Dissonant Prophecy in Ezekiel 26 and 29

DEAN ULRICH BADEN, PENNSYLVANIA

Ezek 26:1-21 and 29:17-21 present a formidable challenge to the deuteronomic criterion for a true prophet. In the former passage Ezekiel predicted that Nebuchadnezzar's army would conquer Tyre and plunder its
wealth. In the latter passage, written 16 years later, Ezekiel admitted that
Nebuchadnezzar's army obtained no plunder from its campaign against
Tyre. He issued a corrective prophecy that promised Egyptian booty as a
consolation. For the most part scholarship has considered the historical
problem the key to the first prophecy. Whereas some interpreters appeal to
multiple historical fulfillments, others allow the evidence to impugn
Ezekiel's integrity. By appealing to the function of mythological imagery
in Ezekiel's oracles against the nations, this article proposes an alternate
approach to the impasse.

Key Words: Tyre, dissonance, oracles against the nations, theophany, judgment

In Ezek 26:7-14, Ezekiel prophesied that Nebuchadnezzar and his army would besiege Tyre and utterly destroy it. After razing the walls and buildings, the troops would kill the residents and plunder the city. The devastation would be so sweeping that Tyre would never be rebuilt. According to 26:1, Ezekiel made this prediction in the 11th year of Jehoiachin's captivity (586 BC), sometime after Nebuchadnezzar's second invasion of Jerusalem. Through the agency of Nebuchadnezzar, YHWH was judging Tyre for gloating over Jerusalem's misfortune.

According to Josephus, Nebuchadnezzar besieged Tyre for 13 years but never conquered the insular fortress. Although there is some evidence that Tyre became a Babylonian vassal, the prolonged fighting left little booty for Nebuchadnezzar's troops. Moreover, Tyre

- 1. Josephus *Ant.* 10.11.1; Ag. Ap. 1.21.
- 2. Cf. ANET, 308. See also H. Jacob Katzenstein, *The History of Tyre* (Jerusalem: Schocken Institute for Jewish Research, 1973) 322-39; Gosta W. Ahlström, *The History of Ancient Palestine from the Palaeolithic Period to Alexander's Conquest* (JSOTSup 146; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993) 810.

eventually recovered from the damage and continued to flourish until Alexander the Great successfully conquered the insular fortress in 332 BC. Even then Tyre remained a fishing village, although this historical fact may correspond with Ezek 26:14. From a historical perspective Ezekiel's prophecy did not come true. By the 27th year of Jehoiachin's captivity (571), Ezekiel himself realized the apparent failure of his earlier prediction and uttered a corrective prophecy. According to Ezek 29:17-21, Nebuchadnezzar would conquer Egypt as compensation for his unrewarded effort against Tyre, but history does not even confirm that Nebuchadnezzar ever conquered Egypt.

These two prophecies cast a shadow on the integrity of Ezekiel's prophetic calling and raise doubt about the inclusion of his book in the OT canon. According to Deut 18:21-22, Israel could know the authenticity of a prophet's calling if his words came true. Because the fulfillment of some prophecies did not occur for many years, this criterion possessed an inherent weakness. Later generations might be able to corroborate an earlier prophet's testimony, but the prophet's contemporaries might not live long enough to judge whether he had spoken accurately. Therefore, they would not know whether to put their confidence in him. With respect to Ezekiel's accuracy, there is apparently no ambiguity, for he lived long enough to become aware of the dissonance between his earlier prophecy and the actual outcome of Nebuchadnezzar's war against Tyre.

PREVIOUS APPROACHES TO THE PROBLEM

In an effort to explain this dilemma, scholars have, for the most part, produced two solutions. Some have defended Ezekiel's integrity by arguing for multiple stages of historical fulfillment. This could be called the traditional view. It eases the tension between the deuteronomic test and the actual words of Ezekiel. Behind this solution there is usually a concern to defend the inerrancy of the biblical writers and the apologetic value of fulfilled prophecy. Others have said that Ezekiel plainly erred and have argued that his prophetic integrity did not depend on untarnished accuracy. The deuteronomic criterion for a true prophet is then applied to Ezekiel's Tyrian oracles in various ways. This solution often bolsters an argument against biblical inerrancy and predictive prophecy. These two approaches and the assumptions that undergird them will now be reviewed in more detail.

Multiple Historical Fulfillments

The Basic Argument. For the most part conservative scholars have dealt with this problem by positing two stages of fulfillment sepa-

rated by several centuries. The first stage involved Nebuchadnezzar's partially successful siege. The second stage involved Alexander's conquest of the insular fortress in 332 BC. Besides an argument based on the actual course of history, conservative scholars have defended this solution on textual and hermeneutical grounds.

According to Robert D. Culver and Gleason L. Archer, Nebuchadnezzar did not fulfill Ezek 26:4 or 26:12, which predicted the sweeping of Tyre's rubble into the sea. Alexander's army cleared the rubble when it constructed a causeway from the mainland to the insular fortress. Archer also suggested that the pronominal switch in 26:12 from singular to plural referred to the ethnically diverse Greek army. Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe added that the switch in 26:12 was signaled by the reference to many nations in 26:3. They seemed to have overlooked the possibility that Nebuchadnezzar's army could also have been ethnically diverse.

Going a step further, Charles Lee Feinberg thought that Tyre was destroyed by a succession of invasions that began with Nebuchadnezzar and ended with the Saracens in the fourteenth century AD. Ezek 26:12 refers to the sieges after Nebuchadnezzar's. Moreover, Feinberg reduced Tyre's descent into Sheol to the disappearance of Tyre's glory and fame. He took literally the description of Tyre's submergence into the surging sea (26:19) and claimed that this has "partially occurred." ⁵

J. Barton Payne offered the most thorough hermeneutical explanation for the two-stage theory. Ezekiel's Tyrian prophecies are an example of prophetic telescoping, which occurs in "progressive predictions that exhibit chronological gaps in their fulfillment." Behind this theory is the assumption that prophecy must be read on a historical as well as transcendent level. Because of divine inspiration, the prophets often spoke more than they realized. According to Payne, Ezek 26:1-4a and 26:6-11 were fulfilled by Nebuchadnezzar, but 26:4b-5 and 26:12-21 were fulfilled by Alexander.

To some extent, Payne's thesis was anticipated by Patrick Fairbairn. Fairbairn argued that prophecy characteristically "[connected] a delineation of events with some grand starting-point, as if all were

- 3. Robert D. Culver, "Were the Old Testament Prophecies Really Prophetic?" in *Can I Trust My Bible*? (Chicago: Moody, 1963) 112-13; Gleason L. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982) 276-77.
- 4. Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe, *When Critics Ask: A Popular Handbook on Bible Difficulties* (Wheaton: Victor, 1992) 287.
- 5. Charles Lee Feinberg, *The Prophecy of Ezekiel: The Glory of the Lord* (Chicago: Moody, 1969) 148-51.
- 6. J. Barton Payne, Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy: The Complete Guide to Scriptural Predictions and Their Fulfillment (New York: Harper & Row, 1973) 134.
 - 7. Ibid., 5.
 - 8. Ibid., 362-63.

to spring immediately from it, while ages, perhaps, were needed to consummate the process." Hence, one should not expect Ezek 26:7-14 to be fulfilled only by Nebuchadnezzar. Elsewhere, Fairbairn explained that a given prophecy must be interpreted in view of the progressive nature of prophetic revelation, which was part of the unfolding of redemptive history. The organic nature of the latter also applied to the prophets whose earlier words, when read retrospectively, contained the seeds of their later words.

Besides the postulation of the dual nature of prophecy, other theological commitments stand behind the appeal to multiple historical fulfillments. In the introductions to their respective books, Archer on the one hand and Geisler and Howe on the other stated the presuppositions that governed their resolution of biblical conundrums. They believed that the Bible is inspired and inerrant. Any interpretive difficulties arise because of the reader's finitude. Rather than discrediting either the human or divine author of Scripture, the reader should assume that enough research can resolve all ambiguities. Moreover, Jesus' credibility is at stake. If Jesus' view of the Bible was mistaken, then he would be disqualified from acting as savior. 13

These conservative explanations have proceeded from an appreciable concern to defend a high view of Scripture. According to the Bible's own testimony, the words of the prophets did not originate with religious, ethically advanced men but with God's Spirit, who directed certain human agents to inscripturate divine revelation. Hence, the OT possesses a typological and prophetic depth that the NT organically related to the person and work of Jesus Christ. A Nevertheless, the above writers have assumed that the solution to Ezekiel's Tyrian oracles must involve a historical realization with a one-for-one correspondence between Ezekiel's statements and their referents. This assumption potentially runs contrary to the prophets' frequent typological adaptation of earlier redemptive events and the NT's spiritualization of OT prophecy.

The Textual Problem in Ezekiel 26:12. As noted above, conservative scholars have built their theory of multiple historical fulfillments on the pronominal switch in Ezek 26:12. The switch from third-

- 9. Patrick Fairbairn, *An Exposition of Ezekiel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1960) 289. 10. Ibid., 290.
- 11. Idem, *Prophecy Viewed in Respect to Its Distinctive Nature, Its Special Function, and Proper Interpretation* (Edinburgh: T & T. Clark, 1865; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976) 177-78.
 - 12. Geisler and Howe, When Critics Ask, 15.
 - 13. Archer, Encyclopedia of Biblical Difficulties, 20.
- 14. See Vern Sheridan Poythress, "Divine Meaning of Scripture," WTJ 48 (1986) 241-79.

person singular in vv. 7-11 to third-person plural in v. 12 is thought to indicate a reference to others besides Nebuchadnezzar who had a hand in the multistage destruction of Tyre. Although the MT and the Targum have third-person plural forms in 26:12, the LXX retains the third-person singular form through 26:13, and the obvious reference is to Nebuchadnezzar. Because of the centrality of the pronominal switch for the conservative solution, some attention needs to be given to this textual problem.

David Thompson noted two possible reasons for the LXX's divergent reading in 26:12. On the one hand the LXX could reflect a different Hebrew *Vorlage* from that of the MT, and that *Vorlage* would have had a singular reading. On the other hand the LXX could have altered the *Vorlage* of the MT. Thompson suggested that those who lived at the time of the LXX's formation would have been aware of Nebuchadnezzar's failure to fulfill Ezek 26:7-14 literally; therefore, the singular reading would have been the more difficult one at that time. Apparently assuming that ancient translators used the same canons of textual criticism as moderns, Thompson thought that the LXX preserved the more difficult reading. Having ruled out the second option, he acknowledged the slim evidence for a separate *Vorlage* but, nevertheless, raised the possibility that the MT represented an early attempt at reinterpretation. ¹⁵

However, other grammatical variations occur in the immediate context. A second textual discrepancy appears in 26:11. In the MT and Targum, Nebuchadnezzar tramples the streets, but in the LXX an unidentified third-person plural is the subject of καταπατήσουσι. This variation is minor and could possibly be attributed to a difference in emphasis. Whereas the MT and Targum make Nebuchadnezzar, the commanding general, responsible for every phase of Tyre's destruction, the LXX emphasizes that the horses and horsemen under his command trample the city. Another possibility is stylistic preference or translation equivalence. The MT, Targum, and LXX say the same thing but with different words.

A third discrepancy occurs in 26:13, and it is more serious. As previously mentioned, the LXX retained the third-person singular forms through 26:13, but the MT and Targum have a first-person singular form in 26:13 (אַבְּעָלְבָּבְּיִלְּ). It clearly refers back to YHWH's use of first person in 26:7. Given the importance of divine activity, the reading of the LXX would appear to have resulted from something other than translation equivalence. In both the MT and Targum on the one hand and the LXX on the other, Ezek 26:7 begins a paragraph

^{15.} David Thompson, "A Problem of Unfulfilled Prophecy in Ezekiel: The Destruction of Tyre (Ezek 26:1-14 and 29:18-29)," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 16 (Spring 1981) 98. 16. Cf. Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37* (AB 22A; New York: Doubleday, 1997) 534.

with YHWH'S first-person commission (ΝΊΤΩ΄ ΔΙΑ΄ απάγω) of Nebuchadnezzar, and 26:14 appropriately concludes the paragraph with a first-person reference to YHWH (Τ΄ ΠΩΤ΄ από δώσω), the ultimate destroyer of Tyre. First-person forms frame the paragraph and ultimately focus the reader's attention on YHWH, not on Nebuchadnezzar. Between vv. 7 and 14 the secondary cause of Tyre's fall is described. As YHWH's punitive agent, Nebuchadnezzar could have ordered his army to perform all of the horrors of war in vv. 8-13, but v. 14 recalls vv. 4b-5, which attribute the bare rock to YHWH's activity. Only YHWH could make Tyre bare and eternally desolate. Thus, the LXX's use of third person through v. 13 appears to heighten the contrast between Nebuchadnezzar's temporal devastation and YHWH's eternal annihilation.

The presence of other grammatical discrepancies in the immediate vicinity of 26:12 suggests that the MT's switch (in 26:12) to third-person plural makes good sense and does not require multiple historical fulfillments. Verses 7-11 have already mentioned the cavalry and engines of war by which Nebuchadnezzar devastated Tyre. Verse 12 addresses the plundering of Tyre, which would be performed by the troops as payment for their successful effort (cf. 29:18-19). Moreover, the plural forms provide a transitional summary between vv. 7-11, which describe the secondary cause of Tyre's fall, and vv. 13-14, which use the first-person pronoun to identify the first cause. 17

Summary. The solution to the problem of Ezekiel's Tyrian oracles does not reside in the pronominal switch in 26:12. This verse cannot bear the weight of multiple historical fulfillments or account for the corrective oracle in 29:17-21. Moreover, the alleged textual support for a two-stage fulfillment inexplicably occurs in the first prophecy instead of the second. One would think that 29:17-21 would contain the "proof" for Alexander's participation in the fulfillment. If the first oracle already foresaw Alexander, the second oracle becomes extraneous. Instead, the solution should be sought in the surrounding context of 26:12. Because of Tyre's maritime superiority, Ezekiel utilized oceanic imagery to describe Tyre's impending destruction. Such imagery was laden with mythical overtones and suggested a wider identity for Tyre.

The Possibility of Error

Numerous scholars have accepted the apparent reality that Ezekiel made a mistake. They have often drawn attention to this dilemma in the course of a broader discussion of Israelite prophecy, particularly

17. Charles Haldor Parker, *The Tyrian Oracles in Ezekiel: A Study of Ezekiel 26:1-28:19* (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1970) 9.

its predictive aspects. Much like the conservative argument, critical exegesis of Ezek 26:7-14 has been governed by historical reconstruction, that is, by what really happened. Because of the alleged discrepancy, critical scholars have often challenged the traditionally orthodox affirmations of divine inspiration, inerrancy, and predictive prophecy. They have also redefined the character and attributes of God.

The Basic Argument. Writing in the latter half of the nineteenth century, Abraham Kuenen anticipated most of today's critical arguments and rebutted most of the conservative defenses of Ezekiel's integrity. According to him, the prophets were preachers of morality who referred to the future only to encourage the pure worship of YHWH or to warn about the dire consequences of apostasy. Thus, statements about the future were contingent upon the response of the people. The prophets did not address the distant future or engage in prophetic telescoping. They expected relatively quick fulfillments to their prophecies; otherwise, their warnings would have had no punitive relevance for their contemporaries. 18 Concerning Ezek 26:7-14 and 29:17-21. Kuenen argued that Ezekiel did not appeal to any theory of multiple fulfillments; instead, he let the failed prophecy stand. Any attempt to rescue Ezekiel from error by proposing multiple fulfillments has to assume a supernatural origin of prophecy that obstructs an unbiased reading of the plain facts of the text. ¹⁹ Ezekiel's Tyrian oracles illustrate the prophetic response to failed predictions: the time of fulfillment is subordinate to the certainty of fulfillment. Prophecies that were not realized during the prophet's lifetime would eventually be fulfilled. Although the prophet could be wrong about the time of judgment, his conviction that YHWH would, at some time, vindicate the prophetic word was correct.²⁰

More recently, R. B. Y. Scott and Gurden C. Oxtoby similarly contended that the prophets addressed their own era and did not engage in long-range prognostication. According to Scott, the prophets made short-range predictions that took their cue from the moral (or immoral) conditions of the present. Both Scott and Oxtoby rejected the predetermination of history and affirmed the moral contingency of prophetic oracles.²¹ Scott further maintained that God always remained free to modify earlier prophecies so that the revelation of his

^{18.} Abraham Kuenen, *The Prophets and Prophecy in Israel* (London: n.p., 1877; reprint, Amsterdam: Philo, 1969) 132-35, 344-45.

^{19.} Ibid., 111, 136.

^{20.} Ibid., 360.

^{21.} R. B. Y. Scott, *The Relevance of the Prophets* (rev. ed.; New York: Macmillan, 1976) 10; Gurden C. Oxtoby, *Prediction and Fulfillment in the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966) 77.

moral purpose was current with the present situation.²² Both regarded Ezekiel's Tyrian oracles as evidence of the conditionality of prophecy.²³

The Theological Ramifications of Ezekiel's Alleged Error. A number of other scholars have added to the basic argument with attempts to defend God's freedom to alter his word without compromising his faithfulness to it. Their arguments have often made God subservient to the flow of history. For example, Ralph W. Klein contended that changing historical conditions required YHWH and Ezekiel to modify the first oracle against Tyre. In the face of history's unpredictability, the working hermeneutic for Ezekiel and the modern reader is as follows: "Yahweh's word was a success if God would at some time and in some similar way exercise judgment; a literalistic, one-to-one fulfillment was not required."²⁴

Walther Eichrodt tried to legitimate this hermeneutic by appealing to God's transcendence and ultimate incomprehensibility. He admitted that Ezek 29:17-21 conceded the historical failure of the earlier prediction, but he was not convinced that historical inaccuracy impugned the truth of the prophecy. According to Eichrodt, the first prophecy never intended to offer a journalistic report of the event; instead, it affirmed God's imminent assertion of his universal rule. Hence, it showcased the strength and limitation of Israelite prophecy. The strength was the larger perspective on history by which the prophets related isolated events to the bigger picture of YHWH's redemptive intervention in history. The limitation was the prophets' finite perspective:

[T]hey are trying to show the way along which God is leading, whereas that God is always transcendent and far above all human capabilities, and so his march through history cannot be imprisoned in human words. He carries his plan home and attains his objective with all the freedom of the Creator; so while prediction can make statements clarifying the plan and assuring us of its existence, it can never determine the exact line it will take or calculate beforehand its individual stages. So prediction demands humble obedience to the mystery of the divine work of realization and, like the rest of what prophets preach, it confronts the hearer with the question of faith which refuses to let itself be led astray by unexpected delays, changes of front, or reconstructions.²⁵

- 22. Scott, Relevance of the Prophets, 11.
- 23. See also Dewey M. Beegle, *Prophecy and Prediction* (Ann Arbor: Pryor Pettingill, 1978) 50, 61-63; J. J. M. Roberts, 'A Christian Perspective on Prophetic Prediction," *Int* 33 (1979) 242-44.
- 24. Ralph W Klein, *Ezekiel: The Prophet and His Message* (Studies on Personalities of the Old Testament; Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988) 135.
 - 25. Walther Eichrodt, Ezekiel (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970) 410-11.

In other words, human language cannot clearly convey God's intentions so that he is bound to perform his word in a recognizable way.

Robert P. Carroll and David Thompson identified the inherent weakness in Eichrodt's (and Klein's) hermeneutic. According to Carroll, Eichrodt's appeal to the "transcendental dimension of prophecy" made prophecy unable to be falsified. The logical consequence of this way of thinking is that whatever happened constituted the fulfillment; therefore, Deut 18:21-22 could never come into play. Carroll perceptively questioned whether Eichrodt's argument preserves the freedom of God or licenses the interpreter to import meaning into the text. On the strength of Carroll's rebuttal, Thompson raised the issue of prophetic credibility: "The prophets could not be continually wrong without eventually undermining confidence in the whole prophetic enterprise."

Undergirding the argument for God's freedom, there has sometimes been a denial of God's prescience. James Barr contended that the messenger formula in a prophetic oracle was never intended to guarantee the historical accuracy of the prediction; instead, the formula lent YHWH's endorsement to the prophet's moral evaluation of Israel, Judah, or a foreign nation. Because the prophecies always had a conditional nature to them, prophetic predictions were subject to change. While Barr admitted that certain prophecies exhibited a close correspondence between prediction and fulfillment, he drew attention to others, such as Isa 38:1-6 or Ezek 26:7-14, which were inexactly fulfilled or completely unfulfilled.²⁸ Barr's defense of prophetic contingency cannot be divorced from his thinking about the divine character. In contrast to fundamentalism, which asserts the immutability of God and the concomitant inerrancy of the prophet, Barr contended that "the God of the Bible . . . is highly subject to variation and imperfection" God's words did not have to be inerrant in order to be "effective" for their intended purpose of contemporary moral reform.²⁹ Hence, he alleged errors in the Bible were not the fault of the prophet but of the imperfect God who stood behind the prophet.

Robert P. Carroll was even more outspoken. Admitting that the prophets did not view their work as a hit-or-miss kind of prognostication but as the sure revelation of YHWH's will, Carroll rejected the possibility of predictive prophecy by either a prophet or by God himself. Concerning the traditional defenses of predictive prophecy, Carroll issued the following philosophical objection:

^{26.} Robert P. Carroll, When Prophecy Failed: Reactions and Responses to Failure in the Old Testament Prophetic Traditions (London: SCM, 1979) 176.

^{27.} David Thompson, "A Problem of Unfulfilled Prophecy," 101.

^{28.} James Barr, *Beyond Fundamentalism: Biblical Foundations for Evangelical Christianity* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984) 29.

^{29.} Ibid., 37.

These positions include the notions that God knows the future, he reveals it to the prophets and as such the revealed word cannot be wrong. These archaic metaphors belong to a discarded form of theological discourse and raise far more problems than solutions for the understanding of prophecy. To equate *simpliciter* the words of men with the words of God is to saddle the deity with the errors of men. Talk about God knowing the future is unnecessary even for theological thought as process theology makes so clear. The hermeneutical gymnastics required to give any coherence to the notion of God knowing and revealing the future in the form of predictions to the prophets does no religious community any credit.³⁰

These naturalistic presuppositions lie behind Carroll's investigation into how Israel handled dissonant prophecy. His core thesis is that "dissonance gives rise to hermeneutic." Although taken from Leon Festinger's sociological theory of cognitive dissonance, Carroll's thesis essentially reiterates that of Abraham Kuenen. Rather than discarding unfulfilled prophecy and discrediting the prophet, Israel (particularly the postexilic community) reinterpreted such prophecy and gave it a new, open-ended possibility for the future. According to Carroll, the reinterpretation of dissonant prophecy derived from a previously operating theological commitment that refused to entertain the possibility of prophetic failure. Underlying this system was the firm hope that God would fulfill his promises in his good time; hence, Israel's theology precluded the falsification or ultimate dissonance of true prophecy. This hope was especially tested during the postexilic era when the earlier promises of a glorious restoration failed to come true. Carroll maintains that the greatly reduced character of the restoration engendered dissonance resolution in the form of apocalyptic eschatology.³²

In Ezek 29:17-21, Carroll saw an example of "adaptive prophecy." Because Ezekiel became aware of the dissonance with the earlier prophecy (26:7-14), he used Nebuchadnezzar's experience at Tyre to launch into a new prophecy against Egypt that resolved the tension created by the earlier oracle. According to Carroll, Ezek 29:17-21 shows that the prophets were not bound by their words. They had latitude to modify and even to correct inaccurate statements.³³

Summary. By way of evaluation, Klein, Eichrodt, Barr, and Carroll have either made God subject to the vicissitudes of history or

^{30.} Carroll, When Prophecy Failed, 34-35. See also p. 57.

^{31.} Ibid., 110, 124.

^{32.} Ibid., 115, 204-13. See also Michael Fishbane, "Revelation and Tradition: Aspects of Inner-biblical Exegesis," *JBL* 99 (1980) 354-59.

^{33.} Ibid., 175.

made him so transcendent that he cannot recognizably enter his own universe. In either case God is rendered insignificant for the human attempt to understand history, and human reason by default becomes the arbiter of truth. Moreover, both redefinitions of the divine character contradict the Bible's witness to God's historical irruptions and its authoritative interpretation of his redemptive acts. While Carroll in particular has helpfully drawn attention to the ostensible slippage between promise and fulfillment, his presuppositions (and not the mere awareness of alleged dissonance) have yielded a hermeneutic at variance with the Bible's own presuppositions and hermeneutic.

The Need for a New Approach

With respect to Ezekiel's Tyrian oracles, both conservative and critical scholars have read the pronouncements against Tyre in a literal, historical way. While conservatives have tried to prove that history vindicated Ezekiel, critical scholars have maintained that history clearly impugns Ezekiel. In both cases handling the historical problem is considered the key to interpreting the passage. Both sides, however, seem to have failed to remember YHWH's words to Moses in Num 12:6-8. In contrast to the greater portion of the Pentateuch, prophetic speech is enigmatic and not straightforward.

In reaction to the conservative and critical approaches to Ezekiel's Tyrian oracles, David Thompson suggested that scholars have approached the problem with the wrong questions. As mentioned above, both sides have mistakenly tried to evaluate Ezekiel with the criterion of Deut 18:21-22, but neither Ezekiel nor the compilers of the OT canon apparently thought that his prophetic calling hung in the balance. Inerrancy is not the issue here. Still, Thompson argued for a literal reading of Ezek 26:1-14 and excluded the possibility of a two-stage fulfillment. Although Thompson shared Carroll's distaste for any hermeneutic that reads prophecy as a copy of tomorrow's newspaper, he could not accept Carroll's commitment to the antisupernatural presuppositions of process theology. He called for the formulation of "a hermeneutic of the prophets" that stretches the application of the deuteronomic criterion to encompass more than historically precise fulfillments. He suggested that the NT's interpretation of OT prophecy, which "expands the idea of fulfillment far beyond the limits of the Deuteronomic test," legitimates such a pursuit.34

The self-admitted shortcoming with Thompson's article is that he did not answer the questions that he raised. Although Ezekiel did not

^{34.} Thompson, "A Problem of Unfulfilled Prophecy," 99-103.

seem bothered by the alleged failure of 26:7-14, he nevertheless spoke 29:17-21. Inerrancy may not be the issue, but Thompson has failed to clarify the issue so that the problem of Ezekiel's Tyrian oracles is resolved. If Thompson has called for an expansion of the deuteronomic criterion, then he must concede that Ezek 26:7-14 requires something more than a one-stage historical fulfillment.

There have been some signs of a third approach to the problem. Although Joseph Blenkinsopp agreed with other critical scholars that Ezek 26:7-14 was originally a dissonant prophecy, he suggested that Alexander's conquest provided later scribes with an opportunity to edit Ezekiel's words and to resurrect the prophecy for a new day. More importantly, he observed that Ezek 26:19-21 set Tyre's demise in a larger, mythical context, which linked Tyre with the waters of chaos. Hence, human arrogance violates the created order and thereby contains the seeds of its own destruction. ³⁵ Blenkinsopp did not speculate about whether 26:19-21 came from Ezekiel or an editor; however, he correctly noticed that the final form of Ezekiel 26 expanded Tyre's identity. The temporal judgment of Tyre became a provisional defeat of chaos. Blenkinsopp's comments raise the possibility that Ezek 26:7-14 and 29:17-21 cannot be properly understood without taking into account the mythical imagery in 26:19-21.

In response to Thompson's article, Alvin S. Lawhead contended that the usual symbolism and hyperbole in Hebrew poetry obviate a literal reading of Ezek 26:7-17. Ezekiel employed the standard military imagery to describe the destruction of a city at the hands of an invading army. Thus, "[t]he prophetic intention of this passage is simply to announce the divine purpose to bring down Tyre as an expression of divine judgment."³⁶ Despite this rather reduced interpretation of Ezekiel's inflated imagery, Lawhead has proposed a reading strategy that is sensitive to genre. Prophecy cannot be read with the same demand for precision that is usually expected of historiography (cf. Num 12:6-8). Within the broad genre of prophecy, however, there are numerous subgenres that require special attention. Lawhead did not attempt to identify the prophetic subgenre of which Ezek 26:7-14 and 29:17-21 are a part, namely, oracle against a nation (OAN). Because of this omission, Lawhead flattened the inflated imagery instead of recognizing it as a linguistic vehicle to connect historical events with cosmic reality.

^{35.} Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel* (Interpretation; Louisville: John Knox, 1990) 115-18, 120.

^{36.} Alvin S. Lawhead, "A Problem of Unfulfilled Prophecy in Ezekiel: A Response," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 16 (Fall 1981) 16-19. Compare Lawrence Boadt, *Ezekiel's Oracles against Egypt: A Literary and Philological Study of Ezekiel 29-32* (BibOr 37; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1980) 53.

Summary of Approaches

The above review of the history of interpretation justifies another look at Ezekiel 26 and 29:17-21. The appeal to multiple historical fulfillments and the admission of error ignore the presence and/or suprahistorical significance of the mythological imagery in Ezekiel's OAN. Strangely, conservative and critical scholars have approached the biblical text with the same demand for historical accuracy, but the prophetic books cannot be read as if they were history books, that is, positivistic historiography. Even more than the deuteronomist or the chronicler, the prophetic critique of history was highly selective and theologically interpreted.³⁷ The prophets never intended to produce straightforward historiography, and the abundance of metaphors, eschatological announcements, and mythological allusions offers proof for a different kind of literature.

THE FUNCTION OF THE MYTHOLOGICAL IMAGERY IN EZEKIEL 26

Its Literary Function

In its canonical shape Ezekiel 26 is composed of four oracles or paragraphs that are demarcated by the messenger formula (26:3, 7, 15, 19) and dated to the 11th year of Jehoiachin's captivity. Moreover, the chapter is framed by references to the surging sea that washed over Tyre at YHWH's command (26:3, 19). In both references the surging sea signified judgment on Tyre for the stated crime in v. 2. Between these references is a historical description of Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Tyre and a poetic report of the nations' disbelief at Tyre's fall. Only the third paragraph does not conclude with either the recognition formula or a variation of the divine utterance formula (cf. 26:5, 14, 21).

Because of the juxtaposition of metaphorical and historical language, several scholars have perceived different editorial layers in Ezekiel 26. Keith W. Carley assigned vv. 1-6 to Ezekiel and vv. 7-21 to Ezekiel's disciples. The former exhibits the same form as the oracles in chap. 25, but vv. 7-21 show dependence on vv. 1-6 and other prophecies. Walther Zimmerli also maintained the originality of vv. 1-6, which announced the impending demise of Tyre at the hands of many nations. By specifying Nebuchadnezzar as the agent of judgment, vv. 7-14 expanded the original oracle and made it more

^{37.} Cf. Klein, Ezekiel: The Prophet and His Message, 72-74.

^{38.} Keith W. Carley, *The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel* (CBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974) 175, 178.

precise. Furthermore, vv. 15-18 (influenced by 27:28-36) and 19-21 (influenced by 32:17-32) subsequently expanded vy. 7-14.³⁹ Walther Eichrodt considered the first, third, and fourth paragraphs original because "they are closely and solidly connected with each other, and are characterized by a terseness and vigour of form which is conspicuously absent from the second."40 John W. Wevers, however, accepted the authenticity of vv. 7-14 and assigned vv. 1-6 and 15-21 to a redactor. 41 According to Ronald M. Hals, who specifically responded to Zimmerli, vv. 7-14 should not be considered a later explanation of 1-6. The similarities between these two paragraphs "are more a matter of stereotypical language than expository clarification." Also, the alleged dependence of vv. 15-21 on other OAN can be explained better as "customary language associated with a theme." Although writing for a series devoted to the form-critical analysis of the OT, Hals distanced himself from Zimmerli's proclivity to emend the text. 43 His emphasis was not so much on form-criticism (diachronic analysis) but on genre-criticism (synchronic analysis).

The search for the text's compositional stages has regrettably produced as many theories as theorists, and this unfortunate result of the critical method has come to the attention of the scholarly community. More than a decade ago, Rolf Rendtorff noted that OT scholars have characteristically ignored the final form of the biblical text and instead have tried to isolate the preliterary sources. Although Rendtorff did not repudiate critical results, he contended that the proper subject of exegesis is the final form of the text. In view of his remarks, the framing references to the surging sea suggest that Ezekiel 26 can be better understood as a literary unit that intentionally juxtaposes historical and mythological material.

Its Theological Function

If this is so, then the framing would appear to set the historical references in the second paragraph in a suprahistorical context, but this is a disputed point. In 26:3 the waves of the sea indisputably symbolize the advancing regiments of a human army. According to Anne-

- 39. Walther Zimmerli, Ezekiel 2 (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress) 33-38.
- 40. Eichrodt, Ezekiel, 377.
- 41. John W. Wevers, Ezekiel (NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 147-48.
- 42. Ronald M. Hals, Ezekiel (FOTL 19; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989) 188.
- 43. Ibid., xii.
- 44. Rolf Rendtorff, "Between Historical Criticism and Holistic Interpretation: New Trends in Old Testament Exegesis," *Congress Volume: Jerusalem 1986* (VTSup 40; Leiden: Brill, 1986) 298-303.

marie Ohler, this imagery is appropriate for Tyre's geographic location; hence, the master of the seas would be inundated by a sea of soldiers. Although she admitted that "das Wort 'Flut', *thwm*, und vor allem die Vorstellung vom Aufsteigen des Meeres gegen die Stadt . . . kommen dem Bilde von der Rückkehr der Chaosflut schon näher," Ohler nevertheless contended that here in Ezekiel 26 the metaphor carried no mythological allusions to a disaster of cosmic proportions. ⁴⁵ The referent turned out to be purely historical—that is, the armies of Nebuchadnezzar.

Similarly, Walther Eichrodt seemed to defend a static connection between 26:3 and 26:19-21. On the one hand he maintained that vv. 19-21 "do not . . . expand and enhance the earthly event in such a way as to bring about a transposition of it into a mythical catastrophe on a cosmic scale." Tyre's demise was strictly historical, and the oceanic imagery was rhetorically suitable but nevertheless commonplace. On the other hand he later appeared to reverse this denial by identifying the surging waves in v. 19 not with the Babylonian army but with the mythical subterranean river that separated the land of the living from the realm of the dead. Despite Eichrodt's recognition of the heightening of the sea's identity, he still seemed to equate the underworld with the grave. Without any allusion to an afterlife, the inflated language in 26:19-21 simply and rather reductionistically refers to physical death.

Carol A. Newsom also agreed that Ezekiel made a metaphor out of Tyre's geographic location but argued further that Ezekiel heightened the metaphor in order to invest it with cosmic significance. In chaps. 26 and 27 the images of the sea and merchant ship both recall the maritime source of Tyre's lucrative trade and point to the fleeting security of wealth and its concomitant power. In chap. 28, however, Ezekiel raised the geographic location to a higher level in order to contend that the real cause of Tyre's downfall was not merely a rainy day for which Tyre did not have sufficient cash reserves. Rather, Tyre's advantageous location deceived her into thinking that she was a god. Moreover, the allusions to the Garden of Eden and to the breastplate of the high priest additionally drew out the theological ramifications of Tyre's attitude. God had privileged Tyre with

^{45.} Annemarie Ohler, *Mythologische Elemente im Alten Testament* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1969) 87-88.

^{46.} Eichrodt, Ezekiel, 376.

^{47.} Ibid., 377.

^{48.} Carol A. Newsom, 'A Maker of Metaphors: Ezekiel's Oracles against Tyre," *Int* 38 (1984) 155-57.

^{49.} Ibid., 158-59.

economic success, but Tyre violated the cosmic order by divinizing power politics through commercial monopoly.⁵⁰ Thus, Newsom's attention to the larger context of Ezekiel 26 appreciably demonstrated that Ezekiel combined and reinterpreted familiar imagery in order to set Tyre's judgment on a suprahistorical level.⁵¹

Although Newsom recognized the development of Ezekiel's thought within the Tyrian oracles, there are some features of chap. 26 itself that raise Tyre to a higher plane. First, Nebuchadnezzar is said to come from the north. Second, the surging sea and the descent to the underworld serve as more than metaphors for Nebuchadnezzar's army and the grave. Together, these features make a case for reading chap. 26 on both a historical and a suprahistorical level.

In 26:7 YHWH said that he would bring Nebuchadnezzar from the north (河東) and shake (ガンフ) not only the walls of Tyre but also the islands. To some extent the directional reference is geographic, and the shaking could be literal or psychological. To avoid the Arabian Desert, Nebuchadnezzar had to travel up the Euphrates River, go west into Syria, and then move south into Phoenicia and Palestine. If and when he battered the walls of Tyre, they would crumble, and Tyre's trading partners would be shocked by its collapse. The occurrence of these terms in prophetic literature, however, often has to do with the intersection of terrestrial and celestial phenomena. ⁵²

Brevard S. Childs demonstrated that Jeremiah and Ezekiel transformed (מְשׁבֶּׁשׁ) and especially מַבְּּשׁׁ into technical terms for the return to chaos. He noted that preexilic literature historicized contiguous myths by keeping the northern invader on the historical level and reserving the use of מַשׁבְּיֹד for descriptions of YHWH's theophany. In the exilic period, though, the prophets more fully comprehended the otherworldly character of evil and salvation. Because of their move toward apocalyptic eschatology, "the eschatological usage of מַשְׁבְּיֹד in connection with the final judgment is everywhere evident." While Childs noted that Ezek 26:7 roots the northern invader in a historical army, he also recognized that Ezekiel 38-39 uses מַשְׁבָּי and מַשְׁבִּי in the context of a discussion about the final judgment (e.g., 38:15, 38:19). Hence, a transformation of the enemy takes place within the book,

^{50.} Ibid., 163.

^{51.} For a similar assessment, see Mark R. Strom, *The Place of Ezekiel 28:11-19 in Biblical and Extra-biblical Tradition* (Th.M. thesis, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1983) 18-19, 91-94, 102-03.

^{52.} Cf. Greenberg, *Ezekiel* 21-37, 532.

^{53.} Brevard S. Childs, "The Enemy from the North and the Chaos Tradition," *JBL* 78 (1959) 189.

^{54.} Ibid., 196.

and this transformation indicates that Ezekiel saw more to history than just power politics. In this respect Childs's comments resemble those of Newsom.

To a lesser extent, this transformation can also be seen in chap. 26. According to 26:20 the sea causes Tyre to descend into the pit, but the pit has to represent more than the grave. Elsewhere in Ezekiel's OAN, it is the place where the uncircumcised lie (28:8-10; 31:15-18; 32:18-32). Because both the circumcised and the uncircumcised died, the pit must be the final destination of those whom YHWH judged. Ezek 26:19-21 should be read as part of a larger phenomenon: Ezekiel's heightening of human pride to a cosmic plane. Hence, the surging sea does more than kill the people of Tyre, which would be the extent of Nebuchadnezzar's activity. The sea also condemns the Tyrians to an eternal destiny devoid of the favorable presence of God. The sea has a historical and suprahistorical referent. To be sure, Nebuchadnezzar sent the Tyrians to the grave, but the ungodly character of the Tyrians gave them no hope beyond the grave. 55

This interpretation is confirmed not only by the broader context of Ezekiel's OAN but also by certain statements in 26:15-21. On the one hand vv. 15-18 summarize the international response to Tyre's demise. As noted by Leslie C. Allen, the Mediterranean world did not take delight in Tyre's misfortune; rather, rulers and merchants were shocked by the collapse of the Near East's economic leader. Although Tyre could use its commercial strength to bully trading partners, these same partners realized that their own economic health depended on Tyrian shipping (27:33). A vibrant Tyre ensured intercontinental trade; a weak Tyre had a devastating impact on the flow of goods. If Tyrian supremacy could evaporate in a relatively short period of time, then economic strength proved to be an unreliable basis for stability and security.

On the other hand vv. 19-21 present a spiritual assessment of Tyre's fall. Nebuchadnezzar's imperialism served the larger purpose of a sovereign God who superintends the destiny of nations. According to v. 19, YHWH turned Tyre into a desolate city by sending the waters of Ding against it. In Ezekiel 31 these same cosmic waters nourished the overreaching world tree that YHWH had to cut down

^{55.} The topic of the afterlife in the OT exceeds the purpose of this paper. The dominant consensus that the OT contains only a few late references to a belief in the afterlife has been challenged by Desmond Alexander ("The Old Testament View of Life after Death," *Themelios* 11 [1986] 41-46) and Herbert Chanan Brichto ("Kin, Cult, Land and Afterlife: A Biblical Complex," *HUCA* 44 [1973] 49-50). Brichto explicitly linked the covenantal promise of requital with the mainstream belief in the afterlife.

^{56.} Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48* (WBC 29; Dallas: Word, 1990) 76.

and consign to שָׁבֶּלִי־חֶרֶב There it would lie with the חַלְלִי־חֶרֶב and בַּרֵלִים, and חַלְלֵי־חֶרֶב and חַלְלִי־חֶרֶב and חַלְלִי־חֶרֶב and חַלְלִי־חֶרֶב, or חַלְלִיים, these verses do contain some other terminology that is common with chap. 31—namely, Hiphil forms of אוֹר with YHWH as subject (26:20; 31:16), the prepositional phrase חַלְבוֹי בְּבֵּוֹי בַּבּוֹרְבִי בַּבּוֹי (26:20; 31:14, 16), and the prepositional phrase מַרְיִי תַּרְּרֵי בַּבּוֹי (26:20; 31:14, 16, 18). This otherworldly terminology indicates that Ezekiel did not employ oceanic imagery merely for rhetorical effect. Discerning the cosmic implications of a terrestrial event, he recognized that Tyre's final destiny was an unfavorable afterlife.

Moreover, Ezekiel likened the אָרֶ אָרֶ מְעוֹלְלֵּ to the בֹּרְבוֹת מִעוֹלְלֵּם. Zimmerli maintained that the ancient ruins are "the land of a people who will never again achieve a reversal of their destiny and a return to life," Along with שֵׁרֵלְם עוֹלְם, the reference to the ancient ruins captures the finality and perpetuity of death. While this is true, Keil additionally saw a connection between the שֵׁלְלֵם מוֹלְלֵם מוֹלְלֵם on the one hand and the victims and ruins of the Noahic flood on the other. The symbolic flooding of Tyre recalled the literal flooding of the earth in the days of Noah. Thus, Tyre did not go only to the grave; instead, it joined those evil humans of yesteryear in the place of YHWH's eternal disfavor. Whether or not Ezekiel consciously connected Tyre's judgment with the flood is hard to say, but Keil appreciably noticed that both the flood and the destruction of Tyre were preliminary manifestations of the final, eschatological outpouring of YHWH's judicial wrath.

Ezek 26:19-21 places vv. 7-14 in a larger context, which demands both a historical and a suprahistorical fulfillment. One must recognize that chap. 26 never expected Nebuchadnezzar to mete out the full judgment on Tyre. As a mere human, Nebuchadnezzar could not have enacted the cosmic aspects of YHWH's sentence. This realization affects the interpretation of the so-called corrective prophecy in 29:17-21.

The Relation of Ezekiel 29:17-21 to Ezekiel 26

Written in the 27th year of Jehoiachin's captivity (571 BC), 29:17-21 is the latest dated oracle in the book, and it implies that the earlier oracle in 26:7-14 did not come true during the intervening 15 years. In

^{57.} Zimmerli, Ezekiel 2, 39. See also Ernst Jenni, "Das Wort $^c\bar{o}l\bar{a}m$ Alten Testament," ZAW 65 (1953) 14.

^{58.} Zimmerli, Ezekiel 2, 39.

^{59.} Carl Friedrich Keil, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Ezekiel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970) 1.381.

^{60.} That the Noahic flood was an intrusion of eschatological judgment has been furthered argued by Meredith G. Kline in *Kingdom Prologue* (South Hamilton, Mass.: n.p., 1989) 153.

fact, the failure to plunder Tyre (29:18-19) seems to contradict the promise of plunder in 26:12. Thus, Ezek 29:17-21 would appear to cast a shadow on the integrity of Ezekiel's prophetic calling and raise doubt about the inclusion of his book in the OT canon (cf. Deut 18:21-22).

While 29:18-19 is admittedly difficult, vv. 20-21 rather clearly indicate that Ezekiel discerned additional symbolic depth to Nebuchadnezzar's activity. This symbolic depth could not be fulfilled only by historical events in the sixth century. In v. 20, Nebuchadnezzar is said to have worked on behalf of YHWH, but the references to the surging sea in 26:19-21 and to other mythological images in the Egyptian oracles (e.g., the sea monster and world tree) suggest that YHWH's purpose in these events included a vertical dimension. As indicated by these arlier OAN, Ezekiel was aware from the start that YHWH was up to more than the political ruin of these states; nevertheless, his understanding of YHWH's larger purpose increased with time so that he could address the situation in 571 BC with more clarity.

This can be seen in two ways. First, 29:21 explains the vertical dimension in terms of YHWH's plan for Israel. Neither the siege of Tyre nor Nebuchadnezzar's actions against Egypt caused a horn (i.e., a leader) to emerge in Israel. Israel remained in captivity until 539 BC, and even then it did not regain political autonomy. If 29:21 alludes to Ps 132:17, a Davidic scion of the stature envisioned by the psalmist never materialized in the postexilic era. Concerning the postexilic hope for a return to preexilic conditions, Greenberg admits, "Our perplexity matches that of the medievals who confessed it, then proceeded each in his own way to try and anchor this passage in the framework of biblical history." ⁶² In keeping with Ezekiel's other statements about the future of Israel (28:25-26; 34:22-31; 36:24-38; 37:15-28), which also were not fulfilled during the postexilic period, 29:21 must refer to the eschatological future of God's people. From a NT perspective, the horn is Jesus Christ (Luke 1:69), by whose coming the future has become present. He rules over the new Israel, that is, the church.

Second, the context of 29:17-21 argues for an enlarged perspective. In 30:3, Ezekiel called Nebuchadnezzar's invasion of Egypt a day of YHWH. Instead of submerging Egypt under the waters of Ding as would happen to Tyre, YHWH would dry up the waters of the Nile (30:12), where the sea monster resides (29:3). The imagery may be

^{61.} Drawing on Michael Fishbane's study of innerbiblical exegesis, Daniel I. Block (*The Book of Ezekiel: Chaps. 1-24* [NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997] 24) says that "the book of Ezekiel is replete with examples of what may be characterized as *resumptive exposition*." Whatever dissonance might be acknowledged in 29:17-20, the allusion to and expansion of a previous oracle fits Ezekiel's style.

^{62.} Greenberg, Ezekiel 21-37,616.

different, but the judicial meaning is the same. Egypt's day of judgment, however, is of a piece with the nations' (30:3).

The earlier discussion of the ophanies must come back into view at this point. Throughout the OT YHWH is said to visit the earth for the purpose of demonstrating his power against his enemies and for his people. Both prose and poetic descriptions of such visits mention the cataclysmic effects of YHWH's appearance and the accompanying fear. 63 Whereas ではつ was used in chap. 26, it is not used in 29:17-21. It does not appear in every theophanic description and so must be understood as one of many stock terms in the vocabulary of the ophanies. 64 Regardless of which synonym is selected. YHWH's theophanic thunderings draw attention to the reality of the metaphysical realm. The universe is not closed, and terrestrial events serve the purposes of Israel's transcendent God. YHWH's appearances often respond to the ostensible indifference or brazen opposition of the nations to his redemptive purpose (cf. Zech 1:11, 15). When YHWH shakes the universe, he interrupts the status quo in order to administer a judicial sentence on his enemies. 65 While such language is not reserved exclusively for Gentiles, 66 the administration of judgment usually holds some promise of deliverance for God's people.⁶⁷

The fact that the OT speaks numerous times of such cosmic and terrestrial disturbances points to the proleptic nature of YHWH's irruptions. Similarly, there is not one day of YHWH but many days. Each visitation represents a proleptic intrusion or preliminary manifestation of the final judgment of sin and the eventual glorification of God's people. Hence, these intrusions are part of an eschatological complex that is gradually coming to fruition. At particular moments in history, individual acts of judgment or salvation may be temporally prior to the eschaton but are nevertheless organically related to it. The particularity of the events, however, can give the impression that God's acts are isolated, unrelated, and incomplete. This seems to

- 63. Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *God at Sinai: Covenant and Theophany in the Bible and Ancient Near East* (Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995) 21-28.
- 64. E.g., שלא and ni in Ps 18:8[7], אחה in Exod 19:18, אות in Isa 2:19. For a more thorough review of these and other Hebrew terms that have to do with shaking, see Samuel E. Loewenstamm, *Comparative Studies in Biblical and Ancient Oriental Literatures* (AOAT 204; Kevelaer: Butzon Bercker / Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1980) 175-76.
- 65. See Judg 5:4; Isa 13:13; 24:18; Jer 10:10; 51:29; Ezek 38:20; Joel 2:10; Nah 1:5. Cf. Childs, "Enemy from the North," 189.
 - 66. E.g., Jer 4:24; Amos 9:1.
 - 67. E.g., Ps 68.8-10[7-9]; Joel 4:16[3:16]).
- 68. Willem VanGemeren, *Interpreting the Prophetic Word* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990) 222.
 - 69. Cf. Niehaus, God at Sinai, 301.

be the case with the corrective prophecy in 29:17-21. Ezekiel apparently perceived dissonance between prophetic promise and fulfillment. The provisional character of the judgment on Tyre necessitated another judicial intrusion—all of which, in Ezekiel's thinking, were part of YHWH'S eschatological plan to eliminate the obdurate nations before granting triumph to Israel.⁷⁰

SUMMARY

The solution to the historical problem in Ezekiel's Tyrian oracles does not lie in the traditional appeal to multiple stages of fulfillment or in the critical resignation to error. If historical criteria are the only grounds for a solution, then proponents of both approaches will remain unconvinced by the other's arguments. Moreover, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the subsequent history of Tyre never unfolded as the prophet literally foresaw. While the prophets were preachers in a given historical setting, they also interpreted the intersection of temporal events and the supratemporal purpose of YHWH. Any such attempt to explain the here-and-now (or the hereand-tomorrow) in relation to eternity will include mystery and perceived slippage between promise and fulfillment. The demand for a one-for-one correspondence between prophetic image and historical referent does injustice to the prophetic task. A "hermeneutic of the prophets" must leave room for symbolic and typological depth, which is to say the intention of the divine giver of prophecy.

A better approach to Ezekiel's Tyrian oracles is to appreciate the literary and theological signs in the two pericopes. These stabilize the reader as he or she deals with the prophetic penchant for writing on two levels. While these indicators do favor more than one stage of fulfillment, they steer the reader away from obsession with times and dates. The first stage may be "literal," that is, datable to some time in Ezekiel's life, but the second stage is more spiritual and enduring. The prophets looked for the climactic irruption of God into history (1 Pet 1:10-11), but they had to describe it in metaphorical and even mythological terms. From a NT perspective, the irruption took place in the person of Jesus Christ, whose two comings are separated by at least two millennia. During that time Christians have maintained that the kingdom of God has run concurrently with the present evil age. Therefore, the temporal distance between the stages of fulfillment does not impugn the integrity of the prophet, but it does warn his readers not to hold him to a punctiliar fulfillment of his prophecies.

^{70.} Mark R. Strom, "An Old Testament Background to Acts 12.20-23," NTS 32 (1986) 290.