, 727; and Fisch, *Ezekiel*, 242.

bloodshed) and fidelity to Yahweh (rejecting idolatry) can a covenant of peace be actualized. This covenant establishes the identity of the unified nation and transforms their moral and ethical behavior toward one another and toward foreign nations. Therefore, my reading challenges those readings in which the bloodshed and violence perpetrated by Israel may be celebrated in the context of nationalism or divinely ordained warfare. Proponents of those readings—particularly dispensationalist readings—that envision the reunited nation of Israel and Judah participating in warfare against their enemies in a cataclysmic eschatological battle (Ezek 37:1—14 and 38—39) should take into consideration both Yahweh’s judgment for Israel and Judah’s previous sin of bloodshed, and Ezekiel’s prophetic ideal of peace and reconciliation established by the covenant of peace that subverts the celebration of bloodshed, violence and war.

## **6.2 Transforming New Heart and Spirit Imagery**

Just as the “two sticks” reconciliation and the covenant of peace transform Israel’s attitude toward bloodshed, so they transforms their heart and spirit as a nation. Possession of a new heart and spirit requires Israel and Judah to renew their relationship with Yahweh by pledging obedience to Him. This obedience requires turning from bloodshed and idolatry, and instead embracing peace and fidelity to Yahweh. Yahweh removed them from the land due to their bloodshed and idolatry; now he will plant them in the land eternally because of the transformation of their hearts and spirits, which will enable them to remain faithful to their covenant with him. The primary emphasis of this transformation toward obedience is corporate, as Joyce rightly argues, as opposed to an individualistic repentance and renewal of faith among

the people. I concur with Joyce, because throughout this pericope and even the larger literary unit, Yahweh is speaking to Ezekiel about Israel and Judah as corporate entities. Even the metaphors of the dry bones resurrecting and the two sticks reuniting represent nations, not individuals. While individuals may experience such transformation in the context of their corporate identity, the focus here is a new heart and a new spirit for the restored nation as a whole.<sup>6</sup>

Not only does this obedience enabled by their new heart and spirit compel Israel and Judah to reconcile with Yahweh, it also demands their reconciliation with one another. They must relinquish centuries-old vendettas and repeated cycles of violence and bloodshed so that they may embrace one another in forgiveness and reconciliation. Forgiveness and cessation of violence is at the very heart of this covenant of peace; without it, the establishment of a unified nation would be impossible. Unity as a renewed covenant people makes possible their perpetuity and prosperity in the land. Ezek 36:33—35 provides perhaps the strongest correlation between the people’s cleansing from their sins (internal restoration) and the people’s prosperity in the land (external restoration).<sup>7</sup> Use of the term “Eden” to portray the abundance of the land may indicate a re-creation, an act of Yahweh in rebuilding and restoring, rather than

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<sup>6</sup> Joyce argues, “Distortion by anachronistic individualizing interpretation must be rejected.” See Joyce, *Ezekiel*, 205. Eichrodt argues to the contrary, that the emphasis here is on the relationship between individuals and their God, not on the people as a whole. He states, “We see the new importance of the individual member of the people.” However, as Joyce points out, the context preceding this text is Ezek 37:17, 21, in which Yahweh addresses “the whole house of Israel.” See Joyce, *Divine Initiative and Human Response in Ezekiel*, 111; and Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 500.

<sup>7</sup> According to Cooke, supernatural fertility of the soil can be viewed as an eschatological symbol of the age to come. While this may be possible, the language does not necessitate an eschatological or apocalyptic fulfillment. It is interesting that the cities are described as “fortified” in Ezek 36:35, but as cities with no walls in Ezek 38:11. See Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary of the Book of Ezekiel*, 392—393.

something the people can take credit for building with their own hands.<sup>8</sup> Yahweh will receive credit for these miraculous actions from the surrounding nations (Ezek 36:36). Yahweh's promise to multiply the people is a direct response to the people's persistent plea for him to do so. While the restoration from sin and return to the land benefits the people of Israel and Judah, ultimately it is not for their sake, but rather for the spiritual transformation of Israel and for the spiritual revelation of Yahweh to the nations, so that all peoples of the earth may know that Yahweh is Lord. In conclusion, Ezekiel transforms his "new heart and new spirit" imagery (Ezek 36:26) with the imagery of two sticks reuniting by emphasizing the corporate and national nature of this spiritual heart transplant—only as a reunified nation living in reconciliation with one another can they truly exhibit the spiritual transformation necessary to submit to Yahweh's rulership through the messianic shepherd-king David under the covenant of peace (Ezek 37:26).

### **6.3 Subverting Militaristic Implications of the Resurrected Army**

The "two sticks" reconciliation and the covenant of peace not only transforms the way Israel and Judah relate to Yahweh and to one another, but it also transforms their national identity and the way they relate to other peoples and nations. Ezek 37:1—14 provides a dramatic story of resurrection from the dead with two visceral images: a valley of dry bones and a resurrected army. The key to interpreting Ezekiel's vision in the context of Ezek 36:16—39:29 is found in understanding the purpose of these two images. First, the dry bones invite the reader to recall the destruction of Judah and the

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<sup>8</sup> Stalker, D.M.G., *Ezekiel*, 254; and Taylor, *Ezekiel*, 233.

dispersion of survivors in the exile. Preceding this vision, Ezekiel clearly defines the reason for their destruction and dispersion: the sins of bloodshed and idolatry (Ezek 36:16—21). If the menstruation imagery condemning bloodshed were not graphic enough, Ezekiel goes even further to portray the people of Israel and Judah—perpetrators of violence—as dead corpses. In fact, the image of the dry bones serves to heighten the menstruation image; both grotesque conditions illicit a strong sense of revulsion from the reader. This revulsion parallels the revulsion of Yahweh at the sins of the people—particularly the sins of bloodshed and idolatry (Ezek 36:16—21). Both the condition of menstruation and contact with dead bodies would cause ceremonial uncleanness and exclusion from Yahweh’s presence. In addition, both images portray death: menstruation only occurs when there is absence of life in the womb and dry bones indicate utter despair for any hope of resurrected life.

The second important image in Ezekiel’s vision is that of the resurrected army. Such imagery invites the question from the reader: “What is the purpose of the employment of military imagery in the resurrection of the dry bones? Why does Ezekiel call the resurrected people an ‘army?’” Following Ezekiel’s strong condemnation of the sin of bloodshed (Ezek 36:16—21), why would the prophet now seemingly paint a picture of a potentially violent army in a positive light? I believe the emphasis of the military imagery is not on determining *for what purpose* the dry bones were resurrected, but rather on determining *from what punishment* they were resurrected. Yahweh resurrects the army from the consequences of past violence; he does not resurrect the army in order to conduct future violence. Ezekiel indicts the people for the sin of violence (Ezek 36:16—21), explaining that Yahweh punished them through death and exile because of their violent actions which were “unclean” in

his sight. Why would Yahweh resurrect them only to perform again the sin for which he had just punished them?

Instead, Ezekiel employs irony by calling this resurrected nation an “army.” As the vision concludes (Ezek 37:14), the reader is left wondering about the nature and purpose of this army—something that Ezekiel will clarify in the ensuing pericope (Ezek 37:15—28). Only when the reader discovers the fulcrum of Ezek 36:16—39:29 as the covenant of peace (Ezek 37:24), does the impact of the irony pictured in the resurrected army reach fruition. A “peace corps” of sorts, this resurrected army establishes peace with Yahweh, peace with one another, and eventually peace in the midst of surrounding nations and attacking enemies (Ezek 38—39). No longer is their strength defined militarily through violence and bloodshed; rather, their strength is found in obedience toward Yahweh. As their trust shifts from their own military might to the provision and protection of Yahweh, they are able dwell in the land with peace and prosperity. In conclusion, the “Two Sticks” pericope, specifically the covenant of peace, subverts any militaristic implications of the resurrected “army” (Ezek 37:10) by redefining strength as submission to Yahweh under the covenant of peace, instead of defining strength as domination of other nations by war and bloodshed.

#### **6.4 Transforming Davidic Kingship**

The resurrected “army,” the restored nation of Israel, must have a leader. The “two sticks” reconciliation and the covenant of peace also transforms the reader’s image of this coming leader. David, their king, shepherd and prince, will unify them (Ezek 37:22), lead them into spiritual transformation (Ezek 37:23—24), and usher in a new covenant of peace (Ezek 37:26). Significantly, Ezek 37:24 describes the national

leader as “David,” who will be their king and their shepherd. Typically, the “Davidic king” motif in eschatological prophetic literature seems to involve nationalistic and militaristic implications, which would then re-emphasize the military strength pictured by the resurrected army of dry bones (Ezek 37:1—14). However, in the broader context of Ezek 33:21—29:29, use of the term “shepherd” in reference to David transforms the reader’s understanding of this leadership. The language in Ezek 37:24 intentionally evokes the memory of the contrast of Israel’s wicked shepherds with the good shepherd Yahweh. In Ezekiel 34, Yahweh is condemning Israel’s leaders for being wicked shepherds who used the flock for their own selfish gain (Ezek 34:1—10). Yahweh then promises that He will be the shepherd of Israel. He will “...tend them in good pasture” and “...shepherd the flock with justice” (Ezek 34:14—16).<sup>9</sup> Then Yahweh declares, “I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them and be their shepherd” (Ezek 34:23—24). Apparently, Yahweh and David will both be shepherds.

Therefore, just as the righteous shepherd contrasts with the wicked shepherds in Ezek 34, this new shepherd called “David” in Ezek 37:24 intentionally contrasts, rather than resembles, the historic King David. The irony is rich, in that one of the primary sins or “backslidings” of which Israel and Judah are accused is the sin of bloodshed (Ezek 36:18). David, the historic king, carried a great reputation for violence and bloodshed, and according to some accounts, it was for this bloodshed that Yahweh prohibited him from building a temple.<sup>10</sup> In a strange twist, the archetypal man of

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<sup>9</sup> See Joyce, *Ezekiel*, 211.

<sup>10</sup> See 1 Chron 22:6—10, 28:3. This bloodshed could be referring to David’s murder of Uriah the Hittite, or it could be referring to his extreme violence and the numerous wars he perpetrated. This

murder and war leads the nation onward into peace. Therefore, this new king “David” ironically subverts the legacy of the historic king David in that he leads the people away from the sin of bloodshed and into covenant faithfulness with Yahweh. I propose that while the new Davidic king is like the historic David in that he will unify the kingdom, he is unlike the historic David in that he will bring this unity through peace and reconciliation rather than through violence and bloodshed.

Returning to Ezek 34, following the description of the Davidic king is the mention of a “covenant of peace” (Ezek 34:25). In like manner, after describing the Davidic king in Ezek 37:24—25 is the בְּרִית שָׁלוֹם (covenant of peace) in Ezek 37:26. This parallel progression between Ezek 34 and Ezek 37 can be no coincidence; clearly Ezek 37 echoes the message of Ezek 34, particularly because the phrase בְּרִית שָׁלוֹם (covenant of peace) is used only in these two instances in the entire Hebrew bible.<sup>11</sup> In Ezek 34, this covenant of peace involves prosperity (Ezek 34:26—27) and protection from wild animals and surrounding nations (Ezek 34:28). In this context, their safety has nothing to do with military strength or even national strength, but it seems to be a direct result of the good shepherding of Yahweh and his servant David, as contrasted with the bad shepherding of Israel’s former leaders, who led them into destruction and exile. The recognition formula is employed in Ezek 34:27, revealing the ultimate purpose of this Davidic leadership and ensuing covenant of peace: and we see the repeated phrase: וַיַּعֲשֵׂה כִּי-אָנִי יְהוָה (they will know that I am the Lord). The ultimate goal

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evokes the words of Nathan the prophet, “Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.” (2 Sam 12:10, NIV).

<sup>11</sup> The only other case in which a similar phrase is used is in Josh 9:15. However, in Josh 9:15, the two words are not in construct relation to one another: נִזְעַק שָׁלוֹם וַיִּכְרֹת לָהֶם בְּרִית (Then Joshua made peace with them, and he cut a covenant with them). There is no connection between this text in Joshua and the covenant of peace in the book of Ezekiel.

and result of the covenant of peace is that “they” (the reconciled, reunited and restored people of Israel) will know that Yahweh is the Lord.

Returning then to Ezek 37:24ff, the leadership of David as shepherd should be understood as a continuation of the picture presented in Ezek 34 of Yahweh and his servant David shepherding the restored, reunified and peaceful nation of Israel. Yahweh again reaffirms his promise to make a “covenant of peace” with them (Ezek 37:26). This covenant will be everlasting, and will involve the establishment and multiplication of the people in the land. Climactically, Yahweh promises that his sanctuary and dwelling place will be among them forever (Ezek 37:26—27). The pericope of the “Two Sticks” concludes with the recognition phrase yet again: וְיַעֲדֵה הָגּוֹם כִּי אֶنְגַּד יְהָוָה (then the nations will know that I am the Lord). Yahweh reveals himself to the nations by his demonstration of making Israel holy and by his dwelling among them in his sanctuary forever. In the context of Ezek 34—37, this holiness is characterized by repentance from bloodshed and idolatry, relational reconciliation among the northern and southern kingdoms, and transformation of the people into a restored nation that submits to the leadership of David and Yahweh in a covenant of peace. This peace characterizes them as a people in how they relate internally among one another, and how they relate externally to the nations, as will be demonstrated in the third sub-unit (Ezek 38:1—39:29).

## 6.5 Subverting Human Violence

Now I return to the questions confronting the reader at the end of Ezek 37:1—14, “What is the nature and purpose of this resurrected army? What will this army accomplish when returned to their land?” The literary suspense seems intentional,

inviting the reader to search for answers in the ensuing “two sticks” pericope (Ezek 37:15—28), my primary text in this thesis, upon which the interpretation of Ezek 36:16—39:29 is based. The “two sticks” reconciliation and the covenant of peace demonstrate that this resurrected army is unlike any other army, because it is defined by nonviolence rather than by violence, by peace rather than by bloodshed, and by submission to a gentle shepherd, rather than by subjection to a violent military commander. The picture of peaceful sheep following a nonviolent shepherd seems to stand in sharp contrast to a resurrected national army, perhaps preparing for war. I believe this contrast is intentional, just as the contrast between the new king David and the historic king David was intentional. In these oracles, Ezekiel’s Yahweh contrasts wicked human leadership resulting in bloodshed and idolatry with righteous divine leadership resulting in peace and righteousness, a righteousness that can bring about the internal transformation of hearts as well as the external transformation of an entire nation through the covenant of peace.

Gog and allies attack a land whose inhabitants have “turned from the sword” מִשׁׁׁוּבָה מֵמְרַבָּה. The Hebrew word מִשׁׁׁוּבָה is sometimes translated “restored from” or “brought back from” in the *polel* form. However, the root of this word is שׁׁוּב which is most commonly translated “turn or return,” and in some cases, “to turn away from, to abandon.”<sup>12</sup> In light of the transformation of the restored nation of Israel described thus far in Ezek 36:16—37:28, the translation “turned from the sword” seems most appropriate because they have rejected the lifestyle of bloodshed from their past and

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<sup>12</sup> According to Koehler and Baumgartner, the *qal* form of שׁׁוּב can be translated, “turn away from, abandon: a decision Jer 42:8 Ps 132:11, נָרַא a course of action 1 Kings 13:33; cf. Ezek 32:2 33:9, נָרַא a prayer for Yahweh to cease being angry Exod 32:12, עֲשֵׂה בְּשִׁירָה those converted from doing wrong Isa 59:20; abs. to desist, not to proceed with an action Job 6:29.” See L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner, M.E.J. Richardson, and J.J. Stamm, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (New York: E.J. Brill), 1999.

embraced a lifestyle of peace with one another, with Yahweh, and with the nations. The people have embraced the covenant of peace and they now live in safety, without fear of their enemies. Significantly, this “peaceful and unsuspecting people” lives in a land of unwalled villages, without walls, gates or bars (Ezek 38:11). Their peace and safety comes not from the strength of an army or the fortification of walls and barriers, but in their covenant relationship with Yahweh. These people are also described as those who were “gathered from the nations,” clearly placing the timing of this event after the restoration of the nation of Israel into a peaceful covenant people (Ezek 38:12).

Regarding the ensuing description of violent warfare in Ezek 38:18—39:8, it is interesting that the only violence perpetrated by humans is that of Gog and allies against Israel. The nation of Israel does not enter into the conflict, fight, or defend themselves because Yahweh is their sole defender. The extent of this violence is unclear; Gog will “attack” (Ezek 38:18), but at that moment Yahweh will respond in zeal and fiery wrath. The text does not explain whether the peaceful people of Israel with no defense systems will be killed or suffer loss, but Yahweh will intervene at the moment of the attack. As the “one-man army” of Israel, Yahweh will defeat Gog with supernatural events, including a great earthquake which will topple mountains, hills and walls (Ezek 38:19—20); a plague; rain and hailstones; and burning sulfur (Ezek 38:22).<sup>13</sup> These “acts of nature” are reminiscent of Yahweh’s supernatural assistance to Joshua and the armies of Israel in the battle against the Amorite kings when the “sun stood still” (Josh 10:1—15).

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<sup>13</sup> Wevers notes other prophetic texts associating a dramatic earthquake with part of the eschatological end of days: Isa 24:17—20, Joel 3:16, Hag 2:6—7, Zech 14:4—5. See Wevers, *Ezekiel*, 290.

Yahweh will then “...summon a sword against Gog” (Ezek 38:21). However, this “sword” does not appear to be in the form of another nation or people rising to Israel’s defense. The language depicts an internal ambush of sorts, since “...every man’s sword will be against his brother” (Ezek 38:21). The armies of Gog will become confused and turn their swords on one another. This type of victory has biblical precedent in the history of Israel, as in the case of Gideon and the Midianite army (Judg 7:22), and Jehoshaphat and the Ammonites/Moabites (2 Chron 20:23). Other stories of Yahweh single-handedly defeating Israel’s enemies include the deliverance from Pharaoh’s army in the Red Sea (Ex 14—15) and the blinded Syrian army returning without killing anyone (2 Kgs 6:8—7:20. The importance of the absence of human armies fighting against Gog in Ezek 38:1—39:29 cannot be overstated. Clearly, Yahweh’s ideal for his “resurrected army” is that they are peaceful. Any violence exacted against their enemies comes from Yahweh’s hand, not from the resurrected army of Israel. The purpose of Yahweh’s defeat of Gog is made abundantly clear in Ezek 38:23 by the repetition of the recognition formula וְיַדְעָה כִּי־אָנִי יְהוָה (then they will know that I am the Lord). In this instance, “they” refers to the nations of the world that witness this display of supernatural power. Three reflexive verbs describe Yahweh’s concluding actions in Ezek 38:23: וְהַתְגַּדֵּל תִּהְיֶה וְהַתְקַדֵּשׁ תִּהְיֶה וְנוֹצַעֲתִי (I will exalt myself, I will show myself holy, and I will reveal myself).<sup>14</sup>

In Ezekiel 39, the graphic description of Gog’s defeat includes the response of the people of Israel. They do not gather the weapons of Gog’s defeated army to store up for future battles, to exact revenge, or to take more territory now that the enemy has

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<sup>14</sup> Wevers, *Ezekiel*, 290.

been soundly defeated.<sup>15</sup> Rather, they gather the wooden weapons and burn them for fuel, which will last for seven years. This specific description of such an enormous amount of weaponry underscores both the vast number of invaders and the tremendous significance of Yahweh's victory over his enemies. In addition, the dramatic imagery of burning weapons for fuel is reminiscent of the beating of swords into plowshares, and the cessation of war between nations (Is 2:4, Mic 4:3).<sup>16</sup> Descriptions of the people of Israel gathering weapons for fuel, plundering the defeated army, and burying bodies for seven months do not lead the reader to believe that Israel sustains any significant losses in the attack of Gog. The ultimate purpose of the restoration of Israel, the defeat of Israel's enemies, and the purification of the land is that the people of Israel would know that Yahweh is Lord (Ezek 39:21—22, 29). Yahweh reveals himself to the people of Israel and to the nations by pouring out his Spirit upon them and revealing his face to them.<sup>17</sup> This leads us back to the primary inquiry of this thesis, "How does the intentional literary placement of the "Two Sticks" pericope between the "Dry Bones" and the "Gog of Magog" pericopes transform the reader's understanding of Ezek 36:16—39:29? The preceding analysis demonstrates that Ezek 37:15—28 transforms the apparently militaristic army of the "Dry Bones" pericope into a nonviolent, peaceful flock of sheep following their shepherd into a covenant of peace.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Stalker, *Ezekiel*, 266.

<sup>16</sup> See Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel*, 418; and Joyce, *Ezekiel*, 217.

<sup>17</sup> Wevers, *Ezekiel*, 295.

<sup>18</sup> Since the primary thrust of this thesis concerns the intentional literary placement of Ezek 37:15—28 between the "Dry Bones" vision and the "Gog of Magog" oracles, I must address a LXX manuscript that orders the chapters differently. While textual criticism is not the primary methodology employed in this study, the role and perhaps theological implications of the unique chapter orders in this manuscript directly relate to my argument. The Greek Papyrus 967, also known as the Scheide Papyri, is

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an Egyptian LXX manuscript discovered in the 1930s and dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup>—3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D. Uniquely, it presents Ezek 36—39 in a different chapter order, placing the “Gog of Magog” oracles directly after the initial restoration of Israel oracle in Ezek 36:16—38, and before the “Dry Bones” vision of chapter 37 (36, 38—39, 37, 40). Also unique among all other Greek and Hebrew manuscripts is the omission of Ezek 36:23c—38. The only other manuscript attesting the same unique chapter order and textual omission is the Vetus Latina Codex Wirceburgensis (*W*). While it is dated much later than the Papyrus 967, it is still one of the earliest and best preserved Latin copies of Ezekiel. Block, Lust and Johnson note that it does not demonstrate direct dependence upon Papyrus 967, because it often differs in other omissions through *parablepsis*. Therefore, they argue that it represents an independent textual witness.

Regarding the problem of the omission of Ezek 36:23c—38, some attribute it to the phenomenon of *parablepsis*. Johnson, Filson, and Wevers believe *homoioteleuton* caused the *parablepsis* of this entire section. However, Zimmerli argues to the contrary, “the omission...as a simple copyist’s error due to *homoioteleuton* is not convincing.” Lust is among those who propose the theory that the issue of omission was with the *Vorlage*, in that the particular version of the MT from which Papyrus 967 was copied happened to omit Ezek 36:23c—38. Block proposes the “accidental loss of a leaf or two” of the manuscript itself as a more likely alternative to *parablepsis* or omission in the *Vorlage*. Crane finds none of these explanations satisfactory, leading him to suppose that perhaps the shorter, terser text of Papyrus 967 could therefore be the more reliable or earlier manuscript. Joyce argues to the contrary, “Ultimately, there are no compelling text-critical grounds to believe that the entire section vv. 23c—38 was missing from an original Hebrew text.”

However, Crane acknowledges that the received text became normative and accepted most widely in its content and ordering. Therefore, rather than suggesting that one text is superior to another, he investigates each text for its own merit, seeking to discern possible theological motivations in both the ordering and omissions (or additions) of both textual traditions. Crane argues the absence of Ezek 36:23c—38 in the Papyrus 967 is not an omission, but rather it is a later insertion into the received text. He also argues that the chapter order of the received text was a later reordering from the original text of Ezekiel, which is represented by Papyrus 967. Crane believes that behind Papyrus 967 is an earlier Hebrew text, presenting a smoother flow, since the “Gog of Magog” war interrupts the covenant of peace. Therefore, he argues, the flow of Papyrus 967 is more logical: Gog of Magog is defeated, then Israel’s dry bones rise, the nation is reunited under their shepherd David, and the covenant of peace prepares the way for the temple. Crane suggests that due to later political pressures, possibly during the Hasmonean uprising in which Gog could have been identified as Antiochus IV, scribes could have rearranged these chapters to encourage rebellion against their nation’s oppressors. Crane argues that only the Papyrus 967 ordering presents an uninterrupted covenant of peace, whereas the ordering of the received text presents a “call to arms” to follow a militaristic David into battle *after* the covenant of peace. Crane asserts, “While chapters 38—39 do not explicitly include Israel or David in the battle against Gog, the chapter reorder implies that the united Israel under David is involved in defeating Gog.”

I respectfully disagree with Crane’s conclusions regarding both the “call to arms” reading in the ordering of the received text, and the idea that Papyrus 967 presents a smoother and more logical thematic flow. First, I depart with Crane’s view that the ordering of the Papyrus 967 promotes violent aggression led by a militaristic David against the enemies of Israel. There is no direct “call to arms” for an army of the people of Israel to face their enemies in Ezek 38—39, nor is there a mention of the Davidic militaristic leader in Ezek 38—39. In fact, there is no mention of violence perpetrated by the people of Israel, nor is there the celebration of human violence and bloodshed anywhere in Ezek 36:16—39:29. Bloodshed perpetuated by humans against one another is referred to only as a sin for which the people suffered exile and dispersion. In this context, glorifying Israel’s warfare would seem to contradict such peaceful ideals previously established. I argue that the covenant of peace is not interrupted by the “Gog of Magog” war, but rather is proven effective, because the people of Israel *do not* take up arms or defenses to fight against Gog. Their lack of defenses and military aggression, in conjunction with the conspicuous absence of a Davidic militaristic leader, demonstrate that the covenant of peace has transformed the community. The only violence perpetrated is from Gog and his armies against Israel, and from Yahweh against the armies of Gog. The author intentionally demonstrates how the covenant of peace transforms the nation of Israel into a peaceful people by placing the “Gog of Magog” oracles *after* the covenant of peace. To place them before the “Dry Bones” vision, as Papyrus 967 does, causes the

## 6.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, a reading of Ezek 37:15—28 that addresses the significance of the covenant of peace and the leadership of the shepherd, David, will transform the reader’s interpretation of the “Dry Bones” pericope (Ezek 37:1—14) and the “Gog of Magog” war (Ezek 38:1—39:29). In Ezekiel 36:16—38, Yahweh rebukes the nation of Israel for her sins of bloodshed and idolatry, following the judgment oracle against Edom for bloodshed (Ezek 35). The nation experiences spiritual transformation with a new heart and a new spirit, turning from these sins. In Ezek 37:1—14, a parallel account of the restoration is illustrated graphically by the dramatic vision of an army of dry bones resurrecting to new life. However, this reconstituted army has received a “heart transplant” from stone to flesh (Ezek 36:26), and therefore this army no longer perpetrates the violence and bloodshed for which they previous suffered destruction and exile. Now reunited and reconciled in the land as one nation (Ezek 37:15—28),

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reader to lose the connection between the transformative the covenant of peace and the peaceful descriptions of the people of Israel in Ezek 38:1—39:29.

Second, I disagree with Crane’s argument that Papyrus 967’s ordering of the chapters provides a smoother reading with a more logical thematic progression. As discussed previously, Ezek 38:8 identifies the people as those who have “turned (or returned) from the sword.” They are a peaceful people living with unwalled villages, which would logically follow the lifestyle of a covenant of peace. Only in an era of peace, with the security of righteous leadership, would the nation ever be living without walls, bars or gates, and yet also in security, without fear. This setting would be impossible to attach to a setting preceding the restoration. Ezek 38:12 calls the people of Israel a people “that have been gathered from the nations.” Clearly, the context for the “Gog of Magog” attack is *after* the restoration of Israel, after they have been returned to their land, and after they have made the covenant of peace with Yahweh. To place the Gog of Magog oracles after Ezek 36:16—38 and before Ezek 37:1—28, as Papyrus 967 does, creates a chronologically and theologically disjointed reading. Therefore, while the ordering of Papyrus 967 does provide an interesting alternate textual variant, it does not demonstrate the effect of the covenant of peace upon the restored community as clearly as the received text does. In addition, the vast textual witness to the chapter ordering in the received text demonstrates the historical recognition and scholarly consensus in favor of the traditional order.

See Ashley S. Crane, *Israel’s Restoration: A Textual-Comparative Exploration of Ezekiel 36—39* (Leiden: Brill, 2008): 207—208; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel*, 242; Johan Lust, “Ezekiel 36—40 in the Oldest Greek Manuscript,” *CBQ* 43 (1981): 521, 517—533; Block, *Ezekiel*, 340; Joyce, *Ezekiel*, 206; Crane, *Israel’s Restoration*, 216, 220—249, 255; and Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel*, 406.

they establish a covenant of peace with Yahweh. Yahweh then rescues this restored nation that is living with unwalled cities, in peace and confidence, without fear of Gog's attack through Yahweh's supernatural and single-handed deliverance. Weapons are used for fuel, prosperity is gleaned through plunder, and the land is cleansed from bloodshed through the burial of Gog's defeated army. These restoration oracles end with a final repetition of the recognition formula, declaring that the purpose of the purification of the land and the restoration of Israel is that all nations of the world will know that Yahweh is Lord.

Three observations can be made about the nature of the restoration of Israel described in Ezek 36:16—39:29. First, it is pneumatological. The author employs intentional repetition of the word spirit (**רֹוחַ**) throughout the entire literary unit. Yahweh promises to give his people a new heart and a new spirit (Ezek 36:26) by placing his Spirit within them (Ezek 36:27). The Spirit carries Ezekiel away to the vision of the valley of dry bones (Ezek 37:1), and Yahweh then commands Ezekiel to prophesy to the bones that Yahweh will put breath (**רוּחַ**) into them, and make them live (Ezek 37:5—6). As Ezekiel watches the dry bones form into bodies, he realizes that they still have no breath (**רוּחַ**) in them (Ezek 37:8). He then receives another command from Yahweh to prophesy to the winds (**רוּחָה**), directing them to bring breath (**רוּחַ**) into the dead bodies (Ezek 37:9—10).<sup>19</sup> As Ezekiel declares the word of the Lord, spirit or breath (**רוּחַ**) enters their bodies and brings them to life as a great army. Yahweh then speaks through the prophet directly to the resurrected bones, telling them that he will

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<sup>19</sup> The phrase “four winds” is recognized in post-exilic Hebrew literature as a common expression (Ezek 42:20, Zech 2:10, 6:5, 1 Chron 9:24, Dan 8:8, 11:4, Ezra 13:5). Cooke claims that it originates as an Akkadian idiom and explains the use of the word **רוּחָה** in two different ways in the same verse. See Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel*, 400; and Wevers, *Ezekiel*, 279.

indeed put his Spirit (**רֹוח**) in them (Ezek 37:14). To conclude all three oracles in Ezek 39:29, the author writes that Yahweh will put his Spirit (**רֹוח**) in them. Although the author does not repeat the word **רֹוח** directly in Ezek 37:15—39:28, he has already established clearly that the Spirit both caused and effected all aspects of this restoration. Therefore, the pneumatological thread of restoration runs clearly throughout these three oracles.

In addition to being pneumatological, this restoration is also peaceful. Contrasting the seemingly violent military imagery of an army resurrecting (Ezek 37:1—14), the author draws from Ezek 34 to reinforce the peaceful picture of a shepherd guiding his sheep into a covenant of peace (Ezek 34:23—25, Ezek 37:24—26). This covenant of peace enables them to reconcile relationally so that they may live at peace with one another and with the nations surrounding them. As the “Gog of Magog” pericope begins, the restored nation of Israel is described as a nation that has turned from the sword and is dwelling safely in the land (Ezek 38:8). This nation is also depicted as a peaceful people living safely without walls, bars or gates (Ezek 38:11). The people of Israel do not fight in this battle; they experience the deliverance of Yahweh from their enemies. Even the gathering of weapons and burning them for fuel paints the picture of a peaceful, nonviolent community (Ezek 39:9—10).

Finally, this pneumatological, peaceful restoration is also permanent. The repeated emphasis on the sanctification of Yahweh’s name (Ezek 36:21—23, 38:23, 39:25—27) ensures that this restoration must be permanent; Yahweh’s name will never again be profaned among the nations because of Israel’s sin, so therefore Israel’s restoration must be everlasting. In Ezek 37:23, Yahweh promises that when this restoration occurs, the people will never again defile themselves with idolatry or sin.

This internal restoration of the heart seems to be permanent, causing the people to repent from the sins of bloodshed and idolatry, for which they were exiled among the nations. Yahweh also declares that they will live in the land of their ancestors forever, and the rule of David their prince and shepherd will also be forever (Ezek 37:25). The covenant of peace will be everlasting, and the presence of God will dwell among his people in a sanctuary forever (Ezek 37:26—28). Finally, in the last verse of this literary unit (Ezek 39:29), Yahweh promises that he will never again hide his face from the people of Israel anymore because he has put his Spirit within them.<sup>20</sup> The locus of his dwelling moves from the static geographical location of the Jerusalem temple to the hearts and spirits of the people; his “sanctuary” will dwell among them and within them eternally.

To conclude, understood in this way with the “Two Sticks” pericope at its heart, Ezekiel 36:16—39:29 as a unit describes a pneumatological, peaceful and permanent restoration of Israel that will reveal to all the nations of the world that Yahweh is Lord. Ezek 37:15—28 expresses the prophetic ideal of a peaceful covenant people living in harmony with Yahweh and with the world. This pericope, intentionally placed between two militaristic metaphors, transforms the imagery of the militarism from violence to peace, reorienting the reader by drawing attention to the fulcrum of the literary unit: the covenant of peace.<sup>21</sup> Any readings, especially classical dispensationalist readings, of

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<sup>20</sup> See Joyce, *Ezekiel*, 218.

<sup>21</sup> As Cooke eloquently summates, “This is the chief passage in which Ezekiel re-affirms the social ideal characteristic of the prophets: an age of peace under the government of a righteous ruler.” Cooke lists these other passages that suggest such a prophetic ideal: Is 1:26, 2:4, 9:1—6, 1:1—8, 13, 16:5, 32:1; Hos 2:20, 14:5—8; Jer 23:5, 31:4—6, 33:15; Mic 5:1, Zech 3:8, 6:12, 9:9—10. See Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel*, 400.

Ezekiel 36:16—39:29 that envision a resurrected militaristic national force (Ezek 37:1—14) fighting a victorious war against the armies and allies of Gog (Ezek 38:1—39:29) have not properly taken into account the rhetorical purpose of the intentional literary placement of Ezekiel’s peaceful “Two Sticks” pericope (Ezek 37:15—18).<sup>22</sup>

Finally, the restoration of Ezek 36:16—39:29 is ultimately theocentric in nature, beginning and ending with the holiness of God and the glorious sanctification of his name. Hope and restoration are not the end, nor are they merely the means to the end of the revelation of God’s holiness to humanity. Rather, they spring forth from his character—his very essence and being—as divinity collides with human history.<sup>23</sup> As Walter Brueggemann brilliantly states, “...newness is wrought out of God’s holiness. ... we may hear with Ezekiel, ‘not for your sake, but for mine.’ The load is lifted. We begin again. The bones rattle. The air stirs. We could be on our way back home to our true community.”

I began this research with the following textual, theological, and ethical questions: How does the message of reconciliation and peace in Ezek 37:15—28 fit with the seemingly violent images of a resurrected army and battles against Gog and other enemies? Why would Yahweh resurrect an army from punishment for the sin of bloodshed, only to prepare them to commit possibly more bloodshed? Why would Yahweh install David as their leader, since David is known for his excessive bloodshed in battles, if this is a sin for which Yahweh had allowed Israel and Judah to suffer destruction? In this chapter, I have answered these questions by demonstrating how the

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<sup>22</sup> For an example of a Pentecostal dispensational reading of these texts reflecting this type of interpretation, see Frank M. Boyd, *Book of the Prophet Ezekiel* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1951), 162—198.

<sup>23</sup> Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination*, 87.

“two sticks” reconciliation and the covenant of peace transforms and subverts all theological themes seemingly implying or promoting violence. Yet one disturbing question remains unanswered: How can Yahweh condemn Israel and Judah for bloodshed and then seemingly contradict his own ethical standard by shedding the blood of Israel’s enemies united by Gog? I still face a theological, ethical and literary problem when I read about the divine violence in Ezek 38—39, because now I see that the people have been transformed into a nonviolent, reconciled, peace-loving community. Yahweh calls the people to nonviolence, but he Himself seems to be quite violent. Ethically speaking, and from a standpoint of literary criticism, how can Yahweh as a character demand ethical and moral behavior from his people that he himself does not demonstrate?<sup>24</sup> Further, can this question be answered within the confines of Ezek 36:16—39:29? In my estimation, the methodology of rhetorical criticism, applied to Ezekiel 37:15—28 in the context of Ezekiel 36:16—39:29, remains inadequate to address this question. Therefore, a new methodology will be incorporated into this study: intertextuality.

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<sup>24</sup> While the broader question of Yahweh’s role as judge in the book of Ezekiel is evoked here, it remains outside the scope of this study. I have noted it as an area suggested for future research in chapter 8.4 of this thesis.

## 7. INTERTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF REVELATION 19:11—21 AND 20:7—10

As explained more thoroughly in chapter one of this thesis, intertextuality can be defined as “the interconnections among texts,” and more specifically as “their inseparability from associations with other texts.”<sup>1</sup> Bakhtin argues that the voice of the new text both persuades and interacts with the voices of previous texts.<sup>2</sup> The “new texts” I have selected for this intertextual analysis are Rev 19:11—21 and Rev 20:7—10, passages which I have selected due to their textual dependency upon portions of Ezek 38—39 and the long history of Pentecostal intertextual interpretations of these specific texts in light of one another.<sup>3</sup> Of particular interest for my study is how allusion to and reinterpretation of Ezek 38—39 in Rev 19:11—21 and Rev 20:7—10 may shed light on some of the unresolved questions introduced by my rhetorical analysis of the Ezekiel texts. In the following intertextual analysis, I hope to discover if the Revelation texts might help to address the apparent paradoxical conundrum of Yahweh’s condemnation of bloodshed (Ezek 36:18) followed by Yahweh’s performance of bloodshed (Ezek 38—39), on the heels of a passage advocating peace and reconciliation (Ezek 37:15—28).

I will begin by identifying possible verbal and thematic allusions to portions of Ezek 38—39 in Rev 19:11—21 and 20:7—10, referencing the work of Sverre Bøe, who argues effectively that Ezek 38—39 functions as a pre-text to Rev 19:17—21 and

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<sup>1</sup> See Tull, “Rhetorical Criticism and Intertextuality,” 165—166.

<sup>2</sup> See Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 273—276; and Tull, “Rhetorical Criticism and Intertextuality,” 173.

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed history of how Pentecostals have interpreted the specific texts addressed in this thesis intertextually, see chapter two.

Rev 20:7—10.<sup>4</sup> Then I will employ rhetorical analysis to study the Revelation texts, followed by an intertextual analysis of the Ezekiel and Revelation texts. Finally, I will present theological conclusions regarding my rhetorical and intertextual analyses of these texts.

### **7.1 Ezekiel 38—39 as Pre-Text for Revelation 19:17—21 and 20:7—10**

In his significant monograph, *Gog and Magog: Ezekiel 38—39 as Pre-Text for Revelation 19:17—21 and 20:7—10*, Sverre Bøe demonstrates with extraordinary textual detail the verbal and thematic connections between these two texts. He begins by establishing the general progression of parallel themes in the book of Ezekiel and the book of Revelation, as demonstrated in the following chart:

<b>Overarching Thematic Parallels Between Ezekiel and Revelation<sup>5</sup></b>	
<b>Ezekiel</b>	<b>Revelation</b>
1. The revival of the dry bones (37:1—14) and the reunited kingdom governed by the messianic king David (37:15—28).	1. The first resurrection (20:4) and the messianic millennial kingdom (20:4—6)
2. The final battle against Gog of Magog (38—39)	2. The final battle against Gog and Magog (20:1—10)
2a. -----	2a. The second resurrection (20:11—15)

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<sup>4</sup> See Bøe, *Gog and Magog*.

<sup>5</sup> The information in this chart is taken directly from Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 5. Bøe credits Johan Lust with establishing these parallels in Johan Lust, “The Order of the Final Events in Revelation and in Ezekiel,” in *L’Apocalypse Johannique et l’Apocalypse dans le Noveau Testament* (BETL 53; ed. J. Lambrecht; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1980), 179—183. Bøe does not directly address the absence of a parallel second resurrection in the Ezekiel texts, which constitutes a fairly major difference in the pattern outlined by Lust. However, the similarities between the thematic patterns of the two texts, despite the one glaring difference, remain significant enough to invite an intertextual examination, in my view. For another chart comparing thematic elements in these texts, see also Steve Moyise, “Ezekiel and the Book of Revelation,” in *After Ezekiel: Essays on the Reception of a Difficult Prophet (Library of Hebrew/Old Testament Studies* 535; eds. Paul M. Joyce and Andrew Mein, New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 45—58.

3. The vision of the New Temple and New Jerusalem (40—48)	3. The descent of the heavenly Jerusalem (21—22)
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Ezekiel 37 opens with a dramatic resurrection scene, as the dry bones rattle and then come to life, forming a vast army. Then, the two nations of Israel and Judah—represented as two sticks becoming one—are reunited and reconciled in a new covenant of peace under the messianic leadership of their shepherd and prince, David. Following this national rebirth, the peaceful and unsuspecting people of this newly reunited kingdom are surrounded by enemies, led by “Gog” of the land of “Magog.” However, the people of reunited Israel do not fight their enemies; rather, Yahweh destroys the enemies with fire from heaven so that all the nations of the world will know that He is God. Ezekiel chapters 40—48 describe the new temple and the new Jerusalem, with utopian pictures of all nations coming together to worship one God.

The similarities of this narrative to the Revelation 19—22 narrative are striking. In Rev 19:11—21, Jesus, the messianic leader, returns on a white horse with the saints to bring redemption and judgment to the nations of the earth through the Word of God, pictured as a sword protruding from His mouth. God’s judgment of the wicked in Rev 19 closely resembles the description of the feast upon the slain in Ezek 39. Reminding readers of Ezek 37, Rev 20 opens with the dramatic resurrection of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the Word of God, and then they reign with Jesus for one thousand years. Following this reign of peace, a peaceful and unsuspecting people are also surrounded by the enemies of God, called “Gog and Magog,” and once again God destroys these enemies with fire from heaven. Following this judgment is a picture of a new Jerusalem descending from heaven to earth in Rev 21—22.

After establishing the similarities between the general thematic trajectories of last several chapters of both Ezekiel and Revelation, Bøe then examines the particular verbal and thematic connections between the Ezekiel and Revelation texts dealing with “Gog and Magog,” as well as other allusions to Ezekiel in Rev 19. First, he explains the ways in which Ezek 39:4, 17—20 corresponds with Rev 19:17—21. These texts portray vividly graphic and disturbing imagery of the invitation for birds to gorge themselves on the corpses of a defeated enemy army.<sup>6</sup> Bøe identifies the following verbal and thematic similarities in both the Ezekiel and Revelation texts:

Verbal Correspondences <sup>7</sup>	
LXX <sup>8</sup>	NT <sup>9</sup>
Ezek 39:4 πλήθη ὄρνεων, παντὶ πετεινῷ (a multitude of birds, by every winged creature)	Rev 19:17 πᾶσιν τοῖς ὄρνεοις τοῖς πετομένοις (to all the birds, the ones flying)
Ezek 39:17 παντὶ ὄρνεῳ πετεινῷ (to every winged bird)	Rev 19:21 πάντα τὰ ὄρνεα (all the birds)
Ezek 39:17b συνάχθητε καὶ ἔρχεσθε, συνάχθητε (gather together and come, gather together)	Rev 19:17b Δεῦτε συνάχθητε (come, gather together)
Ezek 39:18 Φάγεσθε πίεσθε (eat) (drink)	Rev 19:18 Φάγητε (you might eat)

<sup>6</sup> Bøe also notes, “The only other text known to us from antiquity which makes use of the theme is the short notes in *Sib. Or.* 3:644—645 and 697, which also alludes to Ezekiel 39.” See Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 298—299.

<sup>7</sup> These verbal and thematic correspondences are taken directly from Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 299. For a more thorough explanation of each of these points, see Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 274—298.

<sup>8</sup> *Septuaginta: With Morphology*, Ezek 39:4.

<sup>9</sup> K. Aland, B. Aland, J. Karavidopoulos, C. M. Martini, and B. M. Metzger, eds., *NovT Graece* (28th ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012), Rev 19:17.

<b>Thematic Correspondences</b>
Invitations come before the battle
The terms for “meal” or “supper”
The terms for “flesh”
Attacking army is defeated without man’s ordinary warfare
The list of whose flesh the birds will be offered
The references to “fire and sulfur” in the destruction of God’s opponents
The birds “being filled” with flesh

These comparisons, dubbed by Bøe, “a cluster of allusions,” strongly support the verbal and thematic dependence of Rev 19:17—21 on Ezek 39:4, 17—20, as Bøe demonstrates.<sup>10</sup> While Bøe highlights the significant differences between the texts, I found the following similarities, which he calls a “cluster of allusions,” the most interesting and compelling.<sup>11</sup> The primary similarity connecting the two texts is the mention of the names “Gog and Magog.” Second, the armies described in both texts are of enormous size, with apparent near worldwide recruitment, gathered from every area of the globe.<sup>12</sup> Third, God seems to enable the circumstances for these attempted attacks. In Ezek 38, Yahweh leads Gog into battle, and in Rev 20, God frees Satan from his prison, which enables him to gather the armies and mount his attack. Fourth, both of

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<sup>10</sup> For another source on the textual similarities, see Ronald J. Herms, *An Apocalypse for the Church and the World: The Narrative Function of Universal Language in the Book of Revelation* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 240.

<sup>11</sup> Bøe mentions several key differences between the texts. First, in Ezekiel, it is the prophet who offers the invitation to the birds, whereas in Revelation, the invitation comes from an angel. Second, in Revelation, only the birds are beckoned to come and feast on the flesh of the slain, whereas in Ezekiel, both birds and beasts are welcomed. Third, in Ezekiel, this feast is also referred to as a sacrifice, but in Revelation there are no sacrificial ideas presented. In my estimation, this is not surprising considering Ezekiel’s priestly role and employment of priestly imagery and language throughout the book. Fourth, the Revelation text refers only to eating, while Ezekiel mentions both eating (flesh) and drinking (blood). Fifth, whereas Revelation provides no specific location for this feast, Ezekiel locates it on “the mountains of Israel.” Finally, there is no mention of Israel in the Revelation text, but only “Christ’s faithful, regardless of race or people,” according to Bøe. The text literally reads, “armies of heaven,” which Bøe interprets as meaning those faithful to Christ. See Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 299.

<sup>12</sup> Regarding this “around the world” location, Bøe writes, “Ezekiel’s ‘navel of the earth’ seems to have found an echo in Revelation’s ‘breadth of the earth’ in contrast to the ‘four corners of the earth.’” See Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 342.

these divine judgments take place in the context of a period of great peace and joy. This fourth point stands out to me as particularly striking and unique, in that the authors of Ezekiel and Revelation both locate cataclysmic global wars in utopic settings of worldwide peace. Finally, and most significantly, God intervenes directly from heaven without any human participation. In both the Ezekiel and Revelation texts, God alone executes judgment and fights the battle singlehandedly with “fire from heaven,” as well as “fire and sulfur” (Ezek 38:22 and Rev 20:10).<sup>13</sup> It is this absence of human conflict that motivates me to explore the nature of these seemingly parallel “battles” in both the Ezekiel and Revelation texts.

In summation, Bøe’s work strongly demonstrates the verbal and thematic allusions between Ezek 38—39, Rev 19:17—21 and Rev 20:7—10. These allusions and connections, in addition to the Pentecostal tradition of intertextually interpreting these texts, form the basis for my decision to perform this intertextual study in hopes of better understanding some of the questions raised by my rhetorical analysis of Ezek 37:15—28 in the context of Ezek 36:16—39:29. What follows now is a rhetorical analysis of the Revelation texts, focused primarily on theological interpretation. I would like to begin by reading the Revelation texts in their own right, performing a rhetorical analysis on these texts independently of the Ezekiel texts first. Then I will follow with a thematic intertextual analysis of the Revelation and Ezekiel texts, and I

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<sup>13</sup> Also, certain aspects from the Ezekiel text have been altered or transformed in the Revelation text, including the presentation of Satan, “Gog and Magog” as two names instead of a name and a location, “Gog and Magog” as deceived by someone else, and “Gog and Magog” coming from the “four corners of the earth” instead of from specific geographical locations or countries. In addition to these similarities, Bøe notes the following aspects as “missing” from the Revelation text that are present in Ezekiel: emphasis on the ambitions of Gog, direct reference to Israel, and the cleansing of the land. Bøe explains that the lack of reference to Israel explains the absence of concern with details like burying Gog’s soldiers or cleansing the land in the Revelation text. See Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 342—343, 345.

will conclude with my theological reflections and conclusions, paying particular attention to how the rhetorical and intertextual analyses of the Revelation texts may have shed light upon some of my unanswered questions from the rhetorical analysis of the Ezekiel texts.

## 7.2 Revelation 19:11—21 Rhetorical Analysis

While Bøe's significant work establishing Ezek 38—39 as pre-text to these Revelation texts begins with Rev 19:17, I would like to start my analysis with Rev 19:11, since Rev 19:11—21 is a textual unit, comprised of two smaller units (19:11—16 and 19:17—21) that form a literary pair.<sup>14</sup> In addition, the warfare imagery presented in 19:11—16 may offer insight into the post-battle description offered in 19:17—21, and therefore I find it most helpful to interpret the two textual units together and in light of one another. Therefore, the following rhetorical analysis will be organized and addressed accordingly.

### 7.2.1 Revelation 19:11—16 Text and Translation

**11** Καὶ εῖδον τὸν οὐρανὸν ἡγεωγμένον, καὶ ὃδον ἵππος λευκὸς καὶ ὁ καθήμενος ἐπ' αὐτὸν καλούμενος πιστὸς<sup>15</sup> καὶ ἀληθινός, καὶ ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ κρίνει καὶ πολεμεῖ.

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<sup>14</sup> See David E. Aune, *Revelation 17—22* (WBC 52C; Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), 1045—1048.

<sup>15</sup> Textual variants include placing *καλούμενος* after *πιστὸς* (K), *καλούμενο* before *πιστὸς* (046 82 1006 1611 2329 pm vg sy Ir Or TR), or omitting *καλούμενος* entirely (A P 051 1 2059s al). As Mounce explains, these variants make little difference in the interpretation of the verse unless one holds the position that *καλούμενος* implies that the rider was only called “Faithful and True” but was in fact not truly “Faithful and True.” I concur with those who find this interpretation highly unlikely; regardless of the variants, the meaning is plain—the rider is called “Faithful and True” because that title reflects the nature of his character. See Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (NICNT; ed. F.F. Bruce; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 343—344; J. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (AB 38; Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1975), 312; and Aune, *Revelation 17—22*, 1042.

And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! And the one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.

<sup>12</sup> οἱ δὲ ὁφθαλμοὶ αὐτοῦ ὡς φλὸξ<sup>16</sup> πυρός, καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ διαδήματα πολλά,  
ἔχων ὄνομα γεγραμμένον ὃ οὐδεὶς οἶδεν εἰ μὴ αὐτός,

And his eyes are a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems. He had a name written that no one knew except himself.

<sup>13</sup> καὶ περιβεβλημένος ἴματιον βεβαμμένον<sup>17</sup> αἴματι, καὶ κέκληται τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ.

And he had dressed himself in clothes that had been dipped in blood, and his name has been called the Word of God.

<sup>14</sup> Καὶ τὰ στρατεύματα τὰ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ἡκολούθει αὐτῷ ἐφ' ἵπποις λευκοῖς, ἐνδεδυμένοι βύστιν λευκὸν καθαρόν.

And the armies in heaven were following him on white horses, having clothed themselves in clean white linen.

<sup>15</sup> καὶ ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ ἐκπορεύεται ρομφαία ὀξεῖα<sup>18</sup>, ἵνα ἐν αὐτῇ πατάξῃ τὰ ἔθνη,  
καὶ αὐτὸς ποιμανεῖ αὐτοὺς ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ, καὶ αὐτὸς πατεῖ τὴν ληνὸν τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς ὀργῆς τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ παντοκράτορος,

And from his mouth protrudes a sharp sword with which he might strike the nations, and he himself will shepherd them with a rod of iron, and he himself walks the winepress of the wine of the full strength of God's fury and anger.

<sup>16</sup> καὶ ἔχει ἐπὶ τὸ ἴματιον καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν μηρὸν αὐτοῦ ὄνομα γεγραμμένον. Βασιλεὺς βασιλέων καὶ κύριος κυρίων.<sup>19</sup>

And he has on his clothes and on his thigh a name written, “King of Kings and Lord of Lords.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> A 1006 *al lat sy sa* TR place ὡς before φλὸξ, whereas the UBS places it in brackets: [ὡς] φλὸξ. See K. Aland, M. Black, C. M. Martini, B. M. Metzger, M. A. Robinson, and A. Wikgren, eds., *The Greek New Testament with Morphology* (4d ed.; Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft: 1993, 2006), Rev 19:11–16; Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 10; and Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 344.

<sup>17</sup> Although the UBS apparatus includes six forms of *ραινω* or *ραντιζω*, *βεβαμμένον* has stronger manuscript support (A 046 1 82 2059s *pl* TR) and does a better job of accounting for the variants. See Aland, Black, Martini, Metzger, Robinson, and Wikgren, eds., *The Greek New Testament*, Rev 19:11–16; Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1043; and Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 345.

<sup>18</sup> Several manuscripts (046 82 2028 2329 *pm vg<sup>s,el</sup> sy*) add δίστομον (double-edged), most likely from Rev 1:16 and 2:12. See Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 346; and Ford, *Revelation*, 314.

<sup>19</sup> Aland, Aland, Karavidopoulos, Martini, and Metzger, eds., *NovT Graece*, Rev 19:11–16.

<sup>20</sup> This translation and all translations following are mine.

### 7.2.1.2 *Revelation 19:11*

Verse 11 begins a new pericope, marked by the vision clause, “And I saw...” (*καὶ εἶδον*).<sup>21</sup> What follows (Rev 19:11—16) can be accurately described, as Bøe suggests, as a “Christophany,” perhaps reminiscent of numerous theophanies in the OT.<sup>22</sup> This vision presents sensational imagery portraying the second coming of Jesus, often referred to as the *parousia*.<sup>23</sup> Since this is the only biblical text depicting Jesus returning on a white horse, commentators debate its significance and purpose.<sup>24</sup> The white horse is symbolic of Christ’s victory, possibly contrasting the white horse in Rev 6:2, which carried a false world ruler. In addition to the dramatic imagery of the victorious rider on the white horse is the equally significant and unparalleled opening

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<sup>21</sup> Aune, *Revelation 17—22*, 1052.

<sup>22</sup> Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 298—299.

<sup>23</sup> Those who hold the dispensational view see the Parousia as distinct from the “rapture,” which they see described in 1 Thess 4:13—18, as explained by Phillips in his commentary on the book of Revelation. Phillips refers to the rapture as Christ “coming in the air to receive his church,” and the second coming as Christ “coming to earth with his church.” See John Phillips, *Exploring Revelation* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974): 244; and John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), 275—276. Walvoord argues, “Even a casual study should make evident the remarkable contrast between this event and the rapture of the church. At the rapture Christ meets His own in the air, and there is no evidence of immediate judgment upon the earth. By contrast, Christ here is coming to earth with the specific purpose of bringing divine judgment and establishing His righteous rule.”

<sup>24</sup> Keener explains that in the first century Roman Empire, the white horse would have been considered appropriate for “rulers, important officials, and conquerors entering Rome in triumph.” Due to the combination of the white horse and the rider named “King of Kings,” Keener sees a possible allusion to the Parthian king, whose invasion would have been greatly feared by Rome. How much more should they fear the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords! See Keener, *Revelation*, 453. Bøe argues that the imagery in Rev 19:11 alludes to the victorious Messiah depicted in Isa 11:4. This emphasis on the triumphant victory of Christ’s second coming dramatically contrasts other texts portraying the humility of the Messiah’s coming upon a donkey (Zech 9:10, Matt 21:1—11). See Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 246—247. Other scholars who see the white horse as representative of Christ’s victory include Aune, *Revelation 17—22*, 1050—1051; Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 276; George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972). For Beasley-Murray, the white horse symbolizes the role of commander of heaven’s armies and conqueror of evil. See G.R. Beasley-Murray, *Revelation* (NCB; Matthew Black, ed.; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 279.

of heaven itself, indicating increased access to God's presence in the coming of Christ, as Thomas suggests.<sup>25</sup>

The rider's name is "Faithful and True," which solidifies for the reader the rider's identity. I concur with Thomas who argues that since the faithful witness in Rev 1:5 is identified as Jesus, and since the faithful and true witness is also identified as Jesus in Rev 3:14, readers or hearers of Rev 19:11 would know without doubt that this rider on the white horse must also be Jesus.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, the flaming eyes, the sword protruding from the rider's mouth, and the name "Word of God" also call to mind other texts in the book of Revelation in which Jesus is portrayed with similar imagery (Rev 1:5; 1:14, 16; 2:12; 3:14).<sup>27</sup> Keener insightfully defines the name "Faithful and True" as "faithfulness in testifying God's truth regardless of the cost."<sup>28</sup> I agree with Keener's inference that while the moniker "Faithful and True" refers to Jesus (Rev 1:5), it may also describe the character traits of those who follow his example and face similar trials and persecutions (Rev 2:10, 13). This type of faithfulness exemplified by the rider on the white horse contrasts both the deceitfulness of Satan, whose goal is to destroy the

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<sup>25</sup> Earlier in the book of Revelation, various doors were opened (Rev 4:1, 11:19, 15:5), but this is the first time heaven itself is opened. Scholars who note the significance of this heavenly access include Thomas, *Revelation*, 337—338; and Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 279.

<sup>26</sup> See Thomas and Macchia, *Revelation*, 338; and Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 279. Ladd notes that the Hebrew concepts of "faithful and true" would have been equivalent, because the essential meaning of "truth" is "reliability." See Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 253; and Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 344.

<sup>27</sup> See M. Eugene Boring, *Revelation* (IBC; ed. James Luther Mays; Louisville: John Knox Press, 1989), 195.

<sup>28</sup> Craig S. Keener, *Revelation* (The NIV Application Commentary: From Biblical Text to Contemporary Life; ed. Terry Muck; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 452.

nations (Rev 20:7—10), and the violence of the Roman emperors who would martyr the saints.<sup>29</sup>

What follows in the second half of verse 11 is seemingly the picture of a warring Messiah who comes to judge and to usher in the end of the age, reflecting Jewish messianic traditions.<sup>30</sup> This rider comes to bring about both the judgment and righteousness of God.<sup>31</sup> Since the verbs translated “he judges” (*κρίνει*) and “makes war” (*πολεμεῖ*) are both in the present tense, they may indicate both continuous action and revelation of the rider’s character; he acts continuously in judgment and war because it is in his nature to do so.<sup>32</sup> Yet the judgment and war he brings is not via means of a physical military battle; he judges and makes war spiritually against the forces of evil by revealing in his coming the righteousness of God and the salvation made possible for humanity by the shedding of his own blood.<sup>33</sup> Judgment comes only for those who willfully reject this salvation and choose to side with the spiritual forces of evil against the Messiah.<sup>34</sup> Miroslav Wolf explores the theological idea of exclusion as the dark side

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<sup>29</sup> See Gordon D. Fee, *Revelation: A New Covenant Commentary* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2011), 274; and Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 279.

<sup>30</sup> Mounce sees this imagery of a Messiah waging holy war and bringing about the end of the world as aligning more closely with Jewish warrior Messiah traditions than with other NT texts predicting Christ’s second coming. However, he clarifies that expectation for a warrior Messiah does not contradict NT expectations (2 Thess 1:7—8, Matt 25:41). See Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 343.

<sup>31</sup> This righteous judgment may be an allusion to the righteous judgment of the Messiah in Isa 11:4. See Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 279; and Aune, *Revelation* 17—22, 1053.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas and Ladd are among the scholars who note the significance of the present tense use of these verbs and the ensuing implication for both ongoing action and revelation of character. See Thomas, *Revelation*, 338; and Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 253.

<sup>33</sup> Ladd similarly argues that this judgment is not retribution, but rather an expression of the righteousness of God. See Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 254.

<sup>34</sup> As Ladd explains, “...the extirpation of evil is the negative side of the divine salvation.” Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 254.

of embrace, in that God offers embrace to a violent and sinful world, but only those who reject this embrace suffer exclusion from grace.<sup>35</sup> Wolf's theological reflection provides a helpful paradigm through which to understand the type of judgment and war depicted by the image of the rider on the white horse in Rev 19:11; the rider comes to bring salvation for all who will accept the divine embrace, but in judgment and war against the forces of evil, he excludes from grace all those who willfully side with them against God. Macchia expounds upon Wolf's work in his soteriological reflection on the book of Revelation, emphasizing the power of this divine embrace expressed in the cross to break the cycle of violence. Macchia explains, "In this light, the cross is not a passive submission to violence but is part of God's struggle in a violent world for peace and redemptive justice."<sup>36</sup> Therefore, building upon the theological ideas of Wolf and Macchia, I contend that in Rev 19:11 the Messiah comes as a rider on a white horse of victory to judge and wage war, not with physical violence against human enemies, but with the righteousness of God, which offers the divine embrace to all of humanity as an expression of peace and redemptive justice. This war is not waged against humans, but against the forces of evil which would seek to allure humans into rejecting the divine embrace and therefore suffering exclusion from grace, the dark but necessary side of divine justice.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> See Miroslav Wolf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 295—300.

<sup>36</sup> Macchia, *Revelation*, 577.

<sup>37</sup> Frank Macchia articulates this divine sacrifice eloquently as he writes, "As divine, the Son on the cross became the chief entry point for God's taking our sin and violence onto Godself and overcoming it through suffering love." See Macchia, *Revelation*, 576.

### 7.2.1.3 *Revelation 19:12*

Three dramatic images dominate verse 12: eyes as a flame of fire, many diadems, and an unknown name inscribed on the rider's thigh. The opening phrase of verse 12, "eyes are a flame of fire," reminds the readers of the imagery in Rev 1:14, reinforcing the identity of this rider as Jesus. While some see in these fiery eyes an allusion to divine fury, war, and judgment,<sup>38</sup> I think it is more likely that they signify the power of Christ to see all things and to penetrate all mysteries; truly, nothing is hidden from his gaze.<sup>39</sup> The many diadems on the rider's head represent the sovereign power and absolute authority he carries, contrasting the limited power of the great red dragon (Rev 12:3) or the beast (Rev 13:1).<sup>40</sup> The fullness of Christ's power is revealed at his second coming, when he will finally bring judgment and make war against all

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<sup>38</sup> For Fee, this imagery is portraying Christ as divine warrior. Keener claims that the fiery eyes indicate both divinity and fury. Walvoord suggests that the "flames of fire" refer to Christ's "righteous judgment upon sin." See Fee, *Revelation*, 274; Keener, *Revelation*, 453; and Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 276—277.

<sup>39</sup> Scholars who hold this perspective include Thomas, Ladd, and Beasley-Murray. According to Thomas, such imagery may symbolize his "penetrating prophetic vision, from which nothing is hidden." Similarly, Ladd views this visual imagery as representative of the "all-searching gaze of Christ." For Beasley-Murray, not only do these eyes of fire see through all pretense, but they "penetrate the depths of the human heart." See Thomas, *Revelation*, 339; Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 254; and Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 279.

<sup>40</sup> Thomas highlights the significance of this contrast, arguing that since the rider in this context has "many diadems," the implication is that the number is greater than seven or ten, and therefore his power and authority are unlimited, aligning perfectly with his title, Lord of Lord and King of Kings (Rev 17:14). Fee also thinks the diadems indicate Christ as the true king, in contrast to the "false, demonic royalty" of the dragon with seven crowns and the beast with ten crowns. Aune describes the contrast as a "literary counterpoint" to the image of the diadems worn by the dragon and the beast. See Thomas, *Revelation*, 339; Fee, *Revelation*, 274—275; and Aune, *Revelation 17—22*, 1054—1055. For Beasley-Murray, the diadems shift the focus of Christ's role of judge to that of king; he is sovereign over the universe and all the forces of evil, or as Mounce puts it, he has "unlimited sovereignty." Mounce explains that these diadems are symbolic and should not try to be envisioned in a concrete sense. See Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 279; Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 277; and Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 344.

evil powers.<sup>41</sup> Finally, the secret name inscribed on the rider's thigh most likely represents the mysterious transcendence of Christ, revealing further his immeasurable power that remains beyond the grasp of human understanding.<sup>42</sup> This may also remind readers of Rev 2:17, in which Jesus will give his followers a white stone with a new name.<sup>43</sup>

#### 7.2.1.4 *Revelation 19:13*

The meaning of the graphic imagery of the rider's bloodstained robe is famously debated among biblical scholars. Some believe the blood on the rider's robe is that of his enemies who are about to be destroyed, revealing Jesus in his second coming as a violent avenger who annihilates the nations of the world in a bloodthirsty eschatological battle.<sup>44</sup> These scholars appeal to the intertextual allusion to Isa 63:1—3,

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<sup>41</sup> Ladd explains that while Christ reigns presently, the second coming will reveal to all the world the full extent of his power and authority. See Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 254.

<sup>42</sup> Mounce notes that some scholars see a reference to the tetragrammaton, YHWH, due to the Jewish belief that the name is too holy for pronunciation and therefore somewhat unknown. Mounce writes, “There will always remain a mystery about Christ which finite minds will never fully grasp.” He acknowledges the ancient concept that knowing the name of a god allows one to possess power over that god. See Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 344—345. Aune also notes the parallel in Graeco-Roman mythology, in which the gods have a “secret name” known only to the gods, while they have a different name known to humans. For religious texts reflecting this and other similar traditions, see Aune, *Revelation 17—22*, 1055. Beasley-Murray eloquently captures the transcendence of Christ when he writes, “The unknown name of Christ comports with the fact that his nature, his relationship to the Father, and even his relationship to humanity, transcend all human understanding.” See Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 279.

<sup>43</sup> Thomas calls it an “enigmatic paradox” that his name is written yet unknown to anyone but himself. He also notes how anything “written” in the book of Revelation carries eschatological significance, and this unknown name is no exception. Thomas writes, “The fact that both he and they know this name would be yet another example of the way in which the followers of Jesus share in his identity and eschatological rewards, revealing that they too will have access to its power and depth.” See Thomas, *Revelation*, 340.

<sup>44</sup> In his book, *Fight*, Preston Sprinkle quotes John MacArthur, “‘Armageddon … will actually be a slaughter’ of ‘millions of people engaged in the battle of Armageddon,’ and ‘it is the Lord Jesus Christ who crushes out their lives.’” See Preston Sprinkle, *Fight: A Christian Case for Non-Violence*

noting the similarity between Yahweh’s “red robes” and the rider’s robe “dipped in blood.” In the context of Isa 63, the robes are Yahweh’s, and the blood is that of Yahweh’s enemies after he has trampled them in his great wrath. Therefore, the parallel interpretation of Rev 19:13 is that the blood on Christ’s robe must symbolize that of his enemies before he tramples them with the wrath of God.<sup>45</sup> Some who hold this view emphasize the contrast between Jesus presented in the gospels as redeemer, and Jesus presented in the book of Revelation as warrior.<sup>46</sup> For example, Phillips, whose interpretation reflects a dispensational viewpoint, writes, “He [Jesus] now has a ministry far different from that which was His when He came as the Word made flesh, full of grace and truth. His ministry is now one of battle and blood. He is heaven’s minister, but heaven’s minister for war.”<sup>47</sup> Methodologically and theologically, I find this type of interpretation highly suspect. It is methodologically inconsistent to appeal to the intertextual context of Isa 63:1—3 as the basis for envisioning Jesus as a bloodthirsty warrior trampling human beings underfoot, without first considering the

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(Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2013): 173; and John MacArthur, *Revelation 12—22* (Chicago: Moody, 2000): 117—118.

<sup>45</sup> Also, “tread the winepress” and “wrath” in verse 15 allude to Isa 63:2—3. This view is held by Bøe, Keener, Ladd, Walvoord, Beasley-Murray, Mounce, Aune, Phillips, Michaels, Skaggs, and numerous others. Bøe acknowledges the difficulty of the rider’s robe being stained with the blood of his enemies *before* the war occurs, but Mounce claims that this argument “misunderstands the nature of apocalyptic writing.” Mounce also supports his view by appealing to the Palestinian *Targum* on Gen 49:11, which states in part, “...His [Messiah’s] garments will be dipped in blood and he himself like the juice of the winepress.” See Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 250; Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 345; Keener, *Revelation*, 454; Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 277; J. Ramsey Michaels, *Revelation* (IVPNTC; eds. Grant R. Osborne, D. Stuart Briscoe, Haddon Robinson; Downer’s Grove: IVP, 1997), 216; Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 254; Phillips, *Exploring Revelation*, 246; Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 280; Aune, *Revelation 17—22*, 1057, 1069; and Benham and Skaggs, *Revelation*, 198—199.

<sup>46</sup> Ladd explains, “The picture here is of Christ the warrior and conqueror of evil, not of Christ the redeemer.” See Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 254.

<sup>47</sup> Phillips, *Exploring Revelation*, 246.

more immediate context of the book of Revelation, which consistently portrays Jesus as “the Lamb that was slain” (Rev 5:6, 5:12, 13:8). The book of Revelation repeatedly emphasizes the sacrificial nature of Christ’s life, which is consistent with the character of his earthly ministry as presented in the gospels. It is by his sacrifice, and not by a sword, that Jesus gains victory and ushers in the kingdom of God; therefore, any eschatological interpretation in which Jesus in the book of Revelation contradicts Jesus as portrayed in the gospels must be called into question.<sup>48</sup>

How then can the blood on the rider’s robe be understood, if it is not the blood of human enemies? Some scholars suggest that it could be the blood of the martyrs. After Jesus welcomes the martyrs into heaven, his robes become stained with their blood, and the wrath poured out on God’s enemies then becomes revenge for the blood of the martyrs.<sup>49</sup>

While this interpretation is possible, I believe the most compelling and consistent interpretation is that the blood is the Messiah’s own—it represents the blood he shed on the cross, by which he accomplishes both salvation and judgment.<sup>50</sup> This is

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<sup>48</sup> As a Pentecostal scholar who has a high value for intertextuality, correlation and harmonization of scriptures, this type of argument seems to contradict not only the rest of the book of Revelation and the gospels, but also the words of Hebrews 13:8, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” ESV (Heb 13:8).

<sup>49</sup> Fee supports this view, writing, “It seems far more likely in this case to be imagery pointing to the soon-to-be bloodbath of those who remain faithful to his name.” See Fee, *Revelation*, 275. Similarly, Chapman argues, “...his garments are here stained with the blood of the martyrs whom he has embraced and welcomed into the heavenly kingdom. He comes spattered with the blood of his beloved ones to press the grapes of God’s wrath against those who inflicted such a slaughter.” See Charles T. Chapman, *The Message of the Book of Revelation* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1995), 120; George Bradford Caird, *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine* (Black’s New Testament Commentaries; London: Adam and Charles Black, 1966), 192—193, 242—244; and Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 250.

<sup>50</sup> Thomas, Robinson, Swete, Boring, Sprinkle, Robinson, Krodel, Rowland, and Metzger are among those who hold this position. See Thomas, *Revelation*, 340; Henry Barclay Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John: The Greek Text With Introduction Notes and Indices* (London: MacMillan and Company, 1906), 252; Sprinkle, *Fight*, 187; John A.T. Robinson, *Twelve New Testament Studies* (SBT

consistent with the other references to the blood of the Lamb in the book of Revelation (Rev 1:5, 5:9, 7:14, 12:11), by which Christ purchased humanity for God (5:9), brought freedom from sin (1:5), washed and cleansed the robes of the saints (7:14), and enabled the saints to triumph over the accuser (12:11). Now in Rev 19:13, the Lamb completes the salvation and redemption of humanity at his second coming by the past action of the shedding of his blood. Thomas affirms this interpretation when he explains,

The garment dipped in blood points to the nature of this victory or overcoming that enables him to confront all the nations of the earth, for he has been slaughtered for them, shedding his blood for them, a past act to which this perfect passive participle points. The judging and making war he carries out are thus salvific acts based on his atoning life and death.<sup>51</sup>

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34; London: SCM, 1962): 173; Gerhard A. Krodel, *Revelation* (Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament; Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1989), 323; Christopher Rowland, *Revelation* (Epworth Commentaries; London: Epworth Press, 1993), 145; and Bruce M. Metzger, *Breaking the Code: Understanding the Book of Revelation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 91.

<sup>51</sup> While Thomas acknowledges that the imagery of a robe dipped in blood could remind readers of judgment or war in the book of Revelation, he argues that it may also remind them of Jesus' death and of the death of the saints. For other texts describing the judgments of God, see Rev 8:7—8, 11:6, 16:3—4; for the Lamb making war see Rev 17:14. For texts describing the death of Jesus and the death of the saints, see Rev 1:5, 5:9, 6:10, 7:14, 8:8, 12:11, 14:20, 16:6, 17:6, 18:24, and 19:2. See Thomas, *Revelation*, 340.

Throughout the book of Revelation, the victorious Messiah is pictured repeatedly as the Lamb that was slain (Rev 5:6, 5:12, 13:8), and even in this image of a warrior on a white horse, the warrior's bloodstained robes represent his most powerful act of warfare against the forces of evil—the shedding of his own blood as the slaughtered Lamb for the sake of humanity. Christ won the victory over sin and death, and it is in the power of this victory that the Messiah returns as the rider on the white horse, not to wield a physical sword against God's human enemies, but rather to destroy evil once and for all, thereby freeing humanity from evil's destructive power.<sup>52</sup> Christ's victory on the cross provided both salvation for those who would receive it, and judgment for those who would reject it.<sup>53</sup> The judgment Christ brings is not that of additional bloodshed, but rather the eternal judgment of separation from God that ensues for those who reject the Word of God, pictured in verse 15 by the sharp sword protruding from the rider's mouth. As Thomas proposes, even the Greek grammar supports this interpretation, since the word *βεβαμμένον* (having been dipped) is a perfect passive participle, indicating past action with ongoing implications for the present and the future.<sup>54</sup> Use of this form would indeed be a strange choice if the author were referring to the future action of the Messiah, returning to slaughter God's human

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<sup>52</sup> Frank D. Macchia supports this interpretation when he writes, "The Christ who returns victoriously to reign on earth has his robes baptized in blood as a symbol of the baptism of his death in his self-giving in divine love for the salvation of the world (Rev 19:13). It is love that conquers in Christ and not hate, self-giving and not self-serving. That this love has a judgmental side for those who oppose it cannot be denied. But this judgment is not its divine intention." See Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 46.

<sup>53</sup> Farrer explains the connection between Christ's sacrifice and victory over God's enemies, "In shedding his own blood he defeats his enemies and (in ultimate effect) treads down their lives to the earth." See Austin Farrer, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 196—197.

<sup>54</sup> See Thomas, *Revelation*, 340.

enemies with a physical sword. Boring likewise emphasizes the significance of this timing, stating, “The conquering rider arrives wearing a garment dipped in blood. Before the ‘last battle’ ever begins, his garments are already bloody with the sacrifice of himself (1:5, 5:9).”<sup>55</sup> Boring articulates the point highlighted by Thomas—the rider’s robe is stained with blood *before* he enters the battle.<sup>56</sup> In addition to aligning with the imagery of the Messiah portrayed as the “Lamb who was slain” throughout the book of Revelation, this interpretation is also consistent with other uses of the word “blood” in the book of Revelation as referring to the blood of Christ (Rev 1:5, 5:9, 7:14, 12:11).<sup>57</sup> Early Pentecostal writer Uldene Mabelle Utley also holds this view, describing the blood on the rider’s robe as “the precious blood of Christ.”<sup>58</sup> The author of Revelation alludes to the imagery of Isa 63:1—3 not to draw a precise parallel between Yahweh’s judgment of Israel’s ancient enemies and Messiah’s judgment of humanity, but rather to highlight the contrast between the two, subverting Isaiah’s victory-through-violence

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<sup>55</sup> Similarly, Sprinkle reasons, “When Jesus returns in Revelation 19, we see him ‘clothed in a robe dipped in blood’ (19:13) before he wages war against the enemy. The blood, therefore, is probably his own. If the blood was his enemies, it would splatter on his garments after the fight, not before.” See Sprinkle, *Fight*, 187; and Boring, *Revelation*, 196. Ladd counters this view, arguing, “This objection overlooks the fluidity and symbolic nature of apocalyptic language. Christ can be pictured as the warrior even before the battle is joined.” Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 254—255.

<sup>56</sup> Ladd counters this view, arguing, “This objection overlooks the fluidity and symbolic nature of apocalyptic language. Christ can be pictured as the warrior even before the battle is joined.” Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 254—255.

<sup>57</sup> In response to those who find such an interpretation absurd, Boring retorts, “Yet it is not absurd for one who can define ‘conquering’ as ‘dying’ and ‘Lion’ as ‘Lamb.’” Boring and Beasley-Murray also claim that this was the view held by many of the early Church Fathers. However, Beasley-Murray joins modern commentators who view the blood as the blood of Christ’s enemies, due to the intertextual context of Isa 63. See Boring, *Revelation*, 196; and Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 249; and Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 280.

<sup>58</sup> Utley, “A Vision of His Glory on the Mount of Prayer,” 18. Similarly, other writers in Pentecostal journal articles follow Utley’s interpretation. In his 1951 article, Steelberg writes, “In the symbolism of Revelation 19:13 His vesture will be dipped in blood. Oh, I would that you would accept the sacrifice that was made for you. Bow your head and ask Him to let that Blood cover your sin.” See Steelberg, “The Speaking Blood,” 5, and Fred Smolchuck, “No Blood—No Life,” 22.

imagery with the victory-through-sacrifice imagery in the book of Revelation.<sup>59</sup>

Theologically, violent judgment for sin occurs in both texts, but in the Revelation text, it is God himself in the person of Christ who has absorbed the judgment for humanity's sin on the cross, so that the only judgment left to dispense when the Messiah returns is the eschatological exclusion of those who volitionally oppose God's merciful love by rejecting the Word of God.

The final phrase of verse 13 identifies the name of the rider as "The Word of God," further solidifying for the readers his messianic identity. By employing the title, "Word of God," directly after presenting the imagery of the robe dipped in blood, the author of Revelation intentionally communicates the idea that Christ's sacrifice on the cross is God's Word to humanity; it is more than just a title for the returning Messiah.<sup>60</sup> This Messianic title reminds readers of other Johannine literature (John 1), in which the son of God is ὁ λόγος (the word) of God to the world. Boring explains, "This conqueror destroys his enemies, not with a literal sword, but with the sword of his mouth; his only weapon is his word, the Word of God which he himself is (19:13)."<sup>61</sup> The phrase

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<sup>59</sup> Boring also sees the textual allusion to Isa 63 as an intentional contrast, explaining how the author of Revelation re-appropriates Isa 63:1—3, "In contrast to the divine warrior of Isaiah 63:1—3, the source for this imagery, this blood is not the blood of his enemies but his own martyr blood in union with the martyr blood of his followers who, like him, have suffered/testified at the hands of Rome. John's theology as a whole calls for this interpretation. He uses the ancient *form* of portraying the ultimate victory of God as winning a great battle in which those who have resisted God are slaughtered. But he fills this with new *content*. This is simply what has happened in the Christian confession as such, that the Christ, the triumphant military king, is Jesus, the crucified man of Nazareth, who was crucified not as preliminary to his victory but as his victory." See Boring, *Revelation*, 196—197.

<sup>60</sup> Aune understands the "Word of God" in this context to function primarily as a title for the Messiah, and not as a reference to the gospel. However, I argue that since it is impossible to separate the person of the Messiah from his message, it is therefore both a title and a revelation of God's message to humanity through the gospel, which was accomplished by the shed blood of Christ. See Aune, *Revelation* 17—22, 1069.

<sup>61</sup> Boring, *Revelation*, 196.

“Word of God,” which will be portrayed as a sword in verse 15, encompasses both the gospel message and the person of Jesus Christ. The emphasis is not, as Mounce argues, an authoritative declaration of judgment as a prelude to the destruction of the nations, but rather an announcement of mercy available to all who will receive it.<sup>62</sup> The role of the Messiah is also one of “cosmic mediator,” as Beasley-Murray suggests, since the *parousia* initiates the eschatological process of completing the new creation.<sup>63</sup> The emphasis here is upon the culmination and completion of God’s eschatological plan of salvation for all humanity, in which all who embrace the Word of God are included.

#### 7.2.1.5 *Revelation 19:14*

In verse 14, the “armies of heaven” accompany the Messiah at his *parousia*. Some scholars suggest that these armies may be angelic hosts who come to witness the execution of the Messiah’s enemies; others propose that the armies are comprised of both angels and martyrs.<sup>64</sup> However, I believe the clearest reading of the text is that

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<sup>62</sup> Mounce cites other texts supporting the idea of the Word of God as an active agent (Gen 1:3, 7, 9; Heb 4:12, Wis. of Sol. 19:15—16). He writes, “The Messiah as avenging warrior is appropriately named the Word (the powerful and active utterance) of God.” See Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 345—346.

<sup>63</sup> Beasley-Murray also believes that “Word of God” also would have connoted logos-type Christianity (Col 1:15, Rev 3:14). See Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 280.

<sup>64</sup> For Aune, this imagery of an angelic army accompanying Christ in his Parousia could be seen as an allusion to the Son of Man tradition. See Aune, *Revelation 17—22*, 1059. Ladd holds the view that this army is most likely angels, and not saints. Ladd distinguishes between Christ’s role as Lamb and as Warrior, explaining, “As the Lamb, Christ is followed by the saints (17:14); as the heavenly Warrior, he is followed by the angels.” He cites the following references that indicate armies of angels accompanying the Son of Man at his coming (Zech 14:5, Mk 8:38, Lk 9:26, 1 Thess 3:13, 2 Thess 1:7). See Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 255. Beasley-Murray follows Ladd in identifying the army as comprised of angels, appealing to various other texts as biblical precedent (1 Kgs 22:19, Ps 103:21, Dan 4:35, Mt 25:31, Mk 13:27, 2 Thess 1:7). See Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 281. For Mounce, the army may include angels as well as the martyrs, per Rev 17:14. See Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 346. Similarly, Walvoord sees the army as comprising both angels and the church. See Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 277. Boring acknowledges that the armies could be comprised of angelic hosts, these armies most likely are comprised of the martyrs. He elaborates, “They can be pictured as in heaven and thus returning with Jesus at the Parousia, not because they have been earlier ‘raptured’ (in

“armies of heaven” are the saints—the bride of the Lamb—because they are clothed in fine, pure white linen, which is the bridal garment worn by those preparing for marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:6—9).<sup>65</sup> These white garments represent purity, righteousness, and perhaps even the sacrifice of martyrdom,<sup>66</sup> precipitating the joyful anticipation of a wedding celebration, as opposed to military preparation for participation in a battle.<sup>67</sup> These heavenly armies do not carry any weapons, nor do they take part in any conflict.<sup>68</sup> In addition, since the armies are riding on white horses just as the Messiah is, they can also be seen symbolically as victorious overcomers (Rev 12:11, 19:11).

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contrast to modern dispensationalist theory), taken to heaven to escape the eschatological trouble, but because they have been taken to heaven in the same manner as their Leader—through death.” Boring, *Revelation*, 197.

<sup>65</sup> Thomas believes that this intra-textual allusion may indicate that the “armies of heaven” are to be associated with “those who are faithful witnesses to the Lamb.” See Thomas, *Revelation*, 341.

<sup>66</sup> For Aune, the white linen represents the holiness and purity of the heavenly army. Aune, *Revelation* 17—22, 1059—1060. sees the “fine linen, white and pure” as representative of both righteousness and “divine retaliation.” See Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 346. For Boring, the white garments represent their sacrifice as martyrs. See Boring, *Revelation*, 197.

<sup>67</sup> See Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 280; and Thomas, *Revelation*, 341,

<sup>68</sup> Bøe concludes, “Since the accompanying hosts are clothed purely in white, the implication must be that Christ alone is the warrior, without any assistance.” Similarly, Keener emphasizes the fact that whether the armies of heaven are comprised of angels or saints, they themselves “execute no violence themselves,” since Jesus as the mighty warrior is the only one who strikes the enemies of God. See Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 248; Keener, *Revelation*, 453; Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 255; Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 346; and Skaggs, *Revelation*, 199. Contrarily, Fee refers to the “heavenly armies” as “divine combatants” who will “join the Warrior Christ in the Final Battle,” alluding to human participation in judgment, violence and bloodshed. See Fee, *Revelation*, 276.

### 7.2.1.6 *Revelation 19:15*

Verse 15 opens with the description of a sharp sword proceeding from the rider's mouth, with which he will strike down the nations.<sup>69</sup> While the Messiah is accompanied by the armies of heaven who are dressed as a bride preparing for a wedding, he is the only one dressed for battle, and his only weapon is the sword protruding from his mouth.<sup>70</sup> Some scholars believe this is a literal sword which the Messiah will wield to slay human enemies of God in a physical battle, thereby establishing his kingdom.<sup>71</sup> However, the imagery of a sword proceeding from the Messiah's mouth should remind readers of Rev 1:16, in which context the sword is clearly the Word of God.<sup>72</sup> In addition, the more immediate context of Rev 19:13, in which the rider's name identified as "The Word of God," further emphasizes this theme, supporting the interpretation that the sword protruding from the rider's mouth is symbolic for the Word of God.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Fee notes that "nations" is plural to remind the hearers that Rome was not the only nation against God and his people. See Fee, *Revelation*, 276.

<sup>70</sup> Thomas, *Revelation*, 341.

<sup>71</sup> According to Keener, the "sharp sword" could cause Jewish readers to think of the Wisdom of Solomon, in which God's Word comes down from heaven to kill the disobedient (Wisd. Sol. 18:15—16). Keener finds an "eschatological war of ideologies" unlikely, because of allusions to several other biblical passages that may indicate literal bloodshed (Isa 11:4, Ps 2:9, Isa 34:5, Jer 12:12, 47:6). See Keener, *Revelation*, 454; and Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 277.

<sup>72</sup> In every other instance in the book of Revelation, this imagery of a sword coming out of the Messiah's mouth represents the Word of God. Sprinkle notes the following references, "Rev 1:12, 2:12, 16; compare with John 12:48, 2 Thess 2:8, Heb 4:12." See Sprinkle, *Fight*, 187; Thomas, *Revelation*, 342; and Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 248.

<sup>73</sup> Ladd describes the power of this visual imagery, "Here is a symbolic representation of victory by the power of a word which is impossible to be literally envisaged." Ladd and Mounce claim that the only weapon involved in this battle is the Word of God, seeing an allusion to Isa 11:4, in which God smites the earth with the rod of his mouth. Mounce says specifically that the word is "the lethal power of the word of his judgment," referring also to Rev 1:16, 2:12, and 2 Thess 2:8 where Jesus slays the lawless one with "the breath of his mouth." See Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 255—256; and Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 346. For biblical and extra-biblical texts from which John could have constructed this imagery, see Aune, *Revelation 17—22*, 1060—1061.

After striking down the nations with the sword, the rider will then rule them with a rod of iron.<sup>74</sup> Some scholars believe that ruling with an iron rod refers to ultimate annihilation of the nations, and it is just an additional metaphor emphasizing their complete destruction.<sup>75</sup> However, this interpretation invites the question, “If the Messiah has already slaughtered the nations with his sword, what nations are left for him to rule?” The most convincing interpretation is that these metaphors are not employed to insinuate the complete annihilation of the nations with a literal sword and an iron rod, but rather to describe the conversion of the nations through the proclamation of the Word of God. For example, Swete argues that the nations are smitten “...not by judgments only, but by the forces which reduce them to obedience of faith.”<sup>76</sup> I concur strongly with Swete; the nations are conquered not by the bloodshed of a violent sword nor are they ruled by the physical striking of a literal iron rod, but they are conquered by the sacrificial love of Christ and the Word of God, and they are ruled by his authority and power. Boring explains that *ποιμανεῖ* (rule) can also be translated “shepherd,” possibly reminding readers of Rev 7:17 which is most often translated “the Lamb will be their shepherd (*ποιμανεῖ*).”<sup>77</sup> This shepherding includes

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<sup>74</sup> Aune believes the “iron crook” is functionally equivalent to the sharp sword proceeding from the rider’s mouth, which Aune identifies as a symbol for the Word of God. See Aune, *Revelation 17—22*, 1061.

<sup>75</sup> Mounce argues that ruling the nations with a rod of iron does not refer to governance of the nations, but rather to destruction of the nations. Similarly, Walvoord believes the rod “represents unyielding, absolute government under which men are required to conform to the righteous standards of God.” See Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 347; and Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 278.

<sup>76</sup> See Richard Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (New York: T & T Clark, 1993): 238—337. For a critical evaluation of Bauckham’s conclusions, see Herms, *An Apocalypse for the Church and for the World*, 37—43, 139—144. See also Henry Barclay Swete, *Commentary on Revelation* (Kregel Publications, 1977), 254; and Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 346.

<sup>77</sup> This could also remind readers of Rev 12:5, Ps 2:7, and Isa 49:2. See Boring, *Revelation*, 196; Thomas, *Revelation*, 342; and Fee, *Revelation*, 277.

both gentle care and strong leadership, including judgment when necessary.<sup>78</sup> Thomas explains the apparent paradox:

Such shepherding is mentioned after the action of striking, which may be taken as a hopeful sign, suggesting that, even in the context of the return of Jesus, who judges and makes war in righteousness, hope for the conversion of the nations has not been completely lost or forgotten.<sup>79</sup>

While the Word of God brings judgment for those who reject it, it also offers redemption to those individuals and nations who would receive it. Macchia affirms support for Thomas' interpretation, explaining, "Christ strikes down the nations in 19:15 not to annihilate them, but in order to rule them in justice and peace!"<sup>80</sup> Macchia argues that since the nations appear in chapter 20 under the Messiah's rule of peace, the striking of the nations in chapter 19 could not have been for the purpose of annihilation. The final phrase of verse 15, describing how the Messiah will tread the wine of the anger of God's wrath, refers to this eschatological judgment of those who reject the Word of God and set themselves at war against the Messiah.<sup>81</sup> While this phraseology does allude strongly to Isa 63:3,<sup>82</sup> it is not the judgment of a literal physical slaughter that is pictured here, but rather the final and eternal separation from the divine presence of those who wage war against God and the Lamb. Again, the armies of heaven are

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<sup>78</sup> Thomas, *Revelation*, 342.

<sup>79</sup> Thomas, *Revelation*, 342.

<sup>80</sup> Macchia, *Revelation*, 620.

<sup>81</sup> Beasley-Murray notes that in each of the three figures (the sharp sword, the rod of iron, and treading the wine press), Christ acts alone in executing judgment. He sees each of these figures of representative of the Word of Christ, through which he brings judgment. See Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 281.

<sup>82</sup> According to Aune, Jewish exegesis of the Isa 63 text is that the nations Yahweh is trampling are Gog and Magog. See Aune, *Revelation* 17–22, 1061–1062; and Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 256.

observers of and not participants in this judgment.<sup>83</sup> As Thomas argues, this is the climax of God's eschatological judgment.<sup>84</sup> Yet the same Word of God that brings severe judgment also initiates extravagant mercy.<sup>85</sup>

#### **7.2.1.7 *Revelation 19:16***

The rider on the white horse is identified as the “King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.” Revelation 17:14 identifies “the Lamb” as “Lord of Lords and King of Kings,” echoing the description of the rider on the white horse (Rev 19:16).<sup>86</sup> The fourth messianic title in this section, in addition to “Faithful and True,” his unknown name, and “The Word of God,” carries a twofold emphasis. First, it reveals the sovereignty of the Lamb, and second, it expresses the Lamb’s close connection to the unlimited power and authority of God.<sup>87</sup> Thomas also notes that the word “Lord” in the book of Revelation is used only one other time to refer to Jesus (Rev 11:8). In all other cases,

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<sup>83</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 281.

<sup>84</sup> Thomas, *Revelation*, 342.

<sup>85</sup> Regarding God’s judgment, Mounce argues, “Any view of God which eliminates judgment and his hatred of sin in the interest of an emasculated doctrine of sentimental affection finds no support in the strong and virile realism of the Apocalypse.” See Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 347

<sup>86</sup> “The Lamb” is mentioned 31 times in the book of Revelation, and three times is described as “the lamb who was slain” (Rev 5:6, 5:12, 13:8). See Thomas, *Revelation*, 343.

<sup>87</sup> See Thomas, *Revelation*, 343; Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 256; Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 282; Fee, *Revelation*, 277; and Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 347.

“Lord” refers to “The Lord God, the All Powerful One.”<sup>88</sup> Therefore, use of this title here denotes strong connection with the Lamb to God and his power.<sup>89</sup>

### 7.2.2 Revelation 19:17—21 Text and Translation

<sup>17</sup> Καὶ εἶδον ἔνα ἄγγελον ἐστῶτα ἐν τῷ ἥλιῳ καὶ ἔκραξεν ἐν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ λέγων πᾶσιν τοῖς ὀρνέοις τοῖς πετομένοις ἐν μεσουρανήματι· Δεῦτε συνάχθητε εἰς τὸ δεῖπνον τὸ μέγα τοῦ θεοῦ

And I saw one messenger having stood in the sun, and he shouted in a great voice, saying to all the birds flying in heaven, “Come and gather together to the great dinner of God.

<sup>18</sup> ἵνα φάγητε σάρκας βασιλέων καὶ σάρκας χιλιάρχων καὶ σάρκας ἰσχυρῶν καὶ σάρκας ἵππων καὶ τῶν καθημένων ἐπ’ αὐτῶν καὶ σάρκας πάντων ἐλευθέρων τε καὶ δούλων καὶ μικρῶν καὶ μεγάλων.

That you might eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of rulers of a thousand, the flesh of the strong, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all—both free and slave, small and great.

<sup>19</sup> Καὶ εἶδον τὸ θηρίον καὶ τοὺς βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς καὶ τὰ στρατεύματα αὐτῶν<sup>90</sup> συνηγμένα ποιήσαι τὸν πόλεμον μετὰ τοῦ καθημένου ἐπὶ τοῦ ἵππου καὶ μετὰ τοῦ στρατεύματος αὐτοῦ.

And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies, having been brought together to make war with the one sitting on the horse and with his army.

<sup>20</sup> καὶ ἐπιάσθη τὸ θηρίον καὶ μετ’ αὐτοῦ ὁ ψευδοπροφήτης ὁ ποιήσας τὰ σημεῖα ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ, ἐν οἷς ἐπλάνησεν τοὺς λαβόντας τὸ χάραγμα τοῦ θηρίου καὶ τοὺς προσκυνοῦντας τῇ εἰκόνι αὐτοῦ. ζῶντες ἐβλήθησαν οἱ δύο εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρὸς τῆς καιομένης ἐν θείῳ.

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<sup>88</sup> See Rev 1:8; 4:8 11; 11:4, 15, 17; 15:3—4; 16:7. Thomas, *Revelation*, 343. Keener provides historical examples of the title “king of kings” being used for both monarchs in the OT period (Ezra 7:12, Ezek 26:7, Dan 2:37), but also for God as the supreme ruler of all creation (Deut 10:17, Ps 136:3, Dan 2:47, Zech 14:9, 1 Tim 6:15). See Keener, *Revelation*, 454.

<sup>89</sup> Aune offers this astute insight, “Since the title ‘King of kings and Lord of lords’ is one associated primarily with Yahweh, the transfer of this title to the Messiah appears to cohere well with the enhanced Christology of the final edition of Revelation.” See Aune, *Revelation 17—22*, 1063; and Thomas, *Revelation*, 343.

<sup>90</sup> Manuscripts A pc sa replace αὐτῶν with αὐτοῦ. See Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 349.

And the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet, who had done signs before with which he had deceived the ones who had received the mark of the beast and the ones worshipping his image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with sulfur.

<sup>21</sup> καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ ἀπεκτάνθησαν ἐν τῇ ρομφαίᾳ τοῦ καθημένου ἐπὶ τοῦ ἵππου τῇ ἐξελθούσῃ ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ, καὶ πάντα τὰ ὄρνεα ἔχορτάσθησαν ἐκ τῶν σαρκῶν αὐτῶν.<sup>91</sup>

And the remaining were killed by the sword which protruded from the mouth of the one sitting on the horse. And all the birds were satisfied from their flesh.

#### 7.2.2.1 *Revelation 19:17—18*

In verses 17—18, an angel or messenger issues an invitation to the birds of the air to come to the great supper of God and feast upon the bodies of the slain.<sup>92</sup> The author emphasizes God's sovereignty, since the invitation comes before the battle even ensues, warning readers graphically of the severe consequences awaiting those who oppose the Lamb.<sup>93</sup> This supper is a banquet feast for the birds of the air to devour the army of the beast. Such post-battle imagery would not have been unfamiliar to readers familiar with other biblical texts (see 1 Sam 17:44—46, Jer 16:4, Ezek 29:5, 39:17—

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<sup>91</sup> Aland, Aland, Karavidopoulos, Martini, and Metzger, eds., *NovT Graece*, Rev 19:17—21.

<sup>92</sup> According to Beasley-Murray, this invitation to the feast cites Ezek 39:17, and conforms to the pattern in Ezekiel in that the battle against Gog takes place after the millennium. While I agree with Beasley-Murray that this is a clear illusion to Ezek 39:17—20, I do not believe Ezek 38—39 clearly depicts an equivalent to the “millennium” described in Rev 20:1—10. Ezek 38 describes a peaceful and unsuspecting people, but there is nothing in the text that demands a millennial setting for this peace. See Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 282.

<sup>93</sup> For Thomas, this invitation to the birds of the air is not unrelated to other images of war in Revelation, such as the great battle at a place called Har-Meggidon (Rev 16:14—16). Thomas believes this opposition to the Lamb could come in the form of compromise with the beast or with Babylon. Therefore, this graphic picture of the supper of God stands as a warning to readers of the importance of fidelity to the Lamb. See Thomas, *Revelation*, 344—345.

20), and culturally the lack of burial may have been considered worse than death.<sup>94</sup>

This feast may also remind readers more immediately of the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:7—9), which is a contrast or a counter-part to this feast of judgment.<sup>95</sup>

Boring explains that the choice of which meal to partake in is left in the hands of the reader:

John offers his hearer-readers an invitation to an eschatological meal, and lets us choose whether it is to be the wedding celebration of the Lamb or the slaughter-meal of the vanquished. ... John's imagery gives us compelling pictures that communicate both terror of rejecting the Creator and celebration that follows from receiving his grace.<sup>96</sup>

The same act of sacrificial grace, the death and resurrection of Jesus, initiates either redemption or judgment depending on the reception and reaction of the person hearing the message. In other words, Christ's sacrifice as the slaughtered Lamb puts the offer of both meals on the table, and only the hearer/reader can choose whether to embrace the grace offered by the Lamb and join his wedding feast, or to oppose his redemptive purposes and become the feast for the birds of the air. The flesh of those upon whom the birds receive an invitation to feast are those who have volitionally opposed the purposes of God and the offer of the Lamb's redemption.

The word πάντων (all) refers to those who have rejected the Lamb. I agree with scholars who believe it most likely means “all kinds of people,” such as slave and free,

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<sup>94</sup> Thomas suggests that the shame of having their bodies eaten by the birds of the air and without proper burial could be considered an “avenging judgement” for the death of the two witnesses (Rev 11:8—10). See Thomas, *Revelation*, 347. Keener explains that for Greeks, who believed in the endurance of the individual’s image in the afterlife, lack of burial was the only fate worse than death. For more historical sources referring to this great dishonor, see Keener, *Revelation*, 455; Aune, *Revelation* 17—22, 1067—1068; and Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 252.

<sup>95</sup> See Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 257; and Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 349.

<sup>96</sup> Boring, *Revelation*, 200.

great and small, who willfully align themselves against God, rather than “all people.”<sup>97</sup>

Throughout the book of Revelation, there remains a growing anticipation for the salvation of the nations, which makes little sense if all of these nations are to be ultimately destroyed.<sup>98</sup> Judgment remains for all who reject the Messiah, but grace and redemption are also offered equally to all of humanity.<sup>99</sup> Only those who volitionally reject the grace offered by the Messiah will suffer the graphic and gory judgment depicted in Rev 19:17—18.

#### **7.2.2.2 *Revelation 19:19***

Verse 19 opens with the beast, the kings of the earth and their armies gathering together in preparation for war against the rider on the white horse. The enemies of God gather for war, but they initiate this gathering and preparation. The rider on the white horse and his followers do not initiate attack or seek conflict; it is the enemies of God who gather for war.<sup>100</sup> The “beast,” an eschatological leader who opposes God, is a key figure in the book of Revelation—mentioned 40 times as compared to only four times in the rest of the NT.<sup>101</sup> This gathering, as Thomas notes, is evocative of the

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<sup>97</sup> See Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 283; and Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 349.

<sup>98</sup> See Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 283.

<sup>99</sup> Mounce explains this tension, “The good news is that man need not bear the just punishment due his sin but that Another has paid the price on his behalf. Only when man refuses his forgiveness must he bear the penalty for his wickedness.” Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 348—349.

<sup>100</sup> Thomas explains, “The appearance of the rider on the white horse, the one called Faithful and True, results in united opposition to him by those who remain unrepentant, despite all the opportunities given to repent and worship God.” Beasley-Murray notes that it is the Antichrist and his forces that initiate the war; the armies of heaven do not need to make war or go into battle. See Thomas, *Revelation*, 345; and Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 283—284.

<sup>101</sup> The beast may be equated with the Anti-Christ, and may also be based on Daniel 7, and may have been influenced by the Gog prophecy. See Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 253.

spirits gathering others for war (Rev 16:14).<sup>102</sup> In other words, the battle described in Revelation 19 is most likely a secondary account of what is popularly referred to as the Battle of Armageddon (Rev 16).

### 7.2.2.3 *Revelation 19:20*

Verse 20 describes the type of judgment awaiting the beast and the false prophet in the “lake of fire that burns with sulfur.” Bøe notes that the use of passive verbs in verses 20—21 emphasizes Yahweh’s sovereignty and transforms the scene from one of battle to one of divine judgment.<sup>103</sup> Like the gory imagery of verses 17—18, this description of divine judgement is intended rhetorically as a warning for all readers.<sup>104</sup> Surprisingly, as numerous scholars emphasize, there is no description of actual warfare.<sup>105</sup> The armies gather and prepare for battle in verse 19, but no battle ensues in verse 20.<sup>106</sup> Boring explains, “No battle is described; there could be none in John’s theology. The decisive battle was won long ago. The end only makes that victory

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<sup>102</sup> Thomas writes, “The similarities suggest that the battle of Har-Meggidion has finally arrived.” Thomas concurs with Mounce, Ladd and others who see the battle of Armageddon as described in greater detail in Rev 19:17—21. See Thomas, *Revelation*, 345; and Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 349; and Ladd, *Revelation*, 247.

<sup>103</sup> Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 254.

<sup>104</sup> Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 254.

<sup>105</sup> Thomas, Mounce and Aune are among those who emphasize the conspicuous lack of conflict described. Thomas writes, “The army is dressed in white, pure fine linen that accompanies the rider is not involved in combat at all—the rider on the white horse does all the fighting!” Thomas, *Revelation*, 345. Mounce writes, “Armageddon portrays the eschatological defeat of Antichrist (an event which takes place in time and brings to a close this age as we know it) but does not require that we accept in a literal fashion the specific imagery with which the event is described.” See Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 349. Aune also affirms that the army plays no part in the conflict, which actually contradicts typical Jewish eschatological traditions. See Aune, *Revelation 17—22*, 1065.

<sup>106</sup> Bøe notes, “The lack of actual warfare may surprise the reader. Two armies are presented, each headed by their leader/leaders and now confronting each other. The hour of decision has come, and still no warfare is recorded.” Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 252.

effective and manifest.”<sup>107</sup> As Boring argues, the victory was won at the cross; therefore, this final battle visibly reveals the victory Christ has already accomplished; final eschatological defeat is instantaneous as Christ’s enemies enter his presence. Christ comes as the warrior not because he is about to wage a final eschatological battle, but because he has already won the battle. He returns from battle as the victorious warrior to bring a final end to the forces of evil that had already been defeated by his victory on the cross. Yet I also agree with Mounce, who argues that the text does appear to be describing an actual eschatological event taking place at the return of Christ, a final judgment in the culmination of human history, as opposed to a gradual defeat of evil over a period of time.<sup>108</sup> Therefore this event is best described as a final judgment rather than a final battle, and any interpretations of this passage anticipating an eschatological battle between human armies or spiritual beings are missing the point—the warrior returns *from* the battle because he is already victorious; he does not ride *to* the battle. As the victorious warrior and reigning monarch, pictured by the many crowns upon his head (Rev 19:12), he alone has authority to pronounce judgment upon all of his subjects and even upon evil itself. The beast and the false prophet, the two figures employed here by the author of the book of Revelation to represent the forces of evil, are captured and thrown alive into the lake of burning sulfur, a horrific image which starkly contrasts the peaceful “sea of glass” imagery

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<sup>107</sup> Boring, *Revelation*, 199—200.

<sup>108</sup> Mounce emphasizes the eschatological nature of this battle, arguing that it will be an historic event, as opposed to the idea of a gradual defeat of evil forces over a period of time. See Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 349. However, Boring argues to the contrary, “It is not an objectifying prediction of something that will literally occur in some particular geographical spot but a picture of the essential nature of the embattled church.” While Boring’s comment is on the Revelation 20 battle, he reads all the battle depictions this way and doesn’t specify whether they refer to the same or different battles, since ultimately they all picture the final destruction of evil. See Boring, *Revelation*, 210.

from Rev 4:6.<sup>109</sup> Such dramatic imagery indicates eternal death and suffering as the punishment for those who oppose God and the Lamb.<sup>110</sup>

#### 7.2.2.4 *Revelation 19:21*

In verse 21, those who joined the beast and his army are killed by the sword protruding from the rider's mouth. As previously established in the analysis of Rev 19:15, this is not a literal sword, but rather the image of the sword represents the Word of God.<sup>111</sup> The rider's final proclamation of the Word of God at this climactic moment in human history results in either salvation for those who believe and receive it, or judgment for those who reject it and align themselves with the forces of evil.<sup>112</sup> While some scholars see this passage as only one of judgment, I believe the context of the entire preceding chapter of Rev 19 creates space for the possibility of a theological

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<sup>109</sup> This dramatic imagery of the lake of burning sulfur occurs six times in the book of Revelation, lacking any other parallels in the Hebrew Bible, in Jewish literature, or in Graeco-Roman literature. However, fire as a means of eternal punishment was a common concept in Hebrew history and in second temple Judaism. See Keener, *Revelation*, 455. Aune notes the similarity of this judgment to the destruction of Korah, Dathan and Abiram (Num 16:33), when the earth opened up and swallowed the alive into *sheol*. Similarly, 1 Enoch 56:8 states that "Sheol will open its mouth and swallow the hostile sinners." The concept of a lake of fire may also have parallels in Egyptian literature. See Aune, *Revelation 17—22*, 1065—1066. Ladd and Mounce believe that the "lake of fire" is synonymous with "Gehenna," even though the word "Gehenna" does not appear in the book of Revelation. For Ladd's explanation of Gehenna and his distinction between Gehenna and Hades, see Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 258. See also Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 350; and Skaggs, *Revelation*, 202.

<sup>110</sup> Thomas argues that the theological emphasis of such a gruesome text, in the greater context of the book of Revelation, is that those who compromise with the beast and the great whore will receive "absolute desolation, death, and humiliation!" See Thomas, *Revelation*, 346—348.

<sup>111</sup> Aune believes the sword is a metaphor referring to words spoken by the rider, alluding to the imagery of Heb 11:4. See Aune, *Revelation 17—22*, 1067. See also Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 284; and Michaels, *Revelation*, 218.

<sup>112</sup> Ladd emphasizes that this passage does not coalesce neatly with visions of universalism; clearly the author of Revelation expects many humans to remain unrepentant and sadly to be recipients of the wrath and judgment of the Lamb. See Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 258; and Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 350.

dialectic, including the potential for conversion or judgment of the nations, depending upon the responses of individual hearts to the Word of God, as I have argued above.<sup>113</sup> Swete's reading affirms this interpretation, when he writes,

Room should probably be allowed for punitive as well as for restorative operations; the Word slays by pronouncing judgment as well as by reducing to the obedience of faith. But it is probably the latter process which is chiefly in view.<sup>114</sup>

Again, there is no description of conflict between the members of the beast's army and the rider, but rather as Michaels succinctly states, "God speaks and it is done."<sup>115</sup> As with the judgment of the beast and the false prophet in the lake of burning sulfur, the judgment of those who reject the Word of God also seems instantaneous and uncontested. While the text does not specify the precise details of how these events will take place in a literal sense, the emphasis is on the eternal and unquestioned victory of the Lamb over all the forces of evil, as well as the offer of grace and mercy to those who choose to follow him.

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<sup>113</sup> For example, Beasley-Murray believes the sword is a symbol for Christ's powerful words of judgment. He argues strongly that the context is one of judgment, not conversion, as indicated by the presence of birds of prey. Contrarily, Swete sees the conversion of the nations as part of the aspect of God's righteous judgment, "The vision of the victorious Word fulfills itself in any movement which leads to conversions on a great scale, such as that which attended the preaching of Boniface; and it may find a more complete accomplishment at the time yet future, when Christ will work through some new Apostle of the Gentiles for the 'obedience of the Gentiles' (Rom 15:18)." See Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 284; and Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 259.

<sup>114</sup> Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 259.

<sup>115</sup> Michaels, *Revelation*, 218.

## 7.3 Revelation 20:7—10 Rhetorical Analysis

### 7.3.1 Revelation 20:7—10 Text and Translation

<sup>7</sup> Καὶ ὅταν τελεσθῇ<sup>116</sup> τὰ χίλια ἔτη, λυθήσεται ὁ σατανᾶς ἐκ τῆς φυλακῆς αὐτοῦ

And when the thousand years were completed, Satan will be released from his prison

<sup>8</sup> καὶ ἔξελεύσεται πλανῆσαι τὰ ἔθνη τὰ ἐν ταῖς τέσσαρσιν γωνίαις τῆς γῆς, τὸν Γῶγ καὶ Μαγώγ, συναγαγεῖν<sup>117</sup> αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸν πόλεμον, ὃν ὁ ἀριθμὸς αὐτῶν ὡς ἡ ἄμμος τῆς θαλάσσης.

And he will go out to deceive the nations from the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together into war, whose number is as the sand of the sea.

<sup>9</sup> καὶ ἀνέβησαν ἐπὶ τὸ πλάτος τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐκύκλευσαν τὴν παρεμβολὴν τῶν ἀγίων καὶ τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἡγαπημένην, καὶ κατέβη πῦρ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ<sup>118</sup> καὶ κατέφαγεν αὐτούς.

And they went up upon the width of the earth and they circled the camp of the holy ones and the beloved city. And fire came down from heaven and burned them up.

<sup>10</sup> καὶ ὁ διάβολος ὁ πλανῶν αὐτοὺς ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρὸς καὶ θείου ὅπου καὶ τὸ θηρίον καὶ ὁ ψευδοπροφήτης, καὶ βασανισθήσονται ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων.<sup>119</sup>

And the devil, the one deceiving them, was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where also the beast and the false prophet [are], and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

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<sup>116</sup> The Byzantine text replaces ὅταν τελεσθῇ with μετα, possibly insinuating that χίλια ἔτη refers to a definite period of time. See Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 361; and Aune, *Revelation 17—22*, 1074.

<sup>117</sup> Several manuscripts (¶ 051 2059s al g vg) add καὶ before συναγαγεῖν to create a parallel syntax. This reading loses the implication that the purpose of Satan's deception was to gather the nations for battle. See Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 361; Ford, *Revelation*, 355; and Aune, *Revelation 17—22*, 1074.

<sup>118</sup> The UBS<sup>4</sup> text provides seven variants for ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ dealing with prepositional changes and or changes to θεοῦ. See Aland, Black, Martini, Metzger, Robinson, and Wikgren, eds., *The Greek New Testament*, Rev 20:7–10; Aune, *Revelation 17—22*, 1074; and Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 363.

<sup>119</sup> Aland, Aland, Karavidopoulos, Martini, and Metzger, eds., *NovT Graece*, Rev 20:7–10.

### 7.3.2 Revelation 20:7—8

Revelation 20:7—10 follows the description of the millennium (Rev 20:1—6), and opens on the scene of Satan’s release from his one-thousand-year captivity.<sup>120</sup> The future passive indicative form of the verb λυω (to loose or release) is λυθήσεται (translated “will be released”), revealing that God is the one who releases Satan; this action is not of Satan’s own doing, nor is it outside the purview of God’s sovereignty.<sup>121</sup> Once released, Satan’s explicit purpose is to deceive the nations, located in the four corners of the earth.<sup>122</sup> This geographical breadth seems to indicate the universal nature of his deception, meaning that he will influence people from every region of the globe.<sup>123</sup> Although Satan’s attempt to attack God’s people remains futile, he succeeds in deceiving and ensnaring numerous followers to join him in waging war against God and the Lamb.<sup>124</sup>

Who are these nations that follow Satan into battle? Some scholars argue that the identification of these peoples depends largely on whether the interpreter views the battle described in Rev 19:11—21 as a different conflict than the one depicted in Rev 20:7—10. Those who see these two battles as distinct events, presented chronologically

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<sup>120</sup> Aune notes numerous ancient texts in which demonic forces seem to be more dangerous after they are released from a place of confinement. See Aune, *Revelation 17—22*, 1093.

<sup>121</sup> John Christopher Thomas highlights the significance of the passive form of this verb in understanding the nature of Satan’s captivity and release as orchestrated by God. See Thomas, *Revelation*, 357.

<sup>122</sup> The phrase “the four corners of the earth” reveals the vast reach of his deception, according to Thomas. See Thomas, *Revelation*, 357.

<sup>123</sup> Mounce also believes the phrase “the four corners of the earth” does not designate specific geographical realities, but rather is employed to indicate universality. See Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 362.

<sup>124</sup> Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 265.

in the text, have difficulty reconciling the apparent annihilation of the nations in Rev 19:11—21 with the existence of the nations in Rev 20:7—10.<sup>125</sup> However, I believe that understanding these battles theologically through a dialectical framework—of both judgment and salvation, condemnation and conversion, exclusion and embrace—allows the reader to make sense of the presence of the nations in Rev 20:7—10, whether or not the texts describe one battle or various battles. Ultimately God will enact his redemptive plan for all nations of the world in the midst of this final battle (or battles), finally eradicating the evil that has plagued the world since the inception of human sin (Gen 3), while effecting salvation for all who submit to the divine rule.

Echoing Ezek 38—39, these rebellious nations are named “Gog and Magog.” While in Ezekiel Gog was a person and Magog a place where he ruled, in Revelation, Gog and Magog symbolize all nations from the four corners of the earth that wage war against God.<sup>126</sup> Identifications of “Gog and Magog” have ebbed and flowed along with the shifting political tides of history. As Bøe astutely observes, “Throughout most of the history of the Christian church there has been the tendency to identify or at least associate contemporary enemies with biblical figures like Antichrist, Beast, or Gog.”<sup>127</sup> For example, Josephus identified Magog as the Scythians, a contemporary barbarian population from the north. Several early rabbinic texts associate Gog with Rome, and

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<sup>125</sup> For example, Mounce, distinguishes this battle from the Rev 19 battle since the war against “Gog and Magog” takes place after the millennium, and following the chronology of the text, the war in Rev 19 (Armageddon) occurs before the millennium. Bøe also believes the two wars are distinguishable, and therefore he has a difficult time identifying the nations in Rev 20, because “the nations” seem to have been destroyed by Christ in Rev 19:21. While Bøe does not propose a satisfactory answer to this conundrum, he reminds his readers that the literary genre of apocalyptic visions does not lend itself well to dogmatism. See Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 344—345; Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 362; and Aune, *Revelation 17—22*, 1095.

<sup>126</sup> Keener, *Revelation*, 467—468.

<sup>127</sup> Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 216.

some of the early church fathers connected Gog to the Goths who attacked the Roman Empire.<sup>128</sup>

Contemporary scholars vary widely on their identifications of Gog and Magog in Rev 20:7—10. Among those who view Gog and Magog as literal geo-political nations that rebel against God after the millennium,<sup>129</sup> various suggestions regarding the identity of these nations can be grouped into four commonly held views: 1) They are Christ’s millennial co-reigners who later rebel; 2) They are those who submitted to Christ’s rule during the millennium out of fear, but harbored secret sin and rebellion in their hearts and longed for the day when they could oppose his rule; 3) They are a group of nations that remained neutral in the Rev 19:11—21 battle; 4) They are demons or spirits, in which case the battle is entirely spiritual and metaphorical.<sup>130</sup>

Other scholars understand the terms “Gog and Magog” to be used in a more general, symbolic and representative sense, rather than as names of literal geographical nations. For example, Thomas views “Gog and Magog” more broadly as God’s eschatological enemies who attack God’s people after a peaceful era.<sup>131</sup> In a similar fashion, Boring sees Gog and Magog as the ultimate enemies of the people of God, wisely cautioning fellow interpreters of this text,

By ‘Gog and Magog’ we should not think of historical nations that have had a continuing existence during the preceding scene of the

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<sup>128</sup> See Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 185—186, 206—207, 216—217. For a brief historical review of various identifications and explanations of Gog and Magog, see Aune, *Revelation 17—22*, 1094—1095.

<sup>129</sup> See Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 269; and Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 362.

<sup>130</sup> The second view represents the most commonly held dispensational premillennial perspective. See Steve Gregg, ed., *Revelation: Four Views, A Parallel Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997), 474; and Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 265.

<sup>131</sup> Thomas, *Revelation*, 357.

millennium, nor of nations of our own time ‘predicted’ by biblical prophecy.<sup>132</sup>

For Beasley-Murray, Gog and Magog are symbolic titles employed to represent the evil among all nations that causes them to resist God’s rule. He argues that the names “Gog and Magog” do not refer to particular nations in northern geographical locations, nor do they encompass all of humanity outside of followers of Jesus. Otherwise, Beasely-Murray contends, this battle would be the destruction of every living soul apart from the church, which would press the meaning of the language since the pervasive eschatological hope in the book of Revelation is for the salvation of the nations.<sup>133</sup> While Skaggs finds evidence for identifying Gog and Magog with historical nations, she concludes that the wisest interpretation is to view them as symbolic names that serve to represent the forces of evil.<sup>134</sup>

I concur with the interpretations presented by Thomas, Boring, and Skaggs, that the names “Gog and Magog” refer generally and symbolically to all humans from various nations (albeit deceived by evil forces) who oppose God and the Lamb in the final eschatological battle. While I agree with Beasley-Murray that these are symbolic names rather than names of literal geo-political nations, and I appreciate his emphasis on the eschatological hope of the salvation of the nations, I disagree strongly with his implication that the nations may find salvation outside of submission to the divine rule. Without doubt, the hope of salvation of the nations remains a prominent theme throughout the book of Revelation. However, this eschatological hope can only be

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<sup>132</sup> Rather, Boring sees these enemies of God as “larger than life.” See Boring, *Revelation*, 209.

<sup>133</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 297.

<sup>134</sup> Skaggs notes that these names were used symbolically in apocalyptic literature. See Skaggs, *Revelation*, 209—210.

realized as the nations respond and submit to the Word of God spoken by the Messiah, pictured in Revelation as both the Lamb and the victorious rider on the white horse.

The final phrase of verse 8, “whose number is as the sand of the sea,” reminds the reader of frequently employed OT imagery (Gen 22:17, 41:49; Josh 11:4; Judg 7:12; 1 Sam 13:5; Job 29:18; Ps 139:18; Hab 1:9), and symbolizes abundance and great number.<sup>135</sup> Thomas astutely notes the stark contrast between this imagery of sand on the seashore representing Abraham’s descendants in Genesis, and the sand on the seashore representing God’s enemies in Revelation. As Thomas argues, this intentional contrast and subtle allusion to OT texts emphasizes how Satan’s purpose stands in contradiction to the promises God had given to Abraham and the fulfillment of His purposes in the earth.<sup>136</sup> Yet God’s redemptive plan ultimately prevails through the destruction of the forces of evil and the salvation of all nations and peoples who submit to the rule of His eternal kingdom.

### 7.3.3 Revelation 20:9

Verse 9 opens with a description of this vast army of nations, “Gog and Magog,” encircling the camp of the saints, the beloved city, which may imply that they greatly outnumber their opponents.<sup>137</sup> The phrase “camp of the saints” evokes

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<sup>135</sup> Aune argues that the idea of an innumerable army is based on both the Zion tradition reflected in Ps 46, 48, and 76, and on the Gog and Magog tradition. It is also found in 4 Ezra 13:5. See Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 265; and Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1095–1096.

<sup>136</sup> Satan’s purpose for the deception is to gather them for war, reminiscent of Rev 16:14 and the battle of Har-Megiddo. See Thomas, *Revelation*, 357–358.

<sup>137</sup> As Aune notes, this strategy of surrounding prior to a siege and eventual attack was the most commonly employed strategy of ancient warfare. For biblical and extra-biblical examples of this warfare strategy in the ancient near eastern world, see Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1097; and Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 266.

memories for the reader of the Israelite encampments during the time of wilderness wanderings, and it seems to be used interchangeably here with “the beloved city,” referring to the earthly city of Jerusalem.<sup>138</sup> The phrase “the beloved city” may also anticipate the coming of the New Jerusalem, the heavenly city (Rev 3:12).<sup>139</sup> These saints are most likely those who experienced the first resurrection and have already reigned with Christ during the millennium.<sup>140</sup> Ladd argues that all the saints on earth are literally dwelling in the holy city of Jerusalem at the time of this attack.<sup>141</sup> Whether “the beloved city” is used to denote precise geographical location, or whether it intentionally evokes association with Jerusalem and God’s covenant relationship with Israel, the emphasis of the text is that the enemy army surrounds and outnumbers God’s people. This unexpected attack upon the peaceful and unsuspecting people reminds them that even during and following a time of peace, they must remain completely dependent upon the provision, power and defense that comes only from God.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Boring believes the use of these two phrases represents the sojourning pilgrimage of God’s people in this world. See Boring, *Revelation*, 210. Thomas argues that the phrase “camp of the saints,” recollecting the wilderness wanderings, demonstrates a strong tie between “Johannine” believers and the “heritage of Israel (cf. esp. 7:1—8). Keener also suggests that “camp of the saints” could allude to units of war. See Thomas, *Revelation*, 358; Keener, *Revelation*, 469; and Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 363.

<sup>139</sup> Beasley-Murray believes “the beloved city” refers only to the New Jerusalem, indicating for him that John sees the New Jerusalem as central to the kingdom of Christ during the millennium.. Therefore, he views the attack on the heavenly city as an attack against Christ’s rule and reign during his millennial kingdom, and not an attack on the present church. See Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 298; and Thomas, *Revelation*, 358.

<sup>140</sup> Thomas, *Revelation*, 358.

<sup>141</sup> Ladd even seems to consider the obscure possibility of the dispensationalist expectation for the literal rebuilding of the temple and reinstituting of the sacrificial system as the liturgical setting explaining why all the saints are gathered to worship and live in Jerusalem. Yet he claims that “these belong to the old covenant, which has passed away (Heb 8:13).” See Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 270. Aune also believes “the beloved city” must be referring to the “earthly Jerusalem” and not the heavenly or “New Jerusalem,” since the new city does not descend to earth until Rev 21:10. See Aune, *Revelation 17—22*, 1098—1099.

<sup>142</sup> Thomas, *Revelation*, 358.

In a similar manner to the battle of Rev 19, the battle here is once again aborted by divine judgment, and once again, there seems to be no battle at all.<sup>143</sup> Just as in Rev 19:11—21, the “camp of the saints” remains completely passive—they do not seem to be involved in any way with the conflict.<sup>144</sup> In addition, just as in Rev 19, the attack is initiated by the enemy army, and yet no battle follows. Rather, Yahweh preempts the seemingly inevitable battle by commuting divine judgment, this time in the form of “fire coming down from heaven” which then consumes the nations called “Gog and Magog.”<sup>145</sup> Although the text does not mention God as the perpetrator of this fire from heaven, the reader can be in no doubt that it is sent directly from him, whereas in Rev 19:11—21, the rider on the white horse is the one who executes divine judgment with the sword coming out of his mouth.<sup>146</sup>

#### 7.3.4 Revelation 20:10

In verse 10, Satan meets his final judgment in the lake of fire and sulfur. While Gog and Magog are consumed by the fire coming down from heaven, Satan himself is not; he has the same fate as the beast and the false prophet (Rev 19:20). In verse 10, he

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<sup>143</sup> Thomas affirms that “no battle takes place.” Similarly, Boring writes, “As in 11:17—19 and 19:17—21, the ‘last battle’ is no battle at all. There is no other victory than that long since won by God the Victor in the cross of Christ.” See Thomas, *Revelation*, 359; and Boring, *Revelation*, 210.

<sup>144</sup> See Aune, *Revelation* 17—22, 1098.

<sup>145</sup> Boring, *Revelation*, 210.

<sup>146</sup> This fire from heaven could evoke memories for the reader of fire coming from the mouths of the two witnesses in judgment (Rev 11:5), fire from heaven that fell on Gog (Ezek 38:22) and Magog (Ezek 39:6), fire from heaven and the judgment described in 2 Esdras 2:1—12, in which the Messiah destroys his enemies with a fiery stream from his mouth, and Elijah’s fiery judgment on the king’s soldiers (2 Kings 1). For these and other references, see also Aune, *Revelation* 17—22, 1099—1100; Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 266; Thomas, *Revelation*, 359; and Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 362—363.

is called ὁ διάβολος (the devil), whereas in verse seven he was called ὁ σατανᾶς (Satan), although undoubtedly both terms refer to the same entity. The devil is called ὁ πλανῶν αὐτοὺς (the one deceiving them), once again emphasizing that the focus of his work is rooted in deception.<sup>147</sup> Satan, the beast and the false prophet are finally united in judgment, suffering the same punishment. Thomas argues that any opposition to God and to the Lamb will inevitably end in utter annihilation and destruction, despite the apparent strength of evil forces in persecuting God's faithful.<sup>148</sup> The torment of Satan, the beast and the false prophet seems to be eternal and unending, indicated by the phrase ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτὸς (day and night).<sup>149</sup> Such eternal suffering stands in stark contrast to the other pictures painted in the book of Revelation depicting eternal worship (Rev 5:13; 7:11—12).<sup>150</sup> Ultimately, the eternal destinies of Satan, the beast and the false prophet demonstrate the sovereignty of God over the forces of evil; the devil is only free to deceive the nations as long as God permits.<sup>151</sup> In addition, this coming judgment encourages the readers of Revelation to remain faithful amidst

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<sup>147</sup> According to Thomas, it will remind readers or hearers of his similar identification in Rev 12:9 as “the one who deceives the whole inhabited world.” See Thomas, *Revelation*, 359.

<sup>148</sup> Thomas suggests that the eternal duration of this suffering is perhaps appropriate for the ones who accused “the brethren day and night before our God” (Rev 12:10). See Thomas, *Revelation*, 359—360.

<sup>149</sup> Thomas clarifies the eternal destiny of these three beings, “It would be quite clear that both the constancy of the torment and its duration point to an eternal death for Satan, the beast, and the false prophet rather than merely to their annihilation.” See Thomas, *Revelation*, 360. Aune argues that this phrase functions as a hendiadys, meaning it is a 24-hour day, which suggests that the judgment will never cease nor will it be interrupted. See Aune, *Revelation* 17—22, 1100.

<sup>150</sup> Thomas, *Revelation*, 360. See also Fee, *Revelation*, 286.

<sup>151</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 298.

persecution, knowing that God will perform justice on their behalf through the final defeat of all evil powers.<sup>152</sup>

#### **7.4 Intertextual Reading: Ezekiel 36:16—39:29 and Revelation 19:11—21;**

##### **20:7—10**

In chapter five of this thesis, I demonstrated how Ezek 37:15—28, intentionally placed between two militaristic metaphors, transforms the imagery from violence to peace, reorienting the reader by drawing attention to the fulcrum of the literary unit: the covenant of peace. I proposed the thesis that any interpretations, especially dispensational interpretations, of Ezekiel 36:16—39:29 that envision a resurrected militaristic national force (Ezek 37:1—14) fighting a victorious war against the armies and allies of Gog (Ezek 38:1—39:29) have not properly taken into account the rhetorical purpose of the intentional literary placement of Ezekiel’s peaceful “Two Sticks” pericope (Ezek 37:15—18).

Now, having performed a rhetorical analysis on Rev 19:11—21 and 20:7—10, I will seek to ascertain how the Revelation texts may enhance my understanding of Ezek 36:16—39:29. As Bøe and numerous scholars have noted, the language of Rev 19:17—21 strikingly parallels Ezek 39:17—21. The textual parallels are so pronounced that Bøe and others argue that the author of Revelation employed Ezek 39:17—21 as a pretext for Rev 19:17—21. While others have done a fine job of such analyses, my purpose in this intertextual reading is not to compare and contrast linguistic details in

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<sup>152</sup> Keener views this entire section of Scripture as a reminder for believers to remain faithful and vigilant; if the “camp of the saints” needs to remain vigilant following the millennium, Keener argues, how much more do saints in the present time need to display vigilance? See Keener, *Revelation*, 469.

order to determine whether the author of Revelation used Ezekiel as his source material. Rather, my focus is thematic and theological; I want to read the texts together for the purpose of discovering prominent parallel themes that may enlighten and enhance the reader's theological understanding of both texts.<sup>153</sup> Therefore, the following intertextual analysis will be organized both thematically and chronologically according to the order of the Ezekiel texts; however, I will focus selectively on the portions of the Ezekiel texts to which I believe the Revelation texts speak most prominently. Following this intertextual analysis, I will summarize my theological conclusions gained from this study.

Thematic Parallels Between Ezek 36:16—39:29 and Rev 19:11—21; 20:7--10		
Theme	Ezekiel	Revelation
Blood	Menstrual Blood, Bloodshed <i>Ezek 36:16—21</i>	Bloodstained Robe <i>Rev 19:13</i>
Purification	New Heart and Spirit <i>Ezek 36:22—38</i>	New White Wedding Garments <i>Rev 19:14</i>
Army	Army of Resurrected Dry Bones <i>Ezek 37:1—14</i>	Army Following the Messiah <i>Rev 19:14</i>
Messiah	Messianic Shepherd-King David <i>Ezek 37:15—28</i>	Messianic Rider on the White Horse <i>Rev 19:11—16</i>
Gog and Magog	Gog of Magog Attacks Israel <i>Ezek 38—39</i>	Gog and Magog Attack Jerusalem <i>Rev 19:11—21, 20:7—10)</i>

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<sup>153</sup> While the close linguistic parallels in Ezekiel and Revelation may help to justify my selection of these texts for an intertextual analysis, investigating the linguistic similarities at great length as Bøe and others have done is not the primary focus of this study. See Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 342—345.

#### 7.4.1 Blood (Ezek 36:16—21 and Rev 19:13)

In Ezek 36:16—21, blood is alluded to twice, first in the analogy of a woman’s menstrual flow as representing the sins of Israel and Judah (Ezek 36:17), and second as the sin of bloodshed for which Israel and Judah both suffered Yahweh’s judgment in the form of dispersion among the nations (Ezek 36:18). In the Revelation texts, the image of the rider’s bloodstained robe (Rev 19:13) represents the blood of Christ shed as the slaughtered Lamb, subverting the victory-through-violence imagery of Isa 63:1—3, the OT text to which Rev 19:13 alludes, with the victory-through-sacrifice imagery of the returning Messiah triumphing over his enemies through the power of his own shed blood. Throughout the book of Revelation, the blood of the Lamb is the means by which humanity receives freedom from sin (Rev 1:5), cleansing from sin (Rev 7:14), and triumph over evil (Rev 12:11). The contrast between the two uses of “blood” in Ezekiel and Revelation could not be more pronounced—in Ezekiel, blood represents sin and is the reason for the impurity and judgment of Israel and Judah; in Revelation, blood represents sacrifice and is the means by which humanity receives cleansing from sin’s impurity and forgiveness from sin’s consequences, namely divine judgment. In Ezekiel, blood causes Yahweh to execute judgment against Israel and Judah; in Revelation, blood causes Yahweh to commute judgment and extend mercy to all of humanity.

#### 7.4.2 Purification (Ezek 36:22—38 and Rev 19:14)

The primary theme of Ezek 36:22—38 is purification from the sins of bloodshed and idolatry (Ezek 36:17—18). Yahweh will give the people a new heart and a new spirit, replacing their heart of stone with a heart of flesh (Ezek 36:25—26). Rev

19:14 also envisions a group of people who have received purification, pictured by their white, clean linen—bridal garments worn by those preparing for the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:6—9). Revelation 7:14 explains that these robes were washed and made white by the blood of the Lamb.

The emphasis of the purification in Ezekiel is that the people are filled with the Spirit of God so that they may walk in obedience to his laws. Similarly, those wearing the white robes in Rev 19:14 represent those who have experienced not only purification from sin, but also the empowering of the Spirit to remain obedient and faithful unto death in the midst of tremendous suffering and opposition (Rev 7:14—17, Rev 12:11). Just as the Lamb was faithful and obedient unto death, so his followers overcome by his blood and by their testimony.

#### 7.4.3 Army (Ezek 37:1—14 and Rev 19:14)

In Ezek 37:1—14, Ezekiel prophesies to a valley of dry bones and watches as the Spirit breathes upon them and brings them to life as a vast army, possessing power and strength. This is the first time in Ezekiel that militaristic imagery is associated with the prophesied restored nations of Israel and Judah. Since this imagery transitions these nations from death to vibrant life in the form of a restored army, many interpreters view the army as representative of geopolitical, national and military strength.<sup>154</sup> Similarly, in Rev 19:14, an army dressed in pure, white linen follows the rider on the white horse. Use of military language is present in both texts, yet in the Revelation texts, the members of the army are dressed in wedding clothes and do not carry any weapons, nor do they participate in any conflict. The army in Rev 19:14 hardly paints the picture of

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<sup>154</sup> See Ellison, *Ezekiel: The Man and His Message*, 131.

geopolitical, national, or military strength, inviting the question, “Do these two armies dramatically contrast one another in function and purpose, or do they parallel one another?”

As I argued in chapter five of this thesis, I do not believe the resurrected army of Ezek 37 represents a militaristic or geopolitical force prepared to perpetrate violence against their enemies, particularly since the prophet had just strongly condemned the sin of bloodshed (Ezek 36:16—21). It would seem inconsistent for Ezekiel to condemn Israel and Judah for bloodshed, and then to present the image of a resurrected army poised for imminent military conflict in a positive light. Why would Yahweh resurrect the army only for them to commit again the sin of bloodshed for which he had just punished them? The nature of the resurrected army in Ezekiel can only be understood in light of the following pericope, Ezek 37:15—28, in which the covenant of peace (Ezek 37:24) serves as the interpretive and theological fulcrum of Ezek 36:16—39:29, transforming the army into nonviolent followers of the Davidic Messiah (Ezek 37:24—25).

Similarly, the army depicted in Revelation is a nonviolent host comprised of the martyrs, those who followed the example of the Lamb that was slain in their faithful obedience to God, even at the cost of their own lives. Just as the Lamb sacrificed his own life instead of exerting violence against his enemies, so the followers of the Lamb sacrifice themselves by choosing nonviolence in order to remain faithful and obedient to God.

#### 7.4.4 Messiah (Ezek 37:15—28 and Rev 19:11—16)

In Ezek 37:15—28, following the resurrection of the dry bones, Yahweh commands the prophet to join two sticks in his hand, representing the reunification and reconciliation of Israel and Judah. Ezekiel prophesies that these nations will be joined together and reunified in their land, where they will experience peace, prosperity and blessing under the leadership of the messianic shepherd-king, David (Ezek 37:24—25). Yahweh makes an eternal covenant of peace with them, which guarantees not only their perpetuity and prosperity in the land, but most significantly the dwelling of Yahweh in his sanctuary among them, by which he will make known his sovereignty to the nations (Ezek 37:28).

As I argued in chapter four of this thesis, the title “my servant,” employed for the Davidic leader (Ezek 37:24), clearly constitutes a messianic reference. This Messiah, called “David,” is described as servant, shepherd, king and prince (Ezek 37:24—25), reminding readers of Ezek 34:23—24, in which the Davidic Messiah is also called servant, shepherd and prince. Although Davidic leadership was typically associated with military might, this messianic shepherd David ironically leads the people away from the sin of bloodshed in battle and into peace through covenant faithfulness to Yahweh.

Similarly, the rider on the white horse (Rev 19:11—16) also undoubtedly represents the Messiah. Just as the Davidic Messiah of Ezek 37 led the reconstituted army of Israel and Judah away from war and into peace with one another and with surrounding nations, so the rider on the white horse leads a peaceful army, dressed in white linen wedding clothes and without weapons, not into war but rather into peace—

as witnesses of the salvation and judgment he will wield with the sword of his mouth, the Word of God.

Another significant similarity between the Messiah of Ezek 37 and the Messiah of Rev 19 is in their role of shepherding, as visualized by the stick in Yahweh's hand (Ezek 37:19) and the rod of iron in the rider's hand (Rev 19:15). Ancient Near Eastern literature abounds with examples of kings described as "shepherds," indicating their roles as not only monarchs, but also protectors, providers and caregivers for the flock over which they rule.<sup>155</sup> Therefore, while the stick in Yahweh's hand (Ezek 37:19) can be seen as a royal scepter, it can just as easily be understood to represent a shepherd's staff.<sup>156</sup> Ezekiel had already described both Yahweh and David as the true shepherds of Israel and Judah (Ezek 34:15, 23), demonstrating that the Messiah David possesses not only Yahweh's authority, but also his shepherding leadership over the reunited nation.

Just as Yahweh and the Messiah David will rule over and shepherd Israel and Judah (with the stick in Yahweh's hand), so the Messiah pictured as the rider on the

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<sup>155</sup> Ancient Near Eastern gods referred to as "shepherd" include the Ugaritic god El, the Akkadian Hittite hero Gilgamesh, and the Babylonian fertility god Bel-Marduk. The following human monarchs were also among those called shepherds: Lugi-zaggissi, king of Umma (c. 2500 B.C.), Egyptian king Amenhotep III (1411—1374 B.C.), Assyrian kings Shalmaneser I (c. 1280 B.C.) and Tukulti-Urta I (1244—1208 B.C.), and Babylonian king Sannecherib (705—687 B.C.). See Young S. Chae, *Jesus as the Eschatological Davidic Shepherd: Studies in the Old Testament, Second Temple Judaism, and in the Gospel of Matthew* (WUNT 2, Reihe 216; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 20—22; G.R. Driver, *Canaanite Myths and Legends* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956), 67; James B. Pritchard, ed., *ANET* (vol. 1; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 41, 69, 72, 337; E.O. James, *The Ancient Gods* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1960), 118; James H. Breasted, *Egypt* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1962), 3:195, 3:243, 2:365—366; Daniel D. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia 2: Historical Records of Assyria from the Earliest Times to Sargon* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 49—68; Daniel D. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia 2: Historical Records from Sargon to the End* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 405. In addition, in the Ancient Near Eastern world, the shepherd's crook could often be representative of a royal scepter, as is evidenced by the use of the shepherd's crook as the Egyptian Pharaoh's earliest insignia. See Chae, *Jesus as the Eschatological Davidic Shepherd*, 23; and William C. Hayes, *The Scepter of Egypt, Part 1* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1953), 28, 285—286.

<sup>156</sup> See Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21—37*, 753; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 273; and Allen, *Ezekiel 20—48*, 193.

white horse (Rev 19:11—16) will rule over and shepherd the nations (with a rod of iron). Like the stick in Yahweh’s hand, the rod of iron in the rider’s hand can also represent a shepherd’s staff, particularly because the word in Rev 19:15 often translated “rule” (*ποιμανεῖ*), can also be translated “shepherd.”<sup>157</sup> This is significant because the author of the Revelation texts expands the covenant people of God over whom Yahweh and the Messiah rule from the reunited nation of Israel and Judah (Ezek 37:19, 27) to all the nations of the world (Rev 19:15). In Ezek 37:26—28, the reunification of Israel and Judah and ensuing covenant of peace will reveal to the nations that Yahweh is Lord, and in Rev 19:15, the shepherding of the nations with a rod of iron reveals Yahweh’s concern for the nations and reemphasizes the repeated theme of hope for the salvation of the nations throughout the book of Revelation, also echoing Ezekiel’s oft repeated recognition formula, *וְיַדְעִי הָגּוֹם כִּי אֵن יְהֻנָּה* (then the nations will know that I am the Lord).<sup>158</sup>

#### 7.4.5 Gog and Magog (Ezek 38—39 and Rev 19:11—21, 20:7—10)

In Ezek 38, Yahweh speaks through the prophet and tells of a coming attack against the restored nation of Israel, in which Yahweh himself will bring these nations—Gog from the land of Magog and allies—into battle against Israel. In this battle, the people of Israel do not participate in warfare; the only humans who perpetrate violence are Gog and allies. At the time of this attack, the restored nation has turned from the sword, is dwelling securely in the land (Ezek 38:8), and is described as a peaceful and unsuspecting people living securely in unwalled villages (Ezek 38:11).

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<sup>157</sup> See Boring, *Revelation*, 196; Thomas, *Revelation*, 342; and Fee, *Revelation*, 277.

<sup>158</sup> See Ezek 37:28; 38:16, 23; 39:7.

At the moment Gog presses his attack, Yahweh responds with fiery wrath, utterly destroying Gog and his allies (Ezek 38:18—22). By repeating the frequently employed recognition formula *וְיַדְעُו כִּי־אָנִי יְהֹוָה* (then they will know that I am the Lord), Ezekiel reveals the purpose in this judgment of Gog and allies—that the nations of the world will know that Yahweh is Lord.

Just as the people of Israel are peaceful and living without walls or weapons, so in the Revelation text, the army accompanying the rider on the white horse goes into battle with wedding clothes instead of weapons (Rev 19:13). In both cases, Israel and the armies of heaven have rejected violence and bloodshed, choosing to place their trust in Yahweh and his Messiah for their protection and salvation. In both Ezekiel and Revelation, Yahweh and the Messiah wield the sword of judgment; neither human armies nor heavenly armies participate in any kind of conflict.

Ezekiel 39 opens with a repetition of Yahweh’s intent to incite Gog and allies into battle against Israel (Ezek 39:1—2), followed by a description of their swift destruction by Yahweh (Ezek 39:4—6). In Ezek 39: 17—21, Yahweh commands the prophet to issue an invitation to the beasts of the fields and the birds of the air to come and feast upon the flesh and blood of the slain in a sacrificial feast at Yahweh’s table (Ezek 39:17, 20). In both texts, the birds and beasts receive the invitation to feast upon the mighty—kings, princes, and warriors—who have fallen in battle (Ezek 39:18, 20; Rev 19:18). However, in Rev 19:18, the author additionally invites them to feast upon “all—both free and slave, small and great.” This implies that some of the slain will not necessarily be great warriors, or perhaps the point is to emphasize that free and slave, small and great, all those who set themselves against the rider on the white horse and his followers, will suffer the same divine judgment. In Ezekiel, Gog and allies prepare

to attack the peaceful covenant people of Israel, and in Revelation, this attack is pressed against the Lamb and his heavenly armies. In addition, the perpetrators of the Revelation conflict seem to be the beast and the false prophet (Rev 19:19—20); there is no mention of Gog and Magog until Rev 20:8. Another significant difference between the two texts is that in Rev 19:15, 21, the sword protruding from the rider’s mouth—with which he slays those who oppose God—is metaphorical; no literal battle between the sword of the Messiah and the swords of those who follow the beast and the false prophet occurs. Rather, the author of Revelation employs dramatic visual images to portray the final judgment of those who side with the forces of evil against God and the Lamb. While the weapon of the rider is the Word of God in Rev 19:11—21, in lieu of a physical sword, both the Ezekiel and Revelation texts describe not a battle at all but rather a divine judgment with fire and sulfur (Ezek 39:6, 38:22; Rev 19:20).

Revelation 20:7—10 opens upon yet another scene of battle and judgment, as Gog and his allies from the ends of the earth gather to press their attack upon the people of God dwelling in the holy city (Rev 20:7—8). Again, just as in Ezek 38:22, 39:6, and Rev 19:20, fire consumes Gog and his allies, and the ultimate perpetrator, the devil, is cast into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet already are (Rev 20:9—10). The significance of the use of “Gog and Magog” in Rev 20:8 cannot be understated, since this is the only biblical occurrence of these two names together other than Ezek 38—39. Clearly, these two texts both referring to the divine judgment of Gog and his allies must be read in light of one another. This is the third and final description of warriors preparing for a battle that is no battle at all; in all three cases Yahweh transforms a would-be battle into a scene of divine judgment in the form of

fire and sulfur.<sup>159</sup> The judgment is swift and instantaneous, allowing the human armies no opportunity to even press their attack. In Ezek 38:17—22, the fire and sulfur is also preceded by an earthquake, pestilence, bloodshed, torrential rains and hailstones—all supernatural acts of God in judgment against his enemies. While these armies press their attack against the people of God, ultimately they do not take part in any conflict because truly they are enemies of God himself; therefore he exacts judgment upon those who volitionally refused his offer of mercy and salvation extended to all of humanity by the Word of God (Rev 19:13—15). In all of these accounts of impending battles aborted by divine judgment, the people of God—described as Israel (Ezek 38—39), heavenly armies (Rev 19:14), and the camp of the saints (Rev 20:9)—do not participate in any conflict. Rather, they choose nonviolence and the fidelity to the covenant of peace (Ezek 37:26), demonstrating their faithfulness in God by trusting him to defeat their enemies, to bring salvation, and ultimately to make himself known to all nations of the world.

## 7.5 Conclusion

Classical dispensationalist readings of Ezek 36:16—39:29 painted the picture of an army arising from the dry bones of destruction to form a formidable military force, poised for battle in the coming war against Gog of Magog (Ezek 38—39), in which

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<sup>159</sup> Much theological debate persists regarding whether these three texts (Ezek 38—39, Rev 19:11—21, Rev 20:7—10) offer varied portrayals of one final battle following the millennium, or whether they describe three separate eschatological battles. For the purposes of a literary reading of the text, it is not relevant to discuss whether these battles are literal or metaphorical, or whether they refer to the same battle or multiple battles. For a dispensational interpretation, which outlines these events as three separate literal eschatological battles, see Henry M. Morris, *The Revelation Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Wheaton: Tydale House Publishers, 1983): 421—423; and Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 300—304.

they will defeat their enemies with the assistance of other allied nations and Yahweh in battle.<sup>160</sup> Such readings have been used to envision a great eschatological conflict in which the human armies of reunited Israel and Judah defeat the seemingly impossible attack of the surrounding nations who sought to annihilate them. However, I have argued that a closer look at Ezek 37:15—28 transforms the reader’s understanding of Ezek 36:16—39:29 as a whole. It is no longer a reunited human army led by David, a military warrior hero, going into battle against Gog of Magog, but rather it is a peaceful and unsuspecting people, dwelling securely in unwalled cities under the leadership of their shepherd-prince, David, in the covenant of peace. Their security does not come from military strength or thick walls of defense, but rather from their trust in Yahweh and in his supernatural protection and deliverance. They willingly abdicate violence because they have turned from the sword (Ezek 38:8), and instead they trust implicitly in Yahweh’s salvation.

My intertextual analysis of Rev 19:11—21 and 20:7—10 strengthens this nonviolent reading of the Ezekiel texts, as I have demonstrated by the identification and exploration of the following parallel themes: blood, purification, army, Messiah, and Gog and Magog. First, blood figures prominently in both the Ezekiel and Revelation texts. No longer is victory for Israel and Judah achieved by shedding the blood of their enemies (Ezek 36:18), but rather victory comes by embracing Yahweh’s covenant of peace (Ezek 37:26), choosing to live in peaceful reconciliation with one another and with other nations. In Rev 19:13, the covenant of peace is initiated by divine self-sacrifice; the bloodshed of Christ on the cross invites not only Israel and Judah, but all

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<sup>160</sup> For an example of this type of dispensational interpretation by a Pentecostal, see Frank M. Boyd, *The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1951), 162—198.

of humanity into embracing a self-sacrificial lifestyle of peace and reconciliation as modeled by the Messiah. Therefore, the image of the rider with the bloodstained robe in Rev 19:13 reemphasizes the Ezekiel's message of subverting human bloodshed (Ezek 37:26) with divine self-sacrifice.

Second, Israel and Judah experience purification from the sins of bloodshed and idolatry when they receive a new heart and a new spirit (Ezek 36:26—28), enabling them to live in obedience to Yahweh characterized by forgiveness, reconciliation and rejection of violence. In Rev 19, the visual imagery of the army of martyrs dressed in white wedding clothes represents both their purification and their power to obey the Lamb by following his example of obedience and self-sacrifice.

Third, in both the Ezekiel and Revelation texts, the authors employ a form of literary irony with the use of the term “army,” since neither army participates in bloodshed or warfare. Members of the resurrected army (Ezek 37:1—14) choose nonviolence and peace (Ezek 38:8, 11) as they follow their new Davidic leader (Ezek 37:24—25) and remain faithful to Yahweh. Similarly, the army of the saints wears wedding clothes in lieu of weapons (Rev 19:14), following the rider on the white horse as he wages war with the power of the Word of God instead of with a physical sword.

Fourth, both the Ezekiel and Revelation texts give a prominent role to the Messiah; depicted as a shepherd-king named David in Ezekiel (Ezek 37:24—25), and as a rider on a white horse in Revelation (Rev 19:11—16). In both texts, the Messiah serves as a shepherd and ruler to Israel (Ezek 37:15—28) and to the nations (Rev 19:15—16). Finally, the battle (or battles) depicted in Ezek 38—39 and Rev 19—20 reveal that human armies do not even attempt to exert violence in combat against Gog and Magog. Rather, Yahweh and his Messiah exact divine judgment upon the forces of

evil, bringing salvation to the covenant people of God and to those who yield to his sovereignty and redemption. In conclusion, this intertextual analysis of Rev 19:11—21 and 20:7—10 supports my nonviolent reading of Ezek 36:16—39:29, contradicting any interpretations that anticipate a global eschatological war involving human armies of Israel battling against Gog and allies.

## 8. CONCLUSION

### **8.1 Concluding Theological Observations**

Having reviewed the most prominent theological themes in classical dispensationalist and Pentecostal readings of Ezek 36:16—39:29, Rev 19:11—21, and Rev 20:7—10 (chapter two of this thesis), having established the theological context of contemporary Pentecostal eschatologies (chapter three of this thesis), and having articulated my proposed literary and intertextual analysis (chapters four through seven of this thesis), the following theological observations emerge from this study.

First, the eschatological expectation for a literal premillennial war against Gog and allied armies affects Pentecostal politics and missiology when interpreters identify contemporary nations as enemies of God destined for destruction. Early Pentecostal journal articles reveal that eschatological fervor eagerly anticipating Russia's destruction may have served to perpetuate heightened political animosity. Some of the most vocal and visible contemporary Pentecostal and charismatic eschatologists—who heavily promote dispensationalism—continue this trend by eagerly anticipating the coming destruction of Russia, Iran, and Israel's surrounding neighbors as a sign of the fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy, which is clearly problematic ethically.

Second, although numerous Pentecostals have embraced dispensational eschatology, dispensationalism is antithetical to Pentecostalism: dispensational expectation for deteriorating global conditions culminating in the destruction of God's human enemies stands at odds with Pentecostal expectation for the inbreaking power of the Spirit to usher in a great “end-times” revival and an expansion of the kingdom of

God before the return of Christ.<sup>1</sup> The preceding literary analysis of Pentecostal interpretations demonstrates that acceptance of dispensational eschatology allowed interpreters to project current political events onto their readings of the biblical texts, resulting in attitudes of animosity, prejudice, and even apparent racism toward those nations or peoples identified as Gog and allied nations. These attitudes then led to the celebration of human violence in the name of fulfilling biblical prophecy. Viewing human beings of any nation, race or political affiliation fundamentally as enemies of God to be destroyed, rather than as the beloved of God to be saved, is antithetical to Pentecostal eschatology, mission and ethos. Such attitudes contradict the following core values of early Pentecostals: embrace of pacifism, expectation for Christ's imminent return, and evangelistic zeal for all nations.<sup>2</sup> Such a perspective also inadequately represents the variety of Pentecostal eschatological perspectives evidenced in the earliest periodical literature of the movement and among the works of contemporary Pentecostal scholars.

Third, eschatology is not just an abstract series of speculations regarding the last days, but it is a foundational theological framework for biblical interpretation that vitally influences ethical and political perspectives, inevitably affecting many other

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<sup>1</sup> Such a hopeful eschatology does not demand acceptance of postmillennialism or amillennialism; hopeful premillennialism most closely aligns with Pentecostal theology. Raymond L. Gannon similarly concludes regarding the incongruence of dispensational premillennialism with Pentecostalism: "Dispensationalism, with its bleak assessment concerning the coming failure of the Church Age, and Pentecostalism, with its inherent upbeat enthusiasm for Church restoration to its Book of Acts victorious origins, are incompatible at their cores. Yet dispensationalism did have an immense impact upon Pentecostalism." See Raymond L. Gannon, *The Shifting Romance with Israel: American Pentecostal Ideology of Zionism and the Jewish State* (Shippensburg: Destiny Image Publishers, 2012): 47. John Christopher Thomas also argues for the theological significance of the millennium in the book of Revelation for Pentecostal eschatology. See Thomas and Macchia, *Revelation*, 337—348, 470—474.

<sup>2</sup> For more on early Pentecostal pacifism, see Beaman, *Pentecostal Pacifism*; and Paul Alexander, *Peace to War*.

factors including world mission. Just as the eschatological anticipation of fatalistic global deterioration and apocalyptic destruction can increase political support for global violence and hinder mission efforts, so the hopeful eschatological expectation for the inauguration of God’s kingdom through the gospel in the power of the Spirit can increase global political and missional efforts toward peace, preservation of human life, and the proclamation of the good news to the ends of the earth.

Fourth, I believe theological nuance regarding the articulation of premillennialism and the interpretation of apocalyptic and eschatological literature remains vitally important for Pentecostals. Generally speaking, a premillennial perspective may often be associated narrowly with dispensational premillennialism, and therefore may be characterized by an attitude of pessimistic escapism. Such a lack of attention to theological nuance has created the incorrect yet prevalent assumption that premillennialism is inherently a negative, deterministic eschatological framework. However, to contradict this presupposition, as demonstrated in chapter three of this thesis, numerous contemporary Pentecostal scholars articulate eschatologies that are both hopeful and premillennial.<sup>3</sup> I now join my voice to theirs, strongly advocating both a premillennial and a hopeful, inaugurated, proleptic eschatological expectation—a view that I believe correlates most consistently with the historical Pentecostal witness and with the vast majority of contemporary scholarly contributions to Pentecostal eschatology. To effectively disseminate such a view, scholars must clearly articulate

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<sup>3</sup> For a sampling of Pentecostal scholars who articulate both hopeful and premillennial eschatologies, clearly differentiating their views from dispensational premillennialism, see Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 71; Hart, *Truth Aflame*, 439; Thompson, *Kingdom Come*, 140—143; Thomas, *Revelation*, 1, 12—13, 16, 22—23; Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 274—275; Dempster, “Christian Social Concern in Pentecostal Perspective,” 51—64; Gause, *Revelation*; Keener, *Revelation*; and Benham and Skaggs, *Revelation*; among others. For more examples and a more thorough analysis of contemporary Pentecostal eschatology, see chapter three of this thesis.

how hopeful, pneumatic premillennialism differs from pessimistic, dispensational premillennialism, and they must continue to improve ways of conveying these ideas in accessible formats to bridge the divide between the “Ivory Tower” and the “Sunday Pulpit.”

In addition to careful articulations of premillennialism, theological nuance regarding the approach to interpreting apocalyptic and eschatological literature remains just as crucial. The Pentecostal hermeneutical value of seeking a literal interpretation, or emphasizing the “plain sense” meaning of the text, has perhaps made dispensational interpretations of apocalyptic and eschatological literature appealing to Pentecostals who may fear the “slippery slope” of allegorizing biblical literature and sliding into theological liberalism, a nineteenth century phenomenon against which early Pentecostals reacted strongly. Regarding this hermeneutical conundrum, I find Althouse’s suggestion for adopting a “literal” versus a “literalistic” approach to biblical interpretation most helpful. According to Althouse, a literal reading of the Bible takes into account its literary genre and use of literary devices. Therefore, in relation to interpreting apocalyptic and eschatological literature, the interpreter seeking a literal interpretation of the text’s meaning must first consider the nature of the genre, particularly its dramatic use of imagery, symbolism, and visionary accounts.

With this in mind, I propose that apocalyptic and eschatological biblical literature has less to do with *predictive prophecy* functioning as a jigsaw puzzle to determine the future, and more to do with a *prophetic ideal* revealing God’s nature and character, and reminding people how to live in faithfulness to God, particularly during times of resistance against the forces of evil. In the case of Ezek 36:16—39:29, the prophet presents an eschatological prophetic ideal of a people living under the

Messiah's rule and in submission to Yahweh's covenant of peace, in order to encourage an exiled community, not primarily—as dispensationalists would argue—to present “history written in advance.” Similarly, in Rev 19:11—21 and 20:7—10, John borrows much of Ezekiel's imagery to express hope in the Messiah's return and final victory over the forces of evil, in order to encourage a persecuted church to remain faithful to the Lamb and to endure until the end. I also propose that the pragmatic difference between a “prophetic ideal” perspective and a “history written in advance” perspective is that a “prophetic ideal” calls for active participation in the present, for practical expressions of an inaugurated and hopeful eschatology, whereas a “history written in advance” view allows for passivity as spectators anticipate the unalterable unfolding of divinely ordained events. For example, a “history written in advance” view of Ezekiel's “Two Sticks” pericope could relegate a prophesied reconciliation between the ancient nations of Israel and Judah to the ancient past or to the future millennium, thereby deeming present practical actions toward this end as irrelevant. However, a “prophetic ideal” view would encourage the application of present Spirit-empowered action, requiring the practical expression of living in reconciliation and peace with one another, and in full submission to the Messiah's rule. To be even more pragmatic, this could mean ethical, missional and political action working toward peace and reconciliation in local contexts, as well as in the Middle East among the modern inhabitants of the ancient lands. This understanding of a “prophetic ideal” underscores the significance of living in light of a hopeful, proleptic eschatology in which adherents both anticipate and act toward the inbreaking of God's kingdom in the “now,” while eagerly awaiting the “not yet” of the kingdom's culmination.

## **8.2 Constructing a Hopeful Pentecostal Eschatology**

In this thesis, I have argued that the largely ignored “Two Sticks” pericope (Ezek 37:15—28) functions as the literary and theological fulcrum of Ezek 36:16—39:29, and that the intentional literary placement of the “Two Sticks” between the “Dry Bones” (Ezek 37:1—14) and the “Gog of Magog” (Ezek 38—39) pericopes transforms the reader’s understanding of the theological message of Ezek 36:16—39:29 from one potentially promoting eschatological violence to one advocating forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace. My intertextual reading of Rev 19:11—21 and 20:7—10 strengthens this interpretation with the image of the Lamb conquering evil through divine self-sacrifice and the Word of God, rather than with violence and bloodshed. While justice is performed and ultimately evil is destroyed, mercy remains available to all who choose to receive it. This alternate reading challenges violent eschatological readings of these texts propagated most extensively through dispensational premillennialism and adopted in various streams of Pentecostalism. While this new reading contradicts the Pentecostal readings that promote dispensational interpretations of these texts, it aligns with some of the earliest Pentecostal publications addressing eschatology, as well as with the primary eschatological themes emerging among contemporary Pentecostal scholars.

In chapter three of this thesis, I identified the following four prominent eschatological themes of contemporary Pentecostal scholars: eschatology that is pneumatological as opposed to fatalistic, eschatology that is both hopeful and inaugurated, eschatology that anticipates the world’s transformation instead of the world’s annihilation, and eschatology that is based in pneumatic biblical interpretation. In conclusion, I will elucidate the following ways in which these four themes both align

with and strengthen my thesis, in an attempt to formulate a hopeful Pentecostal eschatology based upon my literary intertextual analysis.

First, eschatology that is pneumatological as opposed to fatalistic aligns with my focus upon the Spirit's work in imparting a new heart and spirit (Ezek 36:26—27), in reviving the dry bones (Ezek 37:1—14) and in reconstituting the previously divided nation, bringing forgiveness, reconciliation, and a covenant of peace (Ezek 37:24—26). The emphasis of Ezek 38—39 is not, as dispensationalists would argue, on the certainty of a violent eschatological battle in which the armies on “God’s side” defeat their enemies through bloodshed. Rather, the emphasis is upon the transformative work of the Spirit among God’s people, who are defined as peaceful, unsuspecting, and living without walls or fear (Ezek 38:8, 11, 14). They rely upon Yahweh as their protector, who singlehandedly destroys his enemies and rescues Israel from any participation in battle. My interpretation of these texts reflects a pneumatological eschatology that is copasetic with the views of the vast majority of contemporary Pentecostal eschatologists.

Second, a proleptic eschatology that is both hopeful and inaugurated, characterized by a view of the kingdom that is both “now” and “not yet,” fits with my intertextual analysis of the Ezek and Rev texts because the story of Ezekiel’s “Dry Bones” and “Two Sticks” is one of hope—a nation formerly divided is resurrected, reunited and reconciled by the present work of the Spirit. In reference to Ezek 37, Macchia writes,

Divine love is eschatological and sustains a living hope for the future, calling forth dry bones from their graves and inspiring hope where there is despair.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 269.

In this same divine love, God intervenes to rescue his people from their enemies (Ezek 38—39, Rev 20:7—10), and yet there remains an element of patient waiting for the “not yet” parousia of the Messiah (Rev 19:11—21), who will simultaneously destroy evil and extend mercy to all. A Pentecostal inaugurated eschatology, based upon the texts in this study, is focused upon the actions of the Messiah in establishing the covenant of peace (Ezek 37:24—25) and in coming in the authority of divine self-sacrifice and the Word of God to destroy the forces of evil (Rev 19:11—21), and of the actions of Yahweh in rescuing Israel from the violence of an impending battle and destroying his enemies (Ezek 38—39, Rev 20:7—10). This focus on the salvific actions of the Messiah and Yahweh as they bring hope and the inbreaking of the kingdom differs from dispensationalism’s fatalistic focus on the chronology of “end times” events that often involve human participation in violence to fulfill prophecy.

Third, eschatology that anticipates the world’s transformation instead of the world’s annihilation, reflecting concern for social justice, creation care, and peace, aligns with my nonviolent intertextual analysis of the primary texts in this study. In my interpretation of these texts, the emphasis is not upon the annihilation of the nations or of the cosmos, as a dispensational interpretation would suggest. When God establishes the covenant of peace with the restored nation of Israel under the rule of the Messiah (Ezek 37:26), he does so in order that the nations would know that He is the one sanctifying Israel (Ezek 37:28). The implication of this dramatic statement is that his restoration of Israel is not primarily for Israel, but for the nations—so they might know that Yahweh is God. While Yahweh defeats the enemies that attack Israel in both Ezek 38—39 and Rev 20:7—10, it is not for the purpose of annihilation, but for the purpose of revelation and transformation—revelation of Yahweh as God and transformation of

the nations who acknowledge his authority (Ezek 38:23). Similarly, in Rev 19:11—21, the Messiah establishes God’s victory over his enemies, but not in anticipation of their destruction. Rather, he reveals himself to the nations so that he may rule (or shepherd) them with a rod of iron (Rev 19:15).<sup>5</sup> As I argued previously, if the nations were annihilated in judgment, over whom would he rule? The Messiah comes to establish the reign of God (Ezek 37:24—25, Rev 19:11—21), a reign that is characterized by both social justice (Ezek 37:15—28) and peace (Ezek 38:8, 11, 14). And again, as noted earlier, Dempster argues that God’s eschatological reign should be demonstrated by humans reflecting the moral nature of God’s character. This moral nature promotes social justice, which means, according to Dempster, “strangers are incorporated into the circle of neighbor love; peace is made with enemies; injustices are rectified.”<sup>6</sup> Dempster’s depiction of eschatological social justice is illustrated in the forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace between Israel and Judah as the “Two Sticks” are reunited into one under the covenant of peace (Ezek 37:15—28). Ezekiel’s prophetic ideal envisions a covenant people who embrace both social justice and peace—they live at peace with one another, and with surrounding nations (Ezek 38:8, 11, 14). Such peaceful ideals are tested when Gog and armies gather to press their attack, and yet Israel does not respond by participating in violence. Rather, the restored people of God await the inbreaking of his kingdom through miraculous deliverance and defeat of their enemies. The “army” following the Messiah, dressed in white wedding garments, follows the same ethic. They do not participate in violence or seek to exact vengeance upon the enemies of God; rather, they follow the Messiah who has already

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<sup>5</sup> See also Macchia, *Revelation*, 620.

<sup>6</sup> Dempster, “Christian Social Concern in Pentecostal Perspective,” 58.

accomplished the victory by his shed blood and the Word of God (Rev 19:11—16). My reading of these texts supports the idea that a Pentecostal eschatology must include concern for social justice and peace, as well as creation care in anticipation of the world’s coming transformation, and not the world’s annihilation.

Fourth, eschatology that is based in pneumatic biblical interpretation is reflective of the methodological approach I have taken in this study. By combining literary and intertextual analysis with Pentecostal hermeneutics, I have created a reading that is distinctly Pentecostal and yet offers an alternate interpretation to a dispensational understanding of these texts. While employing various methodologies, my purpose, along with numerous contemporary Pentecostal biblical scholars, is to discern the Spirit’s message in the text. A dispensational interpretation of Ezek 36:16—39:29 and Rev 19:11—21 and 20:7—10 paints the picture of the restored nation of Israel forming a vast army in order to defeat Gog and Magog (Ezek 38—39, Rev 20:7—10), and to fight in the battle of Armageddon (Rev 16:13—16, 19:11—21). While the battle of Armageddon and Ezekiel’s battle of Gog and Magog were originally understood as the same conflict in classical dispensationalism, many contemporary dispensationalists now view them as two separate battles, so that they actually anticipate three “end times” battles in which the people of God potentially exert violence against God’s enemies to annihilate them. In contrast to this approach, my reading is not concerned with the *number* of battles, but rather with the *nature* of the battle or battles. In all three descriptions of the conflict (Ezek 38—39, Rev 19:11—21, and Rev 20:7—10), God’s people do not participate in warfare or violence. Rather, they trust in the Messiah and in God, who brings swift deliverance and defeats their enemies. In the process, he does not annihilate the nations, but rather demonstrates his

power to reveal himself to them, so that they too may join Israel in coming under his rule (Rev 19:15). My reading is both pneumatological, because it emphasizes the work of the Spirit, and eschatological, because it emphasizes the inbreaking of God's kingdom rule—a rule that is characterized by social justice and peace. I hope that this reading supports the work of other contemporary biblical scholars who articulate textual interpretations that challenge dispensationalism, so that inaugurated, proleptic eschatologies of hope may transform Pentecostal theology, ethics, politics and mission.

### **8.3 Contributions of This Study**

This study makes several contributions to scholarship on the books of Ezekiel and Revelation, as well as to the study of eschatology in the Pentecostal tradition.

First, this study provides the first historical analysis of Pentecostal interpretations of the primary texts in this study, Ezek 36:16—39:29, Rev 19:11—21, and Rev 20:7—10. It is also the first to examine the development of Pentecostal eschatology in as recorded in Pentecostal periodicals from the 1920s to 2006. While other scholars have produced significant works surveying early Pentecostal literature on the topics of healing, eschatology and worship in the book of Revelation from 1906 to the early 1920s, this is the first study to date that examines the development of Pentecostal eschatology and particularly its relationship with dispensationalism as demonstrated in Pentecostal periodicals from the 1920s to 2006.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Kimberly Alexander identified differences in models of healing between the “Finished Work” and “Wesleyan Holiness” streams of Pentecostalism, Larry McQueen examined differences in eschatology between the two groups, and Melissa studied Pentecostal interpretations of worship based on the Apocalypse from 1906—1916. See Alexander, *Pentecostal Healing*; McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*; and Archer, ‘*I Was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day*.’

Second, while other scholars have surveyed contemporary Pentecostal contributions to both eschatology and interpretations of the book of Revelation,<sup>8</sup> this is the first study to systematically identify the following significant theological themes: first, eschatology that is pneumatological as opposed to fatalistic; second, eschatology that is both hopeful and inaugurated, characterized by a proleptic view of the kingdom that is both “now” and “not yet; third, eschatology that anticipates the world’s transformation instead of the world’s annihilation, reflecting concern for social justice, creation care, and pacifism; and fourth, eschatology that is based in pneumatic biblical interpretation, demonstrating variety in their approaches to the text—including employment of various methodologies and emphases. The four primary themes I identified not only encapsulate the emphasis of contemporary Pentecostal eschatology to date, but they also provide a potential thematic framework for the ongoing development, organization and presentation of contemporary Pentecostal eschatologies.

Third, this study offers the first literary and intertextual analysis of Ezek 36:16—39:29, Rev 19:11—21, and Rev 20:7—10 written by a Pentecostal scholar. I believe it is also the first Pentecostal scholarly treatment of the Ezekiel texts that emphasizes the theological construction of eschatology. My analysis yields an interpretation that both aligns with the ethos of early Pentecostal eschatology and with the theological direction of contemporary Pentecostal eschatology, providing both an exegetical and theological alternative to dispensational readings of these texts. This study also demonstrates the potential for the field of biblical studies to contribute toward formulating Pentecostal eschatology. While numerous Pentecostal scholars have

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<sup>8</sup> See McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 5—59; and Archer, “Pentecostals and the Apocalypse,” 57—91.

done this with NT texts, particularly with the book of Revelation, this study contributes uniquely by emphasizing the significance of OT texts for Pentecostal eschatology.

Fourth, this study explicitly addresses the theological implications of classical dispensational eschatology concerning violence, dealing directly with those texts from which theologies celebrating eschatological violence have been constructed. It also reveals how the gradual Pentecostal absorption of classical dispensational eschatology throughout history has influenced Pentecostal readings of these texts and the ensuing theological and ethical attitudes toward eschatological violence, especially as potentially perpetrated by or against modern nations equated with the ancient nations named in Ezek 38—39 and Rev 20:7—10.

Fifth, this study contributes to both growing interest among Pentecostals in eschatology generally and in interpreting the book of Revelation specifically, emphasizing the need for not only systematic theological alternatives to classical dispensational eschatology, but also for fresh exegetical insight into the key texts upon which this eschatology is constructed. If Pentecostals choose to distance themselves from classical dispensational eschatology, much work remains in the area of articulating clearly viable exegetical and theological options for dealing with the texts upon which such eschatology has been based. This study attempts in small part to address this need.

Finally, this study contributes toward understanding eschatological violence from a peace perspective by emphasizing the covenant of peace as the literary and theological fulcrum of Ezek 36:16—39:29. This focus on the theological significance of the covenant of peace transforms the interpretation of the larger unit (Ezek 36:16—39:29), and the intertextual interpretation of Rev 19:11—21 and 20:7—10 strengthens

this peace emphasis. To my knowledge, this is the first extensive treatment of the “Two Sticks” pericope that highlights the importance of the covenant of peace not just for the reading of these Ezekiel and Revelation texts, but also for Pentecostal ethics and mission.

#### **8.4 Suggestions for Future Research**

Focused narrowly on particular primary texts, this study contributes to the historical and theological interpretations of these texts among Pentecostals. As McQueen has noted, further historical research is warranted in Pentecostal periodicals from the early 1920s to the present to ascertain why and how dispensationalism grew to dominate Pentecostal eschatology.<sup>9</sup> While this study contributed significantly by laying some groundwork for the development of that knowledge, more extensive research beyond the particular texts examined in this study could help to clarify how truly pervasive dispensational eschatology was throughout the progression of Pentecostal history. Furthermore, the source for my research was limited to the periodicals culled electronically in two databases, which was current through 2006 at the time of the completion of this thesis. Additional research in periodicals that possibly remain in hard copy format only, as well as in periodicals from 2006 to the present, could expand the scope of this study and contribute to a more thorough understanding of the development of Pentecostal eschatology.

Throughout the survey of Pentecostal eschatology among contemporary scholars in chapter three of this thesis, Thompson is the only scholar I located who has presented a full systematic Pentecostal eschatology. Most of the other scholars, myself

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<sup>9</sup> McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, 296.

included, have examined various aspects of Pentecostal eschatology through a narrower filter for their respective purposes. While the aforementioned survey of these varied eschatological views remains valuable and instructive, further development is needed toward articulating a cohesive Pentecostal eschatology in a systematic fashion, providing a more robust theological alternative to the systematic interpretive system of dispensationalism. Systematic Pentecostal eschatologies could also provide a helpful theological context for the exegesis of specific texts.

Following my literary analysis of Ezek 37:15—28, the ethical question of how Yahweh could punish Israel and Judah for their violence when he himself judged the nations with divine violence prompted the intertextual analysis of Ezek 36:16—39:29, Rev 19:11—21, and Rev 20:7—10. This study yielded the conclusion the Revelation texts portray divine self-sacrifice as the means by which Yahweh will redeem the nations. While judgment is not absent, redemption is made available to all. Although this theological conclusion answered my query regarding these particular texts, the ethical implications of Yahweh as judge of the nations in the book of Ezekiel could be examined more thoroughly, perhaps modeled after and building upon the work of Andrew Davies in his exploration of the apparent ethical double standards presented by Yahweh’s role as judge in the book of Isaiah.<sup>10</sup>

This study demonstrates the potential of the field of biblical studies, and more specifically OT studies, for formulating Pentecostal eschatology. As stated previously, while other Pentecostal scholars have devoted extensive attention to NT texts relating to eschatology, more work remains in the area of developing non-dispensational

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<sup>10</sup> See Andrew Davies, *Double Standards in Isaiah: Re-evaluating Prophetic Ethics and Divine Justice* (BibInt 46; Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2000). For another study concerning ethical issues in the book of Ezekiel, see Andrew Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*.

Pentecostal eschatology based in OT studies. Possible texts for further study could include those upon which dispensationalists base their eschatological claims, such as Dan 9 or Zech 14. As interpretations of these texts are forthcoming, a growing work of biblical scholarship can help to shape the future of Pentecostal eschatology.

Finally, further research is warranted by scholars who can address in greater specificity the ethical implications of Pentecostal eschatology and how it affects political and missional spheres, particularly regarding the issue of eschatological violence. While in my view, Amos Yong has done this most extensively thus far among Pentecostal theologians, more work remains to connect Pentecostal ethics to Pentecostal eschatology, yielding a more congruent and consistent articulation of Pentecostal theology.<sup>11</sup> By this, I mean that the ethical implications of Pentecostal eschatology should not contradict the priorities of Pentecostal missiology. For example, when feelings of animosity toward Russia increased based upon classical dispensational interpretations of Ezek 38—39 and Rev 20, as was demonstrated by the historical review of Pentecostal periodicals, missional attitudes and efforts toward the people of Russia suffered. Therefore, a consistent Pentecostal theology must include a cohesive eschatology and missiology, and additional efforts toward articulating such a theology should remain a high priority for Pentecostal theologians.

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<sup>11</sup> See Yong, *In the Days of Caesar*, 316—358.

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