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VESSELS OF WRATH: A BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL
STUDY OF DIVINE REPROBATING
ACTIVITY

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APPROVAL SHEET

VESSELS OF WRATH: A BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL
STUDY OF DIVINE REPROBATING
ACTIVITY

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For Caitlin, my joy and my crown

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ACCS	Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture
ACW	Ancient Christian Writers
AIL	Ancient Israel and Its Literature
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
ANEM	Ancient Near East Monographs
AOTC	Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries
ApOTC	Apollos Old Testament Commentary
<i>AThR</i>	<i>Anglican Theological Review</i>
<i>ATJ</i>	<i>Ashland Theological Journal</i>
AUS	American University Studies
<i>AUSS</i>	<i>Andrews University Seminary Studies</i>
<i>BBR</i>	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BCOTWP	Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms
BDF	Blass, Friedrich, Albert Debrunner, and Robert W. Funk. <i>A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>BibInt</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation Series
BibOr	Biblica et Orientalia
<i>BN</i>	<i>Biblische Notizen</i>

BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
<i>BRev</i>	<i>Bible Review</i>
<i>BSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
<i>BSOAS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
<i>BT</i>	<i>The Bible Translator</i>
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BWA(N)T	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten (und Neuen) Testament
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
ConBOT	Coniectanea Biblica: Old Testament Series
ConcC	Concordia Commentary
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
<i>CTJ</i>	<i>Calvin Theological Journal</i>
<i>CTM</i>	<i>Concordia Theological Monthly</i>
<i>CTR</i>	<i>Criswell Theological Review</i>
<i>EstBib</i>	<i>Estudios Biblicos</i>
<i>ETL</i>	<i>Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses</i>
<i>EvQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
<i>ExAud</i>	<i>Ex Auditu</i>
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FB	Forschung zur Bibel
FC	Fathers of the Church
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten Und Neuen Testaments

<i>HBT</i>	<i>Horizons in Biblical Theology</i>
HCOT	Historical Commentary on the Old Testament
<i>Hor</i>	<i>Horizons</i>
<i>HS</i>	<i>Hebrew Studies</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
HUT	Hermeneutische Untersuchungen Zur Theologie
<i>HvTSt</i>	<i>Hervormde teologiese studies</i>
IBC	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Preaching and Teaching
<i>IBS</i>	<i>Irish Biblical Studies</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>IDS</i>	<i>In die Skriflig</i>
IECOT	International Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>JAAR</i>	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JBQ</i>	<i>Jewish Bible Quarterly</i>
JBS	Jerusalem Biblical Studies
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JHebS</i>	<i>Journal of Hebrew Scriptures</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JRE</i>	<i>Journal of Religious Ethics</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series

JTISup	Journal for Theological Interpretation, Supplements
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LCC	Library of Christian Classics
LHBOTS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
NAC	New American Commentary
NCB	New Century Bible
NIBC	New International Biblical Commentary
<i>Neot</i>	<i>Neotestamenica</i>
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
NTG	New Testament Guides
NTL	New Testament Library
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>OTE</i>	<i>Old Testament Essays</i>
OTG	Old Testament Guides
ÖTK	Ökumenischer Taschenbuch-Kommentar
OTL	Old Testament Library
<i>OTP</i>	<i>Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> . Edited by James H. Charlesworth. 2 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1983, 1985.
<i>OtSt</i>	<i>Oudtestamentische Studiën</i>
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
<i>Presb</i>	<i>Presbyterion</i>
<i>PRStu</i>	<i>Perspectives in Religious Studies</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>

<i>ResQ</i>	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
<i>RevExp</i>	<i>Review and Expositor</i>
<i>RTL</i>	<i>Revue théologique de Louvain</i>
<i>RTR</i>	<i>Reformed Theological Review</i>
<i>SBT</i>	Studies in Biblical Theology
<i>Scr</i>	<i>Scripture</i>
<i>SHBC</i>	Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary
<i>SJOT</i>	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
<i>SR</i>	<i>Studies in Religion</i>
<i>SSN</i>	Studia Semitica Neerlandica
<i>ST</i>	<i>Studia Theologica</i>
<i>StBibLit</i>	Studies in Biblical Literature (Lang)
<i>STI</i>	Studies in Theological Interpretation
<i>TJ</i>	<i>Trinity Journal</i>
<i>TNTC</i>	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
<i>TOTC</i>	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
<i>TWOT</i>	<i>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</i> . Edited by R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke. 2 vols. Chicago: Moody Press, 1980.
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>UNT</i>	Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
<i>USQR</i>	<i>Union Seminary Quarterly Review</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
<i>VTSup</i>	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
<i>WBC</i>	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
<i>WUNT</i>	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZBK	Zürcher Bibelkommentare
ZECNT	Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>
<i>ZTK</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

PREFACE

The following project is in many respects a labor of love. I do not mainly mean to refer to my own love, but rather to the love that has been shown to me by many persons apart from whom this work would not have been possible. First of all, I refer to the love of professors who invested in me and who taught me how to read the Bible. I would specifically like to thank Tom Nettles, Steve Wellum, Peter Gentry, and Jarvis Williams for their gracious instruction and for their personal generosity. In addition, I owe a debt of gratitude to Bruce Ware and to Duane Garrett, who instructed me as professors and who also served on my committee. Lastly, I extend my deepest and warmest thanks to Tom Schreiner, who not only provided me with expert guidance throughout my doctorate, but also befriended me and my family. I will always consider it the honor of a lifetime to have studied under Tom, and I will continuously pray that my own work might reflect the immense blessing the Lord has granted to me in the form of Dr. Schreiner's tutelage and example. "To whom much is given, much will be required."

Second, this project has been sustained by the love of friends who have supported me in a variety of ways. I thank friends like Mike and Emily Lambelet, Kenny and Joy Oliver, Seth Osbourne, Adam and Aly Jacobs, Ryan and Laura Patty, John and Blanca Baker, Doug and Katie Renfro, and Dustin and Rebekah Felcman, who I know have prayed for me as I worked on this dissertation. I am thankful for fellow doctoral students like Andrés Vera, Paul Lamicela, Coye Still, Hyogil Kong, Jim Dernell, Jones Ndzi, and others. I would especially like to thank Jarrett Ford for providing careful feedback on many of these chapters. I am also grateful for many other friends at Clifton Baptist Church through whom I have often received spiritual refreshment. Lastly, I would like to thank Mon, Trina, Marco, Nic, Ito, Franco, Mara, Yosu, and Nica. Though they

will never read this, I hope they know how grateful to God I am for their friendship.

Third, the love of my family has made this project possible in a very literal sense. My parents, George and Candy Blaylock, have supported me throughout my seminary career through their financial generosity, their encouragement, and their prayers. I am so grateful to them, and to my siblings, Jon and Micki Blaylock. My daughters, Addi and Ellie, gladdened my heart time and again whenever I was feeling discouraged. Moreover, they sacrificed time together to afford me the space I needed to focus on writing and research. I only hope that they too will one day be proud of the kind of scholar that their Daddy has become through this process. Most importantly, to my wife Caitlin—I cannot adequately express my thanks to you for all your sacrifices which made this possible. God’s goodness announces itself to me daily in your sweet companionship. I love you, my dear wife. I hope I have made you proud.

Finally, I know that all these are precious reflections of the perfect love of the triune God, who graciously set his love upon me before the foundation of the world and who saved me from my sins. To be so loved by God is a joy beyond words. It is God’s love that has sustained me through the years and has given me some confidence that I might be used by him to bring clarity to a difficult subject. As such, I consider this work to be both a testament of God’s love towards me, as well as an offering of love for him. I only pray that God would be honored by this small, unworthy sacrifice.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Taken at face value, both the Old Testament (OT) and the New Testament (NT) appear to contain passages that depict God deliberately influencing individuals and groups towards evil behavior for which said persons are subsequently punished. Old Testament examples include accounts such as the hardening of Pharaoh's heart in Exodus, YHWH's enticement of King Ahab in 1 Kings 22:19–23, and the divine command given to David to take an apparently sinful census in 2 Samuel 24.¹ But perhaps even more well-known than these is the example given in the ninth chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans, wherein the apostle seems to suggest that some persons are predestined by God to refuse to believe in Christ and to be eternally condemned for their sins. While one might assume that these are isolated instances or that in each case God is merely repaying sin with more sin, a thorough examination of the Bible's testimony to this phenomenon paints a different picture: rather than being a peripheral or uniform concept, the Christian canon seems to portray this type of divine agency as being both significant and multifarious.

Need for the Study

In this study, I refer to the form of divine influence described above as Divine Reprobing Activity (DRA). I define DRA as *any exercise of divine agency intended to efficaciously influence responsible creatures towards behavior that merits divine*

¹ Siebert goes so far as to argue that the God portrayed in the OT is an “unfair afflictor” and a “divine deceiver” precisely because of passages like these. See Eric A. Seibert, *Disturbing Divine Behavior: Troubling Old Testament Images of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 28–32.

condemnation, so that they do in fact experience God's judgment. To my knowledge, there has been very little work done within the field of biblical theology (BT) that directly treats this subject. Admittedly, much ink has been spilt on issues *related* to DRA, especially from within the discipline of systematic theology (ST). In particular, theologians have been wrestling with the doctrines of predestination and reprobation for centuries.² Because these concepts have been so thoroughly debated by systematic theologians throughout church history, it might be tempting to conclude that DRA requires no further investigation. However, I would argue that such a conclusion is premature and that a need for a study of this kind still exists for at least the following reasons. First, although the topics of predestination and reprobation have been the subject of numerous theological investigations, these are not substitutes for an analysis of DRA itself. While negative predestination may be described as a form of DRA, it cannot be said to be co-extensive with the concept. On the contrary, the Christian canon includes many examples wherein God's negative influence is posited without any reference to eternal condemnation. For those interested in understanding the Bible on its own terms, each of these passages merits careful, exegetical investigation, which is not always present in works focused primarily on the doctrine of predestination. Thus, the existing treatises on predestination do not meet the need for a thorough study of the broader phenomenon that is DRA. Second, I would argue that a focus on the doctrine of predestination has often led theologians to "flatten" the Scriptures and to overlook the different nuances that may distinguish one biblical author's perspective on DRA from another's. In other words, the overarching concern to either validate or invalidate certain theological formulations regarding God's decrees has at times led theologians to misrepresent the meaning of particular biblical passages or to overlook the complexity of

² See chap. 2, s.v. "Predestination."

the Scripture's witness to DRA.³ Furthermore, these discussions have often been guided more by philosophical/logical argumentation than by the commitment to understand what each biblical author intended to say about the subject of God's negative influence. For these reasons, the existing theological treatments of predestination do not meet the need for a biblical-theological analysis of DRA-texts. Finally, as already mentioned, I am unaware of works within the field of biblical theology (BT) that provide an exhaustive, detailed investigation of the subject of DRA. While work has been done on election (especially in relation to Paul and to early Judaism), on divine and human agency, on divine hardening, and on Romans 9–11, few monographs within BT have specifically explored the subject of God's agency as it is expressed in moving certain persons to wicked behavior specifically so that they might be judged. In addition, the scholars who have interacted with DRA to some degree have tended to treat this divine activity as though it were one-dimensional and have often denied or minimized the existence of its more distasteful strands for less than convincing reasons. Because I do not know of any existing studies that have attempted (1) to specifically examine the phenomenon of DRA throughout the canon, (2) to account for the different presentations of this activity by the biblical authors, and (3) to adopt a biblical-theological approach to the issue, I am persuaded that such a study would be a useful contribution to the field of BT.

³ Both proponents and opponents of the doctrine of reprobation fall into this trap. On the one hand, proponents of reprobation "flatten" the Scriptures when they read every DRA-text as though it were speaking of eternal condemnation. As I hope to demonstrate, not every DRA-text has eternal condemnation in view; in fact, the Bible contains many passages that describe God leading individuals and groups into punishments that are not presented as carrying over into the eternal state (ex., physical death, loss of land, further sins). But on the other hand, opponents of negative predestination "flatten" the Scriptures in a different direction when they claim that God's negative influence is always intended as a means of punishing sin. On the contrary, my analysis of the biblical texts shows that God is sometimes portrayed as engaging in DRA for reasons other than a desire for retribution.

Aims and Thesis

The general aim of my dissertation is to provide a thorough, biblical-theological study of DRA within the Christian canon. As already mentioned, I define DRA as any exercise of divine agency intended to efficaciously influence responsible creatures towards behavior that merits divine condemnation, so that they do in fact experience God's judgment. In this work, I argue that *the Christian canon does not present DRA as an insignificant or monolithic concept; instead, the biblical authors showcase both the significance and complexity of DRA in a variety of ways*. In order to prove this thesis, I attempt to demonstrate two key points: (1) the Bible provides multivalent descriptions of DRA so that specific examples of this divine activity can be classified as retributive or non-retributive,⁴ mediated or immediate,⁵ passive or active,⁶

⁴ On the one hand, retributive DRA refers to the exercise of reprobating divine agency that is motivated by the Lord's desire to repay individuals or groups for their previous, sinful actions. Judg 9:23–24 provides a good example, for these verses describe the Lord sending an evil spirit “between Abimilech and the lords of Shechem,” setting them against one another, *because* they committed violence against Gideon's sons. On the other hand, by the term non-retributive, I mean to describe instances of DRA wherein God's reprobating activity is not grounded in his desire to repay individuals or groups for previous, sinful actions; instead, the negative divine influence is portrayed as an intentional choice made by God for reasons other than the pursuit of retribution. By claiming that DRA can be non-retributive, I am *not* positing that the biblical authors depict God as acting unjustly. I am merely arguing that some passages refer to DRA without grounding God's actions in his desire for retribution. I will argue that the hardening of Pharaoh's heart in Exod 4–14 and Paul's description of non-election in Rom 9:14–23 serve as prime examples of this type of DRA.

⁵ Mediated DRA refers to reprobating activity that involves a mediating agent through whom/which God brings about his desired effect upon the reprobated individual or group. So for instance, Isaiah's ministry (Isa 6:6–13) should be understood as a mediated type of DRA, because it is through the prophet's ministry that the Lord brings about His reprobating purpose against Israel. In contrast, immediate DRA refers to instances in which no other agent is involved and God is depicted as acting more directly on an individual or group. So for example, when the Lord is said to “harden” the hearts or spirits of certain persons in texts like Exod 10:1, Deut 2:30, Josh 11:20, and others, the biblical authors seem to envision an immediate expression of DRA.

⁶ Passive DRA is reflected in those instances wherein the Lord is depicted as intentionally securing the condemnation of an individual or a group by withholding that which would have allowed the reprobate to avoid wicked behavior and subsequent judgment. One example of this type of DRA can be seen in Deut 29:3 (MT), wherein God is depicted as withholding moral faculties from Israel and thereby ensuring that they would break the covenant. But in addition to this form of DRA, the biblical authors also depict God as exerting influence by taking positive actions in order to bring about the condemnation of certain individuals or groups. I call this active DRA since it involves influence through action rather than

non-eternal or eternal,⁷ and (2) the Bible attests to the significance of DRA by referring to the concept repeatedly across numerous books and biblical genres, by integrally associating DRA with the outworking of salvation history, by using the concept of DRA in relation to individual eschatology, and by presenting DRA as a crucial means through which God's character is revealed.

Methodology

This work is intended to be a thorough, biblical-theological study of a particular kind of divine agency attested throughout the Scriptures. However, the nature of the project raises certain questions. First, what methods will be employed to determine which texts to include within the scope of the project? And second, given the debates surrounding the field of BT, what does it mean that the study attempts to be biblical-theological?

Scope of the Project

A few comments must be made regarding the scope of this study. To begin with, my interest lies with the shorter canon composed of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments as received by today's Protestant churches.⁸ And because this

through intentional inaction. Perhaps the most famous example of active DRA is God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart (cf. Exod 7:3).

⁷ Non-eternal DRA refers to reprobating activity which leads to an intended penalty that is experienced only on the mortal plane of existence and is not depicted as a never-ending punishment. As I will demonstrate, the vast majority of OT examples of DRA fall into this category. Perhaps more controversially, I will argue that the canon also includes examples of DRA wherein the biblical authors see a punishment of eternal duration as the intended result of God's reprobating work. These are found almost exclusively in the NT and are in fact the dominant form of DRA in the second half of the Christian canon.

⁸ While the apocryphal materials may have provided a few additional examples of DRA, it is unlikely that the overall thesis argued in this study would have been greatly impacted had I chosen to treat the canon accepted by the Catholic church. In fact, I anticipate that an analysis of such kind would only strengthen the thesis argued here, as each additional passage could potentially introduce novel descriptions of DRA, thereby reinforcing the claim that DRA is multifarious.

project is meant to be a thorough, biblical-theological study, the attempt will be made to include every relevant passage from within this corpus. Given this goal, it will be important that the study *includes* all the DRA-texts from within the canon while also *excluding* all texts that may describe similar-but-distinct phenomena. But what criteria can be used to determine whether or not a passage actually describes DRA?

While some might argue for a lexical approach to the problem, it seems more appropriate to use the definition of DRA itself as a guide for determining which texts to include. Again, DRA can be defined as *any exercise of divine agency intended to efficaciously influence responsible creatures towards behavior that merits divine condemnation, so that they might in fact experience God's judgment*. Thus, three criteria may be designated in order to decide whether or not DRA is attested in a text. Divine Reprobing Activity may be detected only when a biblical text states or suggests that: (1) in some form or fashion, God intentionally influences an agent or group of agents towards behavior considered by the biblical author to be sinful; (2) an agent or a group of agents engages (or will engage) in the sinful activity towards which they were divinely influenced; *and* (3) God punishes (or intends to punish) said agent(s) for engaging in the condemnable activities towards which they were divinely influenced.

In what follows, these three criteria will be used to identify cases of DRA and to prevent the inclusion of passages that do not bear direct witness to the concept. For example, these criteria would serve to exclude those texts that speak of God's sovereignty over human sins without referring to condemnation.⁹ Such passages may meet the first two criteria by describing God's superintendence of human sins, but they fail to meet the third criteria since they do not claim that God's influence was intended to lead to condemnation. In addition, these criteria also rule out passages that may be taken to

⁹ To provide just one example, see Gen 50:15–21.

logically entail DRA. So for instance, some have deduced the existence of reprobating influence from verses that describe divine election, predestination, and God's sovereignty.¹⁰ While such argumentation may be reasonable and theologically sound, it should not serve as the basis for a biblical-theological study of DRA since the explication of logical entailments goes beyond the tasks of the discipline as it is commonly understood. Thus, by using the three criteria outlined above, the scope of the study will effectively be limited to include only those passages that directly bear witness to DRA.

Finally, as the criteria to be employed already suggest, this project approaches DRA conceptually rather than lexically.¹¹ In other words, a text's relevance to this study will not be determined on the basis of the presence or absence of particular word groups. While lexical studies have their value, a word-study approach would be inappropriate for the purposes of this project since there is no reason to believe that the biblical authors used a limited set of terms to refer to God's reprobating influence. Thus, any attempt to trace DRA by conducting a series of word studies inevitably risks excluding data pertinent to the analysis of DRA,¹² while also increasing the likelihood of including texts

¹⁰ See for instance Patrick Hues Mell, *Predestination and the Saints' Perseverance, Stated and Defended from the Objections of Arminians, in a Review of Two Sermons, Published by Rev. Russell Reneau* (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle, 2003), 28–37; B. B. Warfield, "Predestination," in *Biblical and Theological Studies*, ed. Samuel G. Craig (Philadelphia: P & R, 1952), 302; Geerhardus Vos, "The Biblical Importance of the Doctrine of Preterition," *Presb* 70, no. 36 (1900): 9–10; Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 335–39; Peter Martyr Vermigli, *Predestination and Justification: Two Theological Loci*, trans. Frank A. James III, in vol. 8 of *The Peter Martyr Library* (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2003), 17–18, 23–25. As a point of clarification, I am not suggesting that the biblical data on reprobation was unimportant to these figures; instead, I am only making the point that logical deduction from other doctrines played an important role in their arguments.

¹¹ For a brief discussion of the benefits of a conceptual approach to thematic studies, see Brian S. Rosner, "Biblical Theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity and Diversity of Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 6–8.

¹² As my study will demonstrate, determining what lexemes to include would be very difficult since the biblical authors describe DRA in a variety of ways. Texts like Judg 2:1–5, 1 Sam 2:25, 2 Sam 24:1, Isa 10:5–12, Ezek 20:25–26, Prov 16:4, John 17:12, Acts 7:39–43, and 1 Pet 2:8 each bear witness to DRA without having much in the way of relevant lexical overlap. Moreover, a lexical study focused for instance on hardening language or blinding language (which are perhaps the most famous examples of word groups associated with DRA) is likely to overlook all these passage, along with several others, since

that describe related phenomena without actually depicting DRA.¹³

Biblical-Theological Method

In addition to delineating the scope of the project, what is meant by a “biblical-theological study” must also be unpacked. As is well known, the term “biblical theology” is not one that has a universal meaning.¹⁴ Nevertheless, my investigation of DRA fits

none of them make use of hardening or blinding vocabulary.

¹³ For example, one might try to conduct a study of DRA by analyzing every passage in which a term for “hardening” modifies a word that describes the human decision-making faculty (i.e., “heart,” “mind,” “spirit,” etc.). But this would lead to the inclusion of verses like Mark 6:52 and 8:17, where the verb *πωρόω* is used to describe the hearts of the disciples. However, these texts have little bearing on a study of DRA because there is no reason to believe that the hardening occurred *so that* the disciples might be condemned. In fact, is it not even clear that God is intended to be understood as the agent behind the hardening. Similar comments apply to 2 Cor 3:14 and Rom 2:5: in neither passage is it clearly suggested that hardness of heart was brought about by God’s influence in order to secure divine condemnation. In other words, it is a mistake to conflate DRA with mere hardening terminology, as the presence of the latter does not always indicate the presence of the former. For examples of scholars whose conclusions regarding DRA have been unduly influenced by non-DRA texts that use hardening language, see Robert Shank, *Elect in the Son: A Study of the Doctrine of Election* (Springfield, MO: Westcott, 1970), 147–48; N. T. Wright, *Christian Origins and the Question of God*, vol. 4, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 1225–27; Edward P. Meadors, *Idolatry and the Hardening of the Heart: A Study in Biblical Theology* (New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 152–53; Heikki Räisänen, *The Idea of Divine Hardening: A Comparative Study of the Notion of Divine Hardening, Leading Astray and Inciting to Evil in the Bible and the Qur’ān*, Publications of the Finnish Exegetical Society 25 (Helsinki, Finland: Kirjapaino Oy Savo, 1972), 83; Brian J. Abasciano, *Paul’s Use of the Old Testament in Romans 9.10-18*, LNTS 317 (London: T & T Clark, 2011), 213.

¹⁴ Several works provide an overview and an analysis of various proposals regarding the field of biblical theology. See for instance Edward W. Klink III and Darian R. Lockett, *Understanding Biblical Theology: A Comparison of Theory and Practice* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 13–25; James K. Mead, *Biblical Theology: Issues, Methods, and Themes* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 61–120; D. A. Carson, “Current Issues in Biblical Theology: A New Testament Perspective.” *BBR* 5 (1995): 18–26; Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible*, paperback ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 3–29; Andreas J. Köstenberger, “The Present and Future of Biblical Theology,” *Themelios* 37, no. 3 (2012): 447–59; Charles H. H. Scobie, “The Challenge of Biblical Theology,” *TynBul* 42, no. 1 (1991): 31–49; James Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology: An Old Testament Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 27–51, 312–29, 362–438. And for more recent discussions regarding the meaning and nature of BT, see Bernd Janowski, “Biblical Theology,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Studies*, ed. Judith M. Lieu and J. W. Rogerson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Andrew David Naselli, “What Do We Mean by ‘Biblical Theology’?,” in *40 Questions about Biblical Theology*, by Jason S. DeRouchie, Oren Martin, and Andrew Naselli, 40 Questions (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2020), 19–27; Duane A. Garrett, *The Problem of the Old Testament: Hermeneutical, Schematic and Theological Approaches* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020), 139–58; Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “Stauology, Ontology, and the Travail of Biblical Narrative: Once More unto the Biblical Theological Breach,” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 23, no. 2 (2019): 10–29; Stephen

within the particular stream of scholarship that understands BT to be (1) exegetical, (2) inductive, (3) canonical, (4) conscious of inner-biblical exegesis, and (5) a bridge-discipline between exegesis and ST.¹⁵

Exegetical rigor. In keeping with Gabler’s original proposal,¹⁶ many scholars agree that biblical theology must maintain a particularly tight relationship with the biblical texts.¹⁷ So for instance, Carson says that BT involves “a generally closer

J. Wellum, “Retrieval, Christology, and *Sola Scriptura*,” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 23, no. 2 (2019): 39–43; Mark J. Boda, *The Heartbeat of Old Testament Theology: Three Creedal Expressions*, Acadia Studies in Bible and Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 151–82; Scott N. Callaham, “Must Biblical and Systematic Theology Remain Apart? Reflection on Paul van Imschoot,” *Journal for the Evangelical Study of the Old Testament* 5, no. 1 (2016): 1–26; Konrad Schmid, *A Historical Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, trans. Peter Altmann (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 21–60, 94–127; Carey Walsh and Mark W. Elliott, eds., *Biblical Theology: Past, Present, and Future* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2016).

¹⁵ My understanding of BT shares much in common with many evangelical or confessional proposals. This is perhaps unsurprising, given that I hold an evangelical or confessional view of the Bible. As Stendahl correctly recognizes, one of the key reasons for the diversity of views on BT is that “very different theological and philosophical presuppositions are necessarily involved.” Krister Stendahl, “Biblical Theology, Contemporary,” in *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 418. Thus, among scholars who share theological convictions regarding the nature of the Bible, it would seem natural that their definitions of BT might have more in common. Nevertheless, this point should not be pressed too far since (1) some of these descriptions of BT are shared by scholars who do not hold to a high view of the Bible’s authority and (2) not all evangelical or confessional scholars would agree with this overall description of BT.

¹⁶ According to Gabler, the first task of BT involves carefully discerning “the sacred ideas” of the biblical authors, which requires “the legitimate interpretation of passages pertinent to this procedure.” John Sandys-Wunsch and Laurence Eldredge, “J. P. Gabler and the Distinction between Biblical and Dogmatic Theology: Translation, Commentary, and Discussion of His Originality,” *SJT* 33, no. 1 (1980): 140. He specifically discusses the need to interpret these texts in their original languages and with a sensitivity to each author’s own idiolect. In addition, Gabler decries those “who use the sacred words to tear what pleases them from its context in the sacred Scriptures” (134–44). Together, these observations lead to the conclusion that Gabler thought of BT as a discipline with an inseparable connection to exegesis.

¹⁷ While text-centered approaches to BT seem to dominate the field today, some definitions of BT in the past have stressed a concern for uncovering the events or the theologies that lie “behind the text.” For examples, see G. Ernest Wright, *God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital*, SBT 8 (London: SCM, 1952), 44, 55; Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (1948; repr., East Peoria, IL: Banner of Truth, 2012), 5; William Wrede, “The Task and Methods of ‘New Testament Theology,’” in *The Nature of New Testament Theology: The Contributions of William Wrede and Adolf Schlatter*, SBT 25 (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1973), 68–116. In contrast to these scholars, I would argue that BT should be focused primarily on the task of understanding the meaning of the biblical text itself.

connection to the Bible than is usually reflected in systematic theology,”¹⁸ and that “it is impossible to have any sort of responsible biblical theology apart from careful, responsible exegesis.”¹⁹ Rosner also emphasizes that close connection when he states that BT “subscribes to the primacy of the text.”²⁰ Tom Schreiner concurs, saying that “virtually all would agree that fundamental to any biblical theology is the studying of the text in its historical context.”²¹ Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum share this perspective, calling BT a “hermeneutical discipline” and arguing that its task is to “exegete texts in their own context and then, in light of the entire Canon, to examine the unfolding nature of God’s plan and carefully think through the relationship between *before* and *after* in that plan which culminates in Christ.”²² James Barr goes so far as to say that the work of biblical theology is actually a “level” within the normal activity of exegesis “rather than a special and separate activity.”²³ Because BT as an academic discipline requires its

¹⁸ Carson, “Current Issues,” 20.

¹⁹ D. A. Carson, “Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 91.

²⁰ Rosner, “Biblical Theology,” 5.

²¹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 884–85.

²² Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 34; see also G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 9. Köstenberger however notes the potential downside of making the biblical metanarrative central to one’s conception of the task of BT. See Köstenberger, “Present and Future of Biblical Theology,” 458.

²³ Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology*, 60. For others who also believe BT should be an exegetically oriented discipline, see Adolf Schlatter, “The Theology of the New Testament and Dogmatics,” in *Nature of New Testament Theology*, 117–66; John H. Sailhamer, *The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition and Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 63–64; Francis Watson, *Text and Truth: Redefining Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 1–17; Scott J. Hafemann, “What’s the Point of Biblical Theology? Reflections Prompted by Brevard Childs,” in Walsh and Elliott, *Biblical Theology*, 119; Gerhard Hasel, *New Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 199; Mark W. Elliott, introduction to *Biblical Theology*, x; Stendahl, “Biblical Theology, Contemporary,” 422; David J. MacLeod, “Biblical Theology: An Evangelical Approach,” *Chafer Theological Seminary Journal* 12, no. 2 (2006): 40; Boda, *Heartbeat of*

practitioners to pay close attention to the text of Scripture, exegesis becomes a key component for any biblical-theological pursuit.²⁴

In keeping with this well-established trait of BT, this study of DRA will be grounded in the exegesis of particular biblical texts. Specifically, after determining the relevance of a passage through the use of the three criteria described above, I will proceed to examine its description of DRA by reading the text according to its literal/intended sense.²⁵ This will involve attending to (1) text-critical considerations, (2) normal procedures of grammatical-historical exegesis,²⁶ (3) the passage's immediate

Old Testament Theology, 160–62; Garrett, *Problem of the Old Testament*, 139–41.

²⁴ Not all scholars however are satisfied with the metaphor of “distance” as a means of distinguishing BT from ST. Vanhoozer for instance laments Carson’s suggestion that ST is “further removed from the biblical text” than BT. However, on closer inspection, it seems as though Vanhoozer’s real concern is to combat a disparaging attitude towards ST that sometimes rears its ugly head in departments of biblical studies. Furthermore, his main complaint is registered against the assumption that ST results in conclusions that are less faithful to the biblical texts than those of BT. Thus, he believes it is important to clarify that “doctrine is faithful to biblical discourse not when it simply repeats the same terms in different contexts but when it renders the same judgments by using different terms.” Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “Is the Theology of the New Testament One or Many? Between (the Rock Of) Systematic Theology and (the Hard Place Of) Historical Occasionalism,” in *Reconsidering the Relationship between Biblical and Systematic Theology in the New Testament*, WUNT (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 27. However, it seems to me that the metaphor of distance need not refer to faithfulness at all, and thus, need not be abandoned. In fact, I would argue that the notion of distance helps distinguish the disciplines properly, so long as it is borne in mind that the metaphor refers to the level of interaction with particular texts rather than with fidelity to the Scriptures as a whole. That is to say, “closer” refers to the level of interaction and engagement with the particulars of any given text, not the results of that interaction. For Vanhoozer’s argument, see Vanhoozer, 17–38.

²⁵ With regard to the meaning of “literal,” I agree with Provan when he says that “to read Scripture ‘literally’ . . . means to read it in accordance with its various, apparent communicative intentions as a collection of texts from the past now integrated into one Great Story, doing justice to such realities as literary convention, idiom, metaphor, and typology or figuration.” Iain Provan, *The Reformation and the Right Reading of Scripture* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2017), 85–86.

²⁶ I do not treat the term “historical” in the phrase “grammatical-historical exegesis” as referring primarily to the study of past events in general; instead, by “historical,” I mean to refer to the original intended sense of a biblical passage. Thus, I use the term “grammatical-historical exegesis” in a way similar to Johann August Ernesti’s use of the term. For Ernesti’s description of grammatical-historical exegesis, see Johann Ernesti, *Elements of Interpretation*, trans. Moses Stuart (Andover, MA: Flagg & Gould, 1822), 14–20; John H. Sailhamer, “Johann August Ernesti: The Role of History in Biblical Interpretation,” *JETS* 44, no. 2 (2001): 201–5.

literary context and genre, (4) any potential insights from speech-act theory, (5) a text's use of other biblical passages, and (6) any relevant implications from the passage's canonical context. My assumption is that by attending to these different factors,²⁷ one may approach the goal of exegesis, which is to understand the original author's intention.²⁸ Thus, in keeping with the exegetical character of BT, I will attempt to understand and describe what each biblical author intended to communicate with regards to DRA.²⁹

Inductive approach. According to many, BT as a discipline is devoted to the inductive study of the biblical texts³⁰; in other words, biblical theologians generally

²⁷ Though these factors will play a role in my interpretation of every relevant passage, I do not treat these as equal steps that must be discussed in every instance. The reason for this is because I do not assume that each of these factors will be equally important for every single text to be interpreted. Instead, different amounts of attention will be given to one or more of these factors depending on the demands of the text at hand. So for instance, in the exegetical discussions to follow, text-critical problems will only be addressed when the differences between textual witnesses actually impact a passage's testimony to DRA. When this is not the case, little-to-no space will be devoted to addressing problems related to a passage's textual history.

²⁸ For various affirmations that the hermeneutical priority of the reader is understanding the author's intention, see Watson, *Text and Truth*, 95–124; Ernesti, *Elements of Interpretation*, 2–3; Kit Barker, *Interpretation as Divine Discourse: Speech Act Theory, Dual Authorship, and Theological Interpretation*, JTISup 16 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016), 66–82; Provan, *Reformation and Right Reading of Scripture*, 81–106; Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge*, Landmarks in Christian Scholarship (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 229–63; Sailhamer, *Meaning of the Pentateuch*, 150–60; Jeannine K. Brown, *Scripture as Communication: Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 57–78. Furthermore, I also share Beale's presupposition that "the divine authorial intentions communicated through human authors are accessible to contemporary readers." Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 5.

²⁹ As Schreiner correctly points out, "Understanding the meaning of human authors is fundamental to biblical theology." Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 887. See also Stendahl, "Biblical Theology, Contemporary," 422.

³⁰ Some in fact believe that it is this quality in particular that makes the field so useful. See James M. Hamilton Jr., *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 47.

attempt to let the Bible itself set the theological agenda.³¹ So for instance, Hafemann and Schultz assert as one of ten theses on BT that “biblical theology should develop its theological categories inductively from the biblical text, not from a predetermined systematic framework.”³² Likewise, Gentry and Wellum claim that BT must be *intratextual*: “We are to read the Scripture *on its own terms*, i.e., *intratextually*. Scripture is to be interpreted in light of its own categories and presentation since Scripture comes to us as divinely given, coherent, and unified.”³³ Carson agrees, stating that the biblical theologian “must in the first instance seek to deploy categories and pursue an agenda set by the text itself.”³⁴ With respect to NT Theology in particular, Stuhlmacher’s very first principle is that “a theology of the New Testament must allow the New Testament itself to dictate its theme and presentation.”³⁵ And as far as Hart is concerned, “The distinctive contribution which biblical theology makes (and the key point of its value for systematic theology) is precisely this, that in its engagement with the text as a whole, its concern is to allow the text’s own categories, concerns and emphases to speak.”³⁶ Thus, there seems to be somewhat broad agreement that BT involves approaching the biblical texts in a fundamentally inductive manner.³⁷

³¹ Rosner, “Biblical Theology,” 5.

³² Hafemann, “What’s the Point?,” 119.

³³ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 33.

³⁴ Carson, “Current Issues,” 29.

³⁵ Stuhlmacher, *Biblical Theology*, 3.

³⁶ Trevor Hart, “Systematic—In What Sense?,” in *Out of Egypt: Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig Bartholomew et al., Scripture and Hermeneutics 5 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 345.

³⁷ For others who agree that BT prioritizes an inductive approach to the biblical texts, see Schlatter, “Theology of the New Testament,” 161; Craig Bartholomew, “Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation: Introduction,” in Bartholomew et al., 1; Boda, *Heartbeat of OT Theology*, 152; Gerhard F. Hasel, *Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 194–96; John Goldingay, *Biblical Theology: The God of the Christian Scriptures* (Downers Grove,

As we have seen, BT practitioners share a common concern to allow the Bible to dictate what subjects are to be studied and how they are to be studied. In order to pursue this goal, scholars have developed a number of different methods and approaches. Many have advocated for the usefulness of thematic approaches to BT.³⁸ As Scobie notes, “Studies of particular themes or topics which are traced through both Old and New Testaments are clearly a form of Biblical Theology.”³⁹ In fact, many whole-Bible BT’s have famously attempted to demonstrate that a single, central theme unifies the entire canon.⁴⁰ While scholars debate the prudence of seeking the Bible’s “center,” few have denied the plausibility of thematic studies in general.⁴¹ Nevertheless, in order to remain truly inductive, thematic studies must (1) demonstrate that the theme under consideration is actually attested by the biblical texts,⁴² and they must (2) allow each biblical author to

IL: IVP Academic, 2016), 17; MacLeod, “Biblical Theology,” 28; Naselli, “What Do We Mean by ‘Biblical Theology?’,” 25–26.

³⁸ As Scobie points out, “Any proposal for a Biblical Theology based on the whole Bible and adopting a thematic approach faces the inevitable criticism that it will in effect impose a false unity on the biblical material which will thus be seriously distorted, and that it will thereby undervalue the rich diversity of the biblical witness.” Charles H. H. Scobie, “The Structure of Biblical Theology,” *TynBul* 42, no. 1 (1991): 185. However, as he goes on to explain, this is by no means a necessary consequence of a thematic approach.

³⁹ Scobie, “The Challenge of Biblical Theology,” 60.

⁴⁰ For a recent attempt, see J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *God’s Relational Presence: The Cohesive Center of Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019).

⁴¹ For examples of thematic approaches to BT, see Scott J. Hafemann and Paul R. House, eds., *Central Themes in Biblical Theology: Mapping Unity in Diversity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007); Reinhard Feldmeier and Hermann Spieckermann, *God of the Living: A Biblical Theology*, trans. Mark E. Biddle (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011); Charles H. H. Scobie, *The Ways of Our God: An Approach to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003); Ludwig Köhler, *Old Testament Theology*, trans. A. S. Todd (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1957); Mead, *Biblical Theology*, 169–239; Sigurd Grindheim, *Introducing Biblical Theology* (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2013); Goldingay, *Biblical Theology*.

⁴² In other words, a biblical-theological study must respect the silence of biblical authors when they do not actually address the subject under consideration. As Schlatter memorably states regarding NT theology, “the glory of academic work is not that it knows everything, but that it sees what the witnesses make visible and is silent when they are silent.” Schlatter, “Theology of the New Testament,” 143.

make his own unique contribution to the development of the concept.⁴³ Any thematic study that does not attend to these points fails to approach the text according to its own terms and therefore cannot be considered a work of BT.

In addition, studying the canon inductively does not require scholars to limit themselves to the analysis of biblical vocabulary.⁴⁴ On the contrary, Rosner correctly observes that “concepts rather than words are a surer footing on which to base thematic study such as that involved in biblical-theological synthesis.”⁴⁵ And while analyzing a concept as opposed to a lexeme requires systematization, Hasel is correct to contend that “a degree of systematizing the material content of biblical books and groups of writings is inevitable” and that such a process is legitimate so long as “the principles for systematizing . . . derive inductively from Scripture itself.”⁴⁶ Thus, one way to do BT would be to examine a theme throughout the canon by demonstrating its importance within the biblical texts and by taking special care to describe the concept in ways that accord with the various testimonies of the biblical authors. This is in fact what will be attempted in this project.

As an expression of BT, this study focuses on tracing the theme of DRA through both the Old and New Testaments. By engaging in a close reading of a number of passages, it will be shown that the concept of DRA is a meaningful, biblical category since it designates a type of divine agency repeatedly attested throughout the Scriptures. Furthermore, the following study also attempts to let every biblical author have their say

⁴³ Vanhoozer rightly says, “The distinctive contribution of biblical theology is its focus on understanding each biblical (authorial) voice on its own terms and in the context of its particular place in the drama of redemption.” Vanhoozer, “Is Theology of NT One or Many?,” 36.

⁴⁴ Rightly Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 33.

⁴⁵ Rosner, “Biblical Theology,” 6.

⁴⁶ Gerhard F. Hasel, “The Relationship between Biblical Theology and Systematic Theology,” *TJ* 5 (1984): 126.

with regards to the nature of DRA. Thus, in order to respect each biblical author's contribution, a set of four polarities (i.e., retributive vs. non-retributive, mediated vs. immediate, active vs. passive, eternal vs. non-eternal) will be used as a framework for representing their varied perspectives regarding the concept. While one might question whether the use of this framework violates the inductive character of BT, I would contend that these polarities actually reflect the Scriptures' own ways of characterizing DRA; thus, this framework serves the function of allowing each relevant passage a voice of its own.⁴⁷

Canonical orientation. Scobie notes the importance of the canon to biblical theology when he says, "Biblical theology is canonical theology."⁴⁸ While exegesis is necessary, BT does more than interpret passages in isolation⁴⁹; instead, BT must also concern itself with the entire canonical witness and it must read particular passages in light of their situatedness within the canon.⁵⁰ So Hafemann and House posit that "*biblical*

⁴⁷ My argument is that the biblical authors often *intend* to present DRA either as (1) retributive or non-retributive, (2) mediated or immediate, (3) active or passive, and/or (4) temporal or eternal. Thus, the use of these polarities accords with the inductive nature of BT since the framework is itself derived from the biblical texts. However, this is not to say that the biblical authors intend to provide a such a rich description of DRA *in every case*. On the contrary, there are instances where one or more of these polarities does not apply because the biblical author shows no interest in describing certain aspects of DRA. In such cases, it will be important to take care not to force passages into these categories. Nevertheless, this caveat does not call the framework itself into question because, as I hope to demonstrate, these categories do reflect the concerns of the biblical authors in a significant number of instances.

⁴⁸ Scobie, "The Challenge of Biblical Theology," 52. Of course, not every scholar agrees with this description of the field. For instance, Stendahl states that "as far as the descriptive approach [to BT] goes, the canon can have no crucial significance." Stendahl, "Biblical Theology, Contemporary," 428. As is perhaps unsurprising, a scholar's perspective on the theological significance of the canon has a significant impact on whether or not they grant that BT should be canonical.

⁴⁹ Though BT is exegetical, it is *not* exegesis. As Garrett rightly points out regarding OT theology in particular, "There is obviously a reciprocal relationship between the exegesis of specific verses and the investigation of Old Testament theology; how one understands the one will influence how one understands the other. But they are distinct." Garrett, *Problem of the Old Testament*, 141.

⁵⁰ Rightly Hasel, "Biblical Theology and Systematic Theology," 125–26. In fact, according to Janowski, the reality of the canon is what gives rise to the possibility of BT. As he states, "An attempt at a biblical theology has thus to begin from the existence and the recognition of a Christian biblical canon that

theology seeks its content and coherence in the final propositions and basic ordering of the Old and New Testaments read in their entirety, in their final form, and in concert with one another.”⁵¹ And according to Hasel, it is only “with the entire Bible as the proper context of the biblical-theological enterprise [that] we are able to grasp the full potential of biblical theology.”⁵² Sailhamer comes to similar conclusions in his description of OT theology: “OT theology is not complete in itself. . . . OT theology can only be complete as the first part of a *biblical* theology, one that includes both an Old and a New Testament theology in a final integrated whole.”⁵³ Finally, Stuhlmacher stresses that, while the OT and NT can be distinguished, they cannot be separated; moreover, the task of BT always has the two-part canon in view, so that a NT Theology “must respect and work through the special rooting of the New Testament message of faith in the Old Testament.”⁵⁴ Thus, at least among those who adopt a confessional approach,⁵⁵ there is wide agreement that works of BT must attend to (or show an awareness of) the ways in which individual parts

arises from both Testaments.” Janowski, “Biblical Theology,” 724. Moreover, Janowski maintains that such a view of the canon is appropriate within BT since “a distinctive theological relationship of both Testaments together was the presupposition for the origin of the Christian canon.” Janowski, “Biblical Theology,” 724.

⁵¹ Scott J. Hafemann and Paul R. House, introduction to Hafemann and House, *Central Themes in Biblical Theology*, 17. At the same time, this is not to suggest that works focused on smaller corpuses within the Bible should not be considered examples of BT. Nevertheless, it remains true that studies that show no concern for the canonical situatedness of biblical texts fail to demonstrate a quality that many consider important for works of BT.

⁵² Gerhard F. Hasel, “Proposals for a Canonical Biblical Theology,” *AUSS* 34, no. 1 (1996): 25–26.

⁵³ John H. Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 23.

⁵⁴ Stuhlmacher, *Biblical Theology*, 6.

⁵⁵ For a lengthy description and defense of a confessional approach to BT, see Sailhamer, *Introduction*, 115–83, 224–37. For examples of proponents of confessional BT, see Hasel, “Proposals,” 27.

of the Bible contribute to the meaning the whole, as well as the ways in which the canonical situatedness of particular texts bear upon their meaning.⁵⁶

In keeping with the canonical aspect of BT, this study of DRA will exhibit two features. First, it will seek to include every relevant passages from within the Protestant canon.⁵⁷ On the one hand, this means that the attempt will be made to identify and incorporate every canonical passage that bears witness to DRA. On the other hand, it also means that extra-biblical texts will not be considered directly relevant to the project.⁵⁸ Second, this project will attend to both the diversity and the unity that exists between the OT and the NT.⁵⁹ A biblical-theological study should take care not to drown out the

⁵⁶ To claim that BT ought to evidence a canonical orientation is not the same as advocating for the canonical approaches of either Childs (see *Biblical Theology*, 70–79) or Sanders (see “Biblical Criticism and the Bible as Canon,” *USQR* 32 [1977]: 162–64). While my approach shares more similarities with the former than the latter, I agree with Provan when he says that “Childs is too concerned with validating and applying the results of earlier ‘behind the text,’ historical-critical scholarship.” Provan, *Reformation and Right Reading of Scripture*, 620. Furthermore, my canonical approach to BT rests on the same assumptions outlined by Peckham in his description of a canonical approach to *ST*. The three assumptions he outlines are as follows: (1) a high view of the revelation and inspiration of the biblical canon, (2) the dual authorship (divine and human) of the canonical text, and (3) the grammatical-historical procedures of exegesis. See John C. Peckham, *Canonical Theology: The Biblical Canon, Sola Scriptura, and Theological Method* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 200–206.

⁵⁷ A discussion of the reasons for adopting the Protestant canon rather than that of other traditions would go beyond the scope of this study. For a recent defense of the superiority of the shorter canon, see Provan, *Reformation and Right Reading of Scripture*, 55–80.

⁵⁸ While extra-biblical texts will at times be consulted to provide useful points of comparison or contrast, these will not be treated as witnesses to the *biblical* depiction of DRA. For similar perspectives on the use of extra-biblical texts within BT, see Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, 2–3; Scobie, *The Ways of Our God*, 58–65; Mead, *Biblical Theology*, 69–74, 244–45; Schlatter, “Theology of the New Testament,” 144–48; Hasel, “Proposals,” 24. For examples of others who argue that the canon should not function to limit the scope of BT, see Wrede, “Task and Methods,” 101–2; Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology*, 578–80.

⁵⁹ Admittedly, certain theological commitments lead me to anticipate that some measure of unity will characterize the Old and New Testaments’ witness to DRA. Some might argue that to presume the presence of unity between the two testaments would be to allow for subjective, theological presuppositions to unduly determine one’s reading of the texts. However, as many have noted, the problem of epistemological situatedness is universal and unavoidable. Moreover, those who analyze the Scriptures as though the two testaments were fundamentally independent from one another also proceed on the basis of theological presuppositions about the nature of the Bible (rightly Watson, *Text and Truth*, 5–6). Finally, Garrett is correct to point out that presuppositions alone do not validate or invalidate an argument; instead, through public discourse, all arguments can and should be assessed on the basis of whether or not they are

witness of either testament; instead, both need to be allowed to have their respective voices heard. At the same time, canonical BT should also explore possible points of unity between the two testaments.⁶⁰ Thus, Childs is correct to state that “the task of the responsible exegete is to hear each testament’s own voice, and both to recognize and pursue the nature of the Bible’s diversity,” *and* that “the biblical theologian’s reflection is directed to the connection between the Old and New Testaments in an effort ‘to give an account of his understanding of the Bible as a whole . . . inquiring into its inner unity.’”⁶¹ Thus, in what follows, I will attempt to do justice to the disparate and yet unified witness of the Old and New Testaments by providing summaries of their respective perspectives on DRA before finally exploring the points of unity that exist between the two.⁶²

Inner-biblical exegesis. Mark Elliott states that “biblical theology cannot allow the study of any part of the Bible to remain forever self-contained and self-referential. . . . This respects the biblical writings themselves, since these often seem to

consistent with reason and with the available evidence (Garrett, *Problem of the Old Testament*, 10–15). Thus, my claims and observations about the canon’s witness to DRA can and should be evaluated on their own merits rather than on the basis of my theological presuppositions.

⁶⁰ Such a consideration is especially important for those who argue that BT occupies an intermediate position between exegesis and ST. As Callaham rightly warns, the neglect of the underlying unity of the canon will prevent BT from functioning in its role as a “bridge discipline.” Callaham, “Biblical and Systematic Theology,” 22.

⁶¹ Childs, *Biblical Theology*, 8.

⁶² For examples of scholars who stress the theological disunity between (and even within) the two Testaments, see Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology*, 186–88; Wrede, “Task and Methods,” 68–69; Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Theologies in the Old Testament*, trans. John Bowden (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 1–3; Ernst Käsemann, “The Problem of a New Testament Theology,” *NTS* 19 (1973): 242–43; Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel, vol. 2 (New York: Scribners, 1955), 141–42. For others who argue for the existence of some form of theological unity between the Old and New Testaments, see Iain Provan, *Seriously Dangerous Religion: What the Old Testament Really Says and Why It Matters* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), 304–46; Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 887–88; Köstenberger, “Present and Future of Biblical Theology,” 446; Wright, *God Who Acts*; Mead, *Biblical Theology*, 75–78; Boda, *Heartbeat of Old Testament Theology*, 164–77; Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1998), 53–54.

show awareness of at least *some* other scriptures in their own composition.”⁶³ The fact that biblical texts show an awareness of other canonical passages has deservedly captured the attention of biblical theologians. In fact, a host of publications have addressed the subject of the NT’s use of the OT,⁶⁴ and scholars have also attended to the use of Scripture within the OT itself.⁶⁵ While Seitz is correct when he warns against reducing BT to the study of the NT’s use of the OT,⁶⁶ BT must attend to the phenomenon of inner-biblical exegesis⁶⁷ if it is to remain truly exegetical, inductive, and canonical.⁶⁸

⁶³ Elliott, introduction, vii.

⁶⁴ For a short overview, see Craig A. Evans, “New Testament Use of the Old,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 72–80. For just a few examples of publications on the subject, see Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989); G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012); G. K. Beale, ed., *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994); Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); Steve Moyise, *The Old Testament in the New*, 2nd ed., T & T Clark Approaches to Biblical Studies (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2015); David Allen and Steve Smith, eds., *Methodology in the Use of the Old Testament in the New: Context and Criteria*, LNTS (London: T & T Clark, 2020).

⁶⁵ See for instance Michael A. Fishbane, “Inner-Biblical Exegesis: Types and Strategies of Interpretation in Ancient Israel,” in *The Garments of Torah: Essays in Biblical Hermeneutics* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), 3–18; Gary Edward Schnittjer, *Old Testament Use of Old Testament: A Book-by-Book Guide* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2021); Derek Drummond Bass, “Hosea’s Use of Scripture: An Analysis of His Hermeneutics” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008), 66–102.

⁶⁶ See Christopher R. Seitz, *The Character of Christian Scripture: The Significance of a Two-Testament Bible*, STI (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 20–24.

⁶⁷ I use the term *inner-biblical exegesis* as opposed to *intertextuality* for reasons outlined by Beale. See Beale, *Handbook on NT Use of OT*, 39–40.

⁶⁸ In other words, each of these three qualities requires BT practitioners to attend to the subject of inner-biblical exegesis. First of all, in order to be truly exegetical, BT must seek to understand how the biblical authors intended to use the texts which they cite or to which they allude; otherwise, interpreters run the risk of misunderstanding the meaning of the biblical texts. Second, if BT involves the attempt to read the Bible inductively, then the field will have to pay attention to inner-biblical exegesis since it is itself an important phenomenon that is internal to the Scriptures; moreover, it is sometimes through their use of other passages that the biblical authors reveal the categories, concepts, and frameworks that mattered to them. Lastly, if BT is canonical in the sense that it seeks to understand particular passages in light of their canonical situatedness, then examining the ways in which subsequent biblical authors used those passages may aid in achieving that goal.

The issue of inner-biblical exegesis is particularly pertinent to an examination of DRA for two reasons. First, NT authors often appeal to the OT to ground or to explain their presentations of this divine activity.⁶⁹ Thus, in order to accurately interpret several DRA-texts, it will be necessary to explore how a NT author is making use of the OT. Second, scholars will regularly appeal to the original context of an OT citation in order to justify their interpretations of NT texts that provide important testimony to the concept of DRA.⁷⁰ In fact, interpreters at times reject what seems to be the plain meaning of a passage on the basis of these sorts of appeals. Thus, in order to evaluate existing interpretations of a number of DRA-texts, it will be necessary to wade into the issue of inner-biblical exegesis. For these reasons, this biblical-theological analysis of DRA will proceed with an eye towards identifying and explaining when and how biblical authors use other texts.⁷¹

BT as a bridge discipline. From its inception, BT has been defined in part by

⁶⁹ See for example Matt 13:10–15; Mark 4:10–12; Luke 8:9–10; John 12:37–40; 13:17–20, 27; Rom 9:14–18; 11:7–10; 1 Pet 2:7–8.

⁷⁰ See for example J. Ross Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News: Isaiah and Paul in Concert in the Letter to the Romans*, NovTSup (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2002), 51–78; Roger T. Forster and V. Paul Marston, *God's Strategy in Human History* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1973), 59–61; Abasciano, *Paul's Use of OT in Romans 9.10-18*, 203–14; A. Chadwick Thornhill, *The Chosen People: Election, Paul and Second Temple Judaism* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015), 238; Meadors, *Idolatry and Hardening of Heart*, 129–30; Stephen N. Williams, *The Election of Grace: A Riddle without a Resolution?* Kantzer Lectures in Revealed Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 73–92.

⁷¹ This study does not attempt to address the perennial issues regarding inner-biblical exegesis. These issues include such matters as (1) how allusions may be legitimately detected, (2) which versions of the biblical texts were read by the apostles, (3) what kind of freedom did they exercise in using those texts, (4) what impact the apostles' hermeneutical practices should have on modern readers, and (5) what might the NT use of the OT suggest about the relationship between the two testaments. Nevertheless, because its scope includes a number of NT texts that make use of other OT passages, it may yet make a minor contribution to the biblical-theological study of inner-biblical exegesis.

its relationship to ST.⁷² While some have sought to blur the distinction between the two,⁷³ many scholars still acknowledge that BT and ST refer to different, though overlapping, fields of study. On the one hand, BT involves the attempt to investigate the Bible on its own terms in order to discern and correlate all that the biblical authors intended to say and do in and through their writings (i.e., BT is exegetical, inductive, and canonical); on the other hand, ST is devoted to the task of discerning all that can be known about God and all things in relation to God.⁷⁴ While confessional ST certainly shares BT's concern for understanding the meaning of biblical texts,⁷⁵ the former discipline distinguishes itself

⁷² Rightly, Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology*, 6–7. In addition, the terms “dogmatics” or “dogmatic theology” are often used interchangeably with ST within scholarship (John Webster, “Introduction: Systematic Theology,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007], 1).

⁷³ For instance, DUBY claims that “the common ways of attempting to distinguish [BT] from dogmatic theology are not viable.” While he says “there is a place for the work of biblical theology,” he provides no account of how the field actually does differ from ST. Steven J. DUBY, “Goldingay on God: Addressing the Distinction between Biblical and Dogmatic Theology,” *HBT* 42 (2020): 122. Though he affords BT legitimacy in theory, in effect, DUBY suggests that little (nothing?) differentiates BT from ST and that everything the former does, the latter can do (better?). However, DUBY's criticisms of the ways in which BT and ST are commonly distinguished are unpersuasive. For starters, DUBY's suggestion that Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* reflects an inductive approach to the Bible is unlikely to convince anyone who is not already committed to defending or appropriating medieval theological methods (115–16). Second, while DUBY is of course correct to point out that BT must use words and phrases that are not found in the Bible, he fails to recognize the difference between, on the one hand, using available language to denote concepts that emerge from a plain reading of the biblical texts, and on the other, employing extrabiblical categories in order to pursue a knowledge of God that, though perhaps rooted in the Bible, goes beyond what the Scriptures themselves express (118). Finally, DUBY's method does not seem appropriate to the task he sets for himself; after all, given the complexity of the field, does it really suffice to use a single work of BT (i.e., Goldingay's *Biblical Theology*) in order to make such sweeping claims?

⁷⁴ For others who describe ST similarly, see Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica*, ed. Daniel J. Sullivan, vol. 1, *Great Books of the Western World* 19 (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952), 7; Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, *Prolegomena* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 38; Webster, “Introduction,” 1–2; Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology*, 74. Of course, the matter of defining ST is complex and not all theologians would define the discipline this way. As Webster rightly observes, the field is “characterized by a measure of internal contestation.” Webster, “Introduction,” 2.

⁷⁵ Hasel is also correct to point out that approaches to ST will differ depending on whether or not the Bible is seen as a privileged source of revelation. Practitioners of ST who do prioritize the Bible's testimony will “engag[e] in a constructive presentation of the meaning of biblical and Christian faith with full usage of information available beyond Scriptural revelation such as history, psychology, sociology, philosophy, and so forth, as long as such information is subject to the norms of biblical revelation and its

from the latter in that it does not treat the Scriptures as its chief object of study.⁷⁶ In other words, subjects that are not directly addressed within Scripture are still properly within the scope of ST since the discipline is not *finally* about the message of the Bible *per se*, but it is rather about the knowledge of God and of all reality.⁷⁷ Moreover, unlike BT, ST does not limit itself to the Bible as its source of information about God. So Martin rightly states, “[ST] seeks to connect the whole [message of the Scripture] to what may be discovered and learned outside of Scripture through God’s general revelation.”⁷⁸ Thus, ST allows for extrabiblical (as opposed to unbiblical) frameworks or concepts to function positively within its pursuit of the knowledge of God and all things in relation to God.⁷⁹

truth claims.” Hasel, “Biblical Theology and Systematic Theology,” 127.

⁷⁶ As Barr states, “Doctrinal theology, however much it works with the Bible and acknowledges the Bible as authoritative, is not primarily *about* the Bible: it is primarily about God and its horizon is God.” Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology*, 74.

⁷⁷ So Bavinck can say that “dogmatics is not a kind of biblical theology that stops at the words of Scripture. Rather, according to Scripture itself, dogmatics has the right to rationally absorb its content and, guided by Scripture, to rationally process it and also to acknowledge as truth that which can be deduced from it by lawful inference.” Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1:45. In fact, according to Williams, there is no subject matter that is outside of ST’s purview: “Theology, as we have noted, is concerned with God and other things as they relate to God, potentially everything, in other words. . . . This reach is not simply disciplinary hubris, . . . it reflects the nature of theology’s prime subject [i.e., God].” A. N. Williams, “What Is Systematic Theology?,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 11, no. 1 (2009): 46.

⁷⁸ Oren R. Martin, “How Does Biblical Theology Compare to Other Theological Disciplines?,” in DeRouchie, Martin, and Naselli, *40 Questions about Biblical Theology*, 125.

⁷⁹ So for instance, according to Webster, “the sources of systematic theological concepts are varied. *Some* are drawn from scripture, though often their systematic development involves a measure of generalization and regularization as concepts are put to work in different contexts and for different purposes than those in which they originally functioned. *Other concepts are borrowed, adapted, or constructed from resources outside the sphere of Christian faith* [emphasis added].” Webster, “Introduction,” 9–10. Moreover, Healy posits that the task of ST includes “the activity of reflecting critically and constructively . . . on the Christian and non-Christian sources in relation to which [Christian beliefs and practices] arise.” Nicholas M. Healy, “What Is Systematic Theology?,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 11, no. 1 (2009): 24. As an example of a theologian who openly borrows extrabiblical (and in this case, unbiblical) frameworks, see the work of Craig Carter, who argues that Platonism (or “Ur-Platonism”) is foundational for Christian theology (Craig A. Carter, *Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition: Recovering the Genius of Premodern Exegesis* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018], 61–91). For a convincing critique of Carter’s claims, see Garrett, *Problem of the Old Testament*, 70–71.

Thus, there remains good reason to distinguish between the two theological disciplines.⁸⁰

According to Poythress, “Biblical theology and systematic theology both need robust interaction with one another for the sake of deepening their methodological and doctrinal soundness.”⁸¹ But if that is so, what ought to be the nature of that interaction? Some have proposed that BT should serve as a bridge discipline between exegesis and systematic/dogmatic theology. Such a view can be traced back to Gabler, who argued that “when these opinions of the holy men have been carefully collected from Holy Scripture and suitably digested, carefully referred to the universal notions, and cautiously compared among themselves, the question of their dogmatic use may then profitably be established.”⁸² Though scholars have criticized various aspects of Gabler’s original vision, many have agreed with the proposal that BT should serve as an intermediate discipline between exegesis and ST. For example, Hodge maintains that the difference between BT and ST is that “the office of the former is to ascertain and state the facts of Scripture,” while “the office of the latter is to take those facts, determine their relation to each other and to other cognate truths.”⁸³ Scobie describes BT as a discipline “situated between the historical (and literary) study of scripture on the one hand and its use by the Church in dogmatic theology and related areas on the other.”⁸⁴ Gentry and Wellum posit that “the conclusions of systematic theology must first be grounded in the exegetical

⁸⁰ A further difference between the two is that ST seeks to address current questions and issues while BT tries to limit itself to the concerns of the biblical authors. See Hart, “Systematic,” 345, 348–49; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 35–36.

⁸¹ Vern S. Poythress, “Kinds of Biblical Theology,” *WTJ* 70 (2008): 142.

⁸² Sandys-Wunsch and Eldredge, “J. P. Gabler and the Distinction,” 142.

⁸³ Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 1–2.

⁸⁴ Scobie, “The Challenge of Biblical Theology,” 49–50. He suggests in particular that BT might function by building on the work of historical and text critics, providing “an overview and interpretation of the shape and structure of the Bible as a whole,” and by seeking “the unity and continuity of Scripture, but without sacrificing the richness of its diversity.” Scobie, *The Ways of Our God*, 47.

conclusions of biblical theology.”⁸⁵ Schreiner refers to BT as “a kind of bridge discipline” that stands “between responsible exegesis and responsible systematic theology”; he also states that a primary goal of BT ought to be to “inform systematic theology.”⁸⁶ Carson likewise believes that BT admirably serves as a bridge discipline because of its close relationship to exegesis on the one hand and ST on the other.⁸⁷ However, this is not to say that relationship between the disciplines is uni-directional in practice. As Carson observes,

Although in terms of authority status there needs to be an outward-tracing line from Scripture through exegesis towards biblical theology to systematic theology (with historical theology providing some guidance along the way), in reality various ‘back loops’ are generated, each discipline influencing the others, and few disciplines influencing the others more than does systematic theology.⁸⁸

Nevertheless, proponents of this model still argue that in principle, BT should serve as the foundation for those forms of ST that privilege the authority of the Bible.⁸⁹

Even with the caveats that confessional ST is also biblical and that BT is impacted by ST, some still find fault with the description of BT as an intermediate discipline.⁹⁰ Vanhoozer denies that ST is a subsequent step to BT, and instead views the former as “a partner in the exegetical process itself.”⁹¹ Elmer Martens shares this

⁸⁵ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 36.

⁸⁶ Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 883.

⁸⁷ Carson, “Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology,” 91.

⁸⁸ Carson, “Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology, 102. See also Andrew David Naselli, “D. A. Carson’s Theological Method,” *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 29, no. 2 (2011): 263.

⁸⁹ As Hasel states, “Biblical theology is foundational for systematic theology, if systematic theology is understood to receive its normative authority from Scripture.” Hasel, “Biblical Theology and Systematic Theology,” 127.

⁹⁰ For examples, see Vanhoozer, “Is Theology of NT One or Many?,” 23; Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology*, 64–68; Darian R. Lockett, “Some Ways of ‘Doing’ Biblical Theology: Assessments and a Proposal,” in Walsh and Elliott, *Biblical Theology*, 97.

⁹¹ Vanhoozer, “Is Theology of NT One or Many?,” 38.

perspective, stating that the “bridge-discipline” model is “badly flawed” and that “*both* biblical theologians and systematic theologians engage the biblical text.”⁹² Watson goes so far as to argue that the division between BT and ST “systematically distorts” interpretation; thus, BT should be defined as “an interdisciplinary activity, unconstrained by conventional disciplinary boundaries and critical of the distortions that these boundaries engender.”⁹³ There is some merit to these critiques, and admittedly, the bridge metaphor can be taken too far.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, critics of the “bridge-discipline” view of BT exaggerate the model’s flaws while also failing to attend to its merits.⁹⁵ MacLeod outlines three reasons why BT should be viewed as a discipline that methodologically precedes ST: (1) such a view would remind BT practitioners that “the work of theology does not end with description and interpretation,” (2) such a model prevents ST from de-historizing theology and from obscuring truths about God’s personal and dynamic acts

⁹² He still admits however that ST is “not nearly as closely involved with the Scripture” and that in exegetical investigations, “the biblical theologian will take the lead.” Elmer A. Martens, “Moving from Scripture to Doctrine,” *BBR* 15, no. 1 (2005): 87–88.

⁹³ Watson, *Text and Truth*, 7, 17.

⁹⁴ While I agree with his proposal, it is unfortunate that Carson seems to express some pessimism regarding the prospects of biblically faithful ST (see Carson, “Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology,” 101–2). In my opinion, the bridge model of BT should not be taken to imply that ST is somehow biblically suspect. Nevertheless, even Carson does not deny that ST is “text based,” as he goes on to say that ST “seeks to rearticulate what the Bible says in self-conscious engagement with (including confrontation with) the culture” (102–3).

⁹⁵ Many of the complaints about the “bridge-discipline” model stem from the argument that it inaccurately describes ST as being divorced from the Bible. However, in my view, it is possible to affirm the intermediate position of BT without arguing that ST is unconcerned with the biblical texts. After all, in describing BT and ST, I am only highlighting the expectations generally adopted by practitioners within these academic disciplines. I am not arguing that systematicians have never done or can never do detailed exegesis. Instead, I am merely observing that such involvement with the texts is not a prerequisite within the field of ST. In contrast, works within the field of BT are generally expected to be exegetical in character. Moreover, while I would describe BT as being “nearer” to the biblical text than ST, the metaphorical distance here refers to the level of textual engagement rather than to the level of biblical fidelity. In other words, it is *not* the case that BT is to be automatically privileged over ST in terms of its accuracy in expressing the theology contained in the Bible. However, it *is* the case that, unlike ST, works within BT are generally expected to include detailed exegesis.

within time and space, and (3) the precedence of BT serves to keep ST founded upon exegesis.⁹⁶ I find these points compelling and am thus persuaded that the “bridge-discipline” model captures one of the unique values of BT.⁹⁷

In the analysis of DRA that follows, I assume that BT should function as a bridge discipline between exegesis and ST. As such, the study goes beyond mere exegesis by synthesizing the canonical witness to DRA at multiple levels. At the same time, the study will not venture into the realm of systematics. In particular, the study will not seek to address (1) how its findings regarding DRA might impact other issues in dogmatics, or (2) contemporary concerns that may intersect with the subject of DRA. At the same time, I am hopeful that the results of this study will be of interest to systematic theologians, as the biblical portrait of DRA should have implications for a number of Christian doctrines.

⁹⁶ MacLeod, “Biblical Theology,” 33–34.

⁹⁷ In addition to the critics of the “bridge-discipline” model already mentioned, there are some who argue that BT cannot be an intermediate discipline since the biblical materials cannot be presumed to be relevant for contemporary theology. For instance, while he understands BT to “explicate the connections within the biblical material,” Barr states that “doctrinal theology . . . make[s] clear how far the biblical material is believed to correspond to the external, extra-biblical, reality that is the real object of faith.” Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology*, 74. However, Barr’s position is likely to persuade only those who reject a confessional approach to BT.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORY OF RESEARCH

Few scholars (if any) have pursued a biblical-theological treatment of DRA. Nevertheless, many have commented on the matter in treatments of related concepts. Since DRA itself remains rather unexplored, one must turn to studies of these related topics in order to provide a survey of scholarship on DRA. While a number of topics may be linked to DRA, there are five that stand out due to closeness of the connection and due to the attention these have garnered from scholars and theologians: (1) divine hardening, (2) predestination, (3) election, (4) divine and human agency, and (5) the ninth chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans. By attending to these five key issues, I provide a historical overview of scholarly and theological opinions regarding DRA.

Divine Hardening

Though a substantial number of monographs and articles have been written on the topic of divine hardening, only a few have examined the phenomenon canonically.¹ Heikki Räisänen has done so in his book *The Idea of Divine Hardening*.² In his work, Räisänen examines texts in the Qu'ran and in the Bible "in which God is said to harden,

¹ The theme that I (along with others) refer to as "divine hardening" has received other designations. As the following survey demonstrates, others have referred to the same concept as "sensory deprivation," "obduracy," "divinely inspired delusion," "the suspension of free will," "deafness and blindness," "the divine trap motif," etc. These different labels make a valuable point: one must distinguish between the concept of divine hardening and hardening vocabulary (ex., כבד, חזק, קשה, σκληρύνω, πωρόω, πώρωσις, etc.). The concept under investigation includes passages that refer to God's negative influence without necessarily employing words lexically associated with hardening.

² Heikki Räisänen, *The Idea of Divine Hardening: A Comparative Study of the Notion of Divine Hardening, Leading Astray and Inciting to Evil in the Bible and the Qur'ān*, Publications of the Finnish Exegetical Society 25 (Helsinki, Finland: Kirjapaino Oy Savo, 1972).

seduce or lead man astray, or according to which God condemns a man to damnation without regard to his deeds.”³ Räisänen endeavors to demonstrate that despite suggestions to the contrary, the notions of predestination found in the Qu’ran do not compare poorly with those found in the Christian canon.⁴ While he helpfully comments on different passages involving divine hardening,⁵ Räisänen assumes that an emphasis on human responsibility precludes any notions of predestination. This assumption at times prevents him from acknowledging the role of DRA in the thought of certain gospel writers.⁶ Additionally, despite recognizing instances of non-retributive hardening, Räisänen repeatedly downplays the importance of witnesses to this type of divine activity. One way he does this is by assigning fault to the authors of these verses, accusing them of being poor thinkers or of somehow being eccentric.⁷ Räisänen also at times masks the significance of divine hardening through the use of source and tradition criticism. So for instance, Räisänen suggests that the use of Isaiah 6:9–10 in Mark 4 does not actually reflect the evangelist’s own view. Instead, Mark simply makes use of an older tradition and tries to correct its predestinarian theology elsewhere in his gospel.⁸ These features keep Räisänen’s work from providing a satisfying canonical treatment of divine hardening or of DRA.

³ Räisänen, *The Idea of Divine Hardening*, 12.

⁴ Räisänen, *The Idea of Divine Hardening*, 7–12.

⁵ See for instance his discussion of Isa 6 in Räisänen, *The Idea of Divine Hardening*, 59–62.

⁶ Räisänen, *The Idea of Divine Hardening*, 88–92.

⁷ So for instance, Räisänen says that the argument of Rom 9–11 “consist(s) of a bundle of differing lines of thought” and that “from an exegetical and historical point of view it can only be said that there are two unconnected lines of thought in Paul’s theology. He himself has hardly felt a contradiction between them.” Räisänen, *Idea of Divine Hardening*, 85. See also pp. 79–80, 86–87, 92–95.

⁸ Räisänen, *The Idea of Divine Hardening*, 89. It is unlikely however that Mark would have simply quoted a tradition with which he disagreed. Furthermore, Mark could have adjusted the quote if he wanted to distance himself from the thought of the original.

A second example of an attempt at a canonical overview of hardening was written by Edward P. Meadors. Meadors writes that hardening “is a systemic deterioration that God permits to infiltrate those who reject, challenge, or break his covenant due to a greater confidence in idols.”⁹ Taking Psalms 115:4–8 and 135:15–18 to be paradigmatic of the phenomenon as a whole, Meadors argues that hardening is most often God’s response to the particular sin of idolatry: as a result of worshipping worthless, senseless things, idolaters too become worthless and senseless.¹⁰ While Meadors provides an insightful survey of passages involving idolatry and hardening in the Scriptures, his exegesis is not always convincing. For example, I am unpersuaded by his interpretation of Exodus 1–14, wherein he concludes on the basis of his study of Egyptology that Pharaoh must have been hardened due to his idolatrous practices.¹¹ While idolatry was undoubtedly practiced in Egypt, the text never specifies that as the reason for Pharaoh’s hardening.¹² An additional problem is that Meadors simply assumes that the relationship between hardening and idolatry can only move uni-directionally: from the latter to the former. But there are no textual or logical reasons to believe that the reverse might not be true.¹³ On a similar note, Meadors fails to consider that correlation does not necessarily

⁹ Edward P. Meadors, *Idolatry and the Hardening of the Heart: A Study in Biblical Theology* (New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 11.

¹⁰ Meadors, *Idolatry and Hardening of Heart*, 2.

¹¹ “Pharaoh’s obstinate refusal to heed Moses’ warnings may have been the result of his trust in the power of amulets. . . . As a practitioner of amulets, Pharaoh represents the premier biblical example of the fate that awaits those who place trust in pagan deities and idols. A devotee of amuletic idols and a patron and priest of idol laden temples, he thus suffered the hardening of his inner will.” Meadors, *Idolatry and Hardening of Heart*, 35.

¹² Meadors’ interpretation of Rom 9:10–23 could serve as a second example of unpersuasive exegesis. Space does not permit a detailed engagement with his argument at this juncture. Suffice to say, Meadors completely misses Paul’s point when he concludes that election and hardening in Rom 9 are God’s responses to human faith or human unbelief. For his view on Rom 9, see Meadors, *Idolatry and Hardening of Heart*, 123–33.

¹³ In fact, some biblical texts suggest that divine hardening leads to idolatry. So for instance, some interpreters understand Deut 4:19 as indicating God’s sovereign influence over the idolatry of pagan

imply causation: he mistakenly assumes that any mention of both idolatry and hard-heartedness in the same context necessarily supports his thesis.¹⁴ Moreover, several of his examples may not be instances of divine hardening at all. For instance, Meadors cites Leviticus 26:14–36 as evidence that the sin of idolatry leads to divine hardening because these verses mention eyes that “waste away” and “weakness” that enters the heart.¹⁵ However, it is doubtful that this passage is speaking of the kind of spiritual blindness or obstinacy that is addressed in hardening passages like Exodus 4–14 or Isaiah 6. Lastly, Meadors falters by treating all hardening passages as though they were speaking of the same phenomenon. Given the fact that the biblical authors use the concept of hardening in very different contexts, it is highly unlikely that all use of such language was intended to refer to a singular idea.¹⁶ So for example, Meadors refers to Mark 6:51–52 and 8:17–21 to show that even the disciples could suffer divine hardening.¹⁷ However, it seems

nations. See for example Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 507–8; Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 50; Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 137. See also my discussion on Isa 44:18ff. in chap. 5, s.v. “DRA in the Book of Isaiah,” and “Other Cases of DRA.”

¹⁴ See for instance the discussion on the divided monarchy in Meadors, *Idolatry and Hardening of Heart*, 47–55.

¹⁵ See Meadors, *Idolatry and Hardening of Heart*, 9–10.

¹⁶ The biblical authors employ hardening language in different contexts and for different purposes. At times, the concept provides a way of speaking of God’s sovereignty over evil and unbelief (Exod 4:21ff; Rom 9:15–18); at others times, hardening language serves to highlight the personal responsibility of those caught in unbelief (Zech 7:11–12; Mark 6:52). Some texts depict hardening as God’s intended means of bringing condemnation on those hardened (1 Kgs 22:19–23; Isa 6:8–13); in other passages, hardening language is used to warn God’s people against walking in rebellion (Ps 95:8; Rom 2:5; Heb 3:13). The failure to attend to these sorts of differences has led some scholars to tame the biblical witness by reading the more severe expressions of divine hardening in the light of more agreeable ones. See for instance Meadors, *Idolatry and Hardening of Heart*, 173–81; Brian J. Abasciano, *Paul’s Use of the Old Testament in Romans 9.10–18*, LNTS 317 (London: T & T Clark, 2011), 213; N. T. Wright, *Christian Origins and the Question of God*, vol. 4, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 1225–27; Roger T. Forster and V. Paul Marston, *God’s Strategy in Human History* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1973), 155–77.

¹⁷ In another instance of unpersuasive exegesis, Meadors argues that idolatry of two kinds led to the hardening of the disciples: (1) the idol of anxiety and worry, and (2) the idol of a preconceived

unwarranted to assume on the basis of similar vocabulary that God's treatment of the disciples in Mark 6:51–52 is equivalent to his treatment of Pharaoh in Exodus 4–14, or to Ahab in 1 Kings 22, or to the vessels of wrath in Romans 9. In the three latter texts, God's purpose is clearly to condemn the individuals or groups in question; Mark however makes no suggestion that God intends to do the same to the disciples.¹⁸ In other words, hardening language does not always refer to DRA. By failing to notice this point, Meadors unfortunately flattens the witness of the texts and mistakenly treats hardening as a monolithic phenomenon.

Scholars have also examined heart-hardening with a more limited scope. For instance, Robert B. Chisholm Jr. seeks to explore the issue of divine hardening in the OT.¹⁹ Chisholm argues that “divine hardening is never arbitrarily implemented, but comes in response to rejection of God's authoritative word or standards.”²⁰ In order to make his case, Chisholm posits that Pharaoh acted autonomously before being hardened by God as a judicial response. He believes in fact that God gave Pharaoh several opportunities to repent, but being an obstinate rebel, the Egyptian monarch refused and

concept of messiahship. There is little in the text to warrant the suggestion that Mark intends to depict this hardening as punishment for idolatry. For his discussion, see Meadors, *Idolatry and Hardening of Heart*, 88–90.

¹⁸ In addition, it is not certain that Mark intended *πεπωρωμένη* to be understood as a divine passive; thus, divine hardening may not be in view at all. For examples of commentators who seem not to take Mark 6:52 as a reference to divine hardening, see William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 237–39; Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark: The Greek Text With Introduction, Notes, and Indexes*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 330–31; Larry W. Hurtado, *Mark*, vol. 2, *New International Biblical Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 107; Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26*, WBC (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 352–54; James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 200–201.

¹⁹ Robert B. Chisholm Jr., “Divine Hardening in the Old Testament,” *BSac* 153, no. 612 (1996): 410–34.

²⁰ Chisholm, “Divine Hardening in OT,” 434.

thus put himself in a position to be hardened.²¹ I, however, am unpersuaded by his reading as it fails to attend adequately to the importance of YHWH's declaration in Exodus 4:21 and to the repeated **כִּאֲשֶׁר** formula.²² Nevertheless, Chisholm helpfully expounds some retributive hardening texts and rightly notes that OT authors attest to both "direct divine hardening" and "indirect divine hardening."²³ Brian P. Irwin also studies divine hardening in the OT, but he focuses his attention on Exodus 4–14 and 1 Kings 22 in order to examine "Yahweh's suspension of free will."²⁴ With regard to Exodus, he claims that "the only way for Yahweh to demonstrate his own deity, and to establish Pharaoh's mortality, is to remove his opponent's free will."²⁵ Irwin then argues that the account of Ahab and the lying spirit must be read in light of the story of Naboth and his vineyard (1 Kgs 21). By doing so, one understands YHWH's actions as a form of "poetic justice." As he states, "Just as Ahab had earlier been complicit in using lying witnesses to kill Naboth, so now Yahweh would use a lying spirit to bring about the death of the king."²⁶

Other works on hardening have attended specifically to God's treatment of Pharaoh in Exodus 4–14. Many of these have posited that YHWH's actions were retributive: God hardened the Egyptian's heart as a just response to his own actions or attitudes.²⁷ William Ford maintains that the author of Exodus intends to depict God to be

²¹ Chisholm, "Divine Hardening in OT," 428.

²² A more detailed exposition of Exod 4–14 is provided in the subsequent chapter.

²³ His distinction corresponds somewhat to the one I draw between immediate and mediate DRA. See Chisholm, "Divine Hardening in OT," 411.

²⁴ Brian P. Irwin, "Yahweh's Suspension of Free Will in the Old Testament: Divine Immorality or Sign-Act?," *Tyndale Bulletin* 54, no. 2 (2003): 55–62.

²⁵ Irwin, "Yahweh's Suspension of Free Will," 59.

²⁶ Irwin, "Yahweh's Suspension of Free Will," 61.

²⁷ Some commentators go a step further and argue that the references to divine hardening are

one “who responds to human actions and acts himself in order to seek the appropriate response from them in turn.”²⁸ Consistent with this reading, he argues that divine hardening (1) reduced Pharaoh’s ability to obey without removing it²⁹; (2) was a response to Pharaoh’s own “hardened” oppression of Israel³⁰; and (3) functioned by strengthening an intention reached independently of divine influence.³¹ Jonathan Grossman also argues that hardening is retributive, but he appeals to the narrative design in order to do so.³² Unlike Grossman, Matthew McAfee makes the bulk of his case on the basis of grammar and lexicography.³³ He claims that YHWH was not involved in hardening Pharaoh’s heart in Exodus 7:13–8:28 because the *qal* statives used to describe hardening do not require an ingressive or dynamic translation.³⁴ In fact, McAfee concludes that the “hardening” verbs in this section of the Exodus story do not assign a change in Pharaoh’s attitude; instead, they provide insight into his consistent disposition. Thus, YHWH only hardens

merely rhetorical; the hardening involved in the Exodus story is always Pharaoh’s self-hardening. U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, trans. Israel Abrahams, English ed. (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1967), 56–57; Benno Jacob, *The Second Book of the Bible: Exodus*, trans. Walter Jacob (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1992), 246–47.

²⁸ William A. Ford, *God, Pharaoh and Moses: Explaining the Lord’s Actions in the Exodus Plagues Narrative* (Milton Keynes, England: Paternoster, 2006), 214.

²⁹ Ford, *God, Pharaoh and Moses*, 154–56.

³⁰ Ford, *God, Pharaoh and Moses*, 120.

³¹ Ford, *God, Pharaoh and Moses*, 176–77.

³² Grossman argues that the redactor structured the plagues accounts with a 7 + 3 pattern in mind: the first unit (plagues 1-7) realizes the goal of God’s self-revelation to the Egyptians, while the second unit (plagues 8-10) realizes the goal of God’s self-revelation to Israel. Hardening also serves this pattern as God’s intervention in Pharaoh’s heart only begins after the first unit of plagues has ended. Grossman does acknowledge however that Exod 9:12 poses a problem for his scheme. See Jonathan Grossman, “The Structural Paradigm of the Ten Plagues Narrative and the Hardening of Pharaoh’s Heart,” *VT* 64, no. 4 (2014): 597–604.

³³ Matthew McAfee, “The Heart of Pharaoh in Exodus 4-15,” *BBR* 20, no. 3 (2010): 331–53.

³⁴ McAfee, “The Heart of Pharaoh,” 340–43.

the monarch after he has already shown himself to be committed to walking in stubbornness.³⁵ Despite the popularity of this reading of Exodus 4–14, not all scholars believe that a retributive interpretation of hardening best comports with the sense of the text. Some maintain that divine hardening in the Exodus story is not presented as an act of judgment³⁶; rather, the narrative presents YHWH as initiating Pharaoh’s hardening in order to accomplish His own purposes.³⁷ G. K. Beale observes that “it is never stated in Exod 4–14 that Yahweh hardens Pharaoh in judgment because of any prior reason or condition residing in him. Rather . . . the only purpose or reason given for the hardening is that it would glorify Yahweh.”³⁸ This suggests that God’s actions towards Pharaoh were not motivated by a desire for retribution, but by other divine purposes.³⁹ Beale then

³⁵ McAfee, “The Heart of Pharaoh,” 351–52.

³⁶ Eslinger goes even further and argues the author of Exodus actually intends to impugn YHWH’s character. He suggests that readers are meant to attend to the narrator’s perspective, which is critical of YHWH precisely for His sovereign treatment of Pharaoh and of Egypt. See Lyle Eslinger, “Freedom or Knowledge: Perspective and Purpose in the Exodus Narrative (Exodus 1-15),” *JSOT* 52 (1991): 43–60.

³⁷ Some have avoided assigning a primacy either to Pharaoh’s responsibility or to YHWH’s hardening. See for instance Dorian Coover Cox, “The Hardening of Pharaoh’s Heart in Its Literary and Cultural Contexts,” *BSac* 163, no. 651 (2006): 309–10; Claire Matthews McGinnis, “The Hardening of Pharaoh’s Heart in Christian and Jewish Interpretation,” *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 6, no. 1 (2012): 61. Others have sought to address the tension in the narrative by appealing to the various (alleged) sources behind the existing text. These sources differ in their views regarding the hardening of Pharaoh. See for instance Robert R. Wilson, “Hardening of Pharaoh’s Heart,” *CBQ* 41, no. 1 (1979): 28–32; Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975), 170–75.

³⁸ This does not mean however that Beale views God’s treatment of Pharaoh to have been unjust or immoral. For his explanation as to how this might be so, see G. K. Beale, “An Exegetical and Theological Consideration of the Hardening of Pharaoh’s Heart in Exodus 4-14 and Romans 9,” *TJ* 5, no. 2 (1984): 149–52.

³⁹ Beale lists at least three purposes: (1) to demonstrate the uniqueness of God’s omnipotence to the Egyptians; (2) to memorialize YHWH’s acts for Israel; and (3) for YHWH’s glory. See Beale, “Exegetical and Theological Consideration,” 149. John L. McLaughlin likewise states that “the primary purpose for which Pharaoh’s heart is hardened is the glorification of Yahweh through the increasingly powerful actions he performs on behalf of the Israelites, *not the punishment of Pharaoh*” [emphasis added]. John L. McLaughlin, “Their Hearts Were Hardened: The Use of Isaiah 6,9-10 in the Book of Isaiah,” *Bib* 75, no. 1 (1994): 1–25.

argues that 4:21b (“I will harden his heart”) states the ultimate cause of 4:21c (“and he will not send the people away”), which suggests that Pharaoh’s actions in 5:2 are already the result of (and not the reason for) divine hardening.⁴⁰ Furthermore, he interprets the **כִּאֲשֶׁר** formula found in Exodus 7:14–25 as evidence that God is ultimately behind Pharaoh’s stubbornness even when YHWH is not the grammatical subject of the statements that refer to hardening.⁴¹ In a similar vein, John Piper argues that the divine hardening of Pharaoh was not an act of retribution.⁴² He notes that the exchange between YHWH and Moses in Exodus 3–4 already emphasizes God’s sovereign freedom in His dealings with men.⁴³ Like Beale, Piper also understands Pharaoh’s actions in Exodus 5:2 to be the fulfillment of His promise to harden in 4:21. He argues that this view is confirmed by Moses’ complaint in 5:7–9, wherein he asks YHWH, “Why have *you* done evil to this people?”⁴⁴ He also notes the importance of the **כִּאֲשֶׁר** formula, which demonstrates that Pharaoh’s hardening throughout the Exodus story is a fulfillment of God’s promise to negatively influence his heart.⁴⁵ In addition, Piper points out that the summary statement found in 11:9–10 implies that YHWH had been hardening Pharaoh’s heart from the very beginning.⁴⁶ In Piper’s view, this explains why Paul is able to cite the Exodus story in order to ground his argument regarding God’s absolute freedom both

⁴⁰ Beale, “Exegetical and Theological Consideration,” 134–36.

⁴¹ Beale, “Exegetical and Theological Consideration,” 140–42.

⁴² Piper states that God’s aim in the hardening of Pharaoh was “to so demonstrate his power and glory that his people fear him and trust him always,” and to ensure that “his name be declared in all the earth.” John Piper, *The Justification of God: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Romans 9:1-23*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1993), 170.

⁴³ Piper, *Justification of God*, 162.

⁴⁴ Piper, *Justification of God*, 162.

⁴⁵ Piper, *Justification of God*, 163–65.

⁴⁶ Piper, *Justification of God*, 170.

to extend mercy and to harden.⁴⁷ Edgar Kellenberger likewise understands the hardening in Exodus 1–14 as non-retributive. He makes four conclusions regarding the hardening in the Exodus story: (1) the hardening terms chosen suggest that YHWH’s actions are being portrayed positively rather than negatively⁴⁸; (2) the narrator connects YHWH’s self-glorification to both the destruction of Egypt and the salvation of Israel⁴⁹; (3) the text displays a stunning YHWH-centeredness, even presenting the Lord to be the active source behind both Pharaoh’s condition and his actions⁵⁰; and (4) the narrative gives no indications of concern regarding Pharaoh’s responsibility or free will.⁵¹ Armed with these findings, Kellenberger chides interpreters for seeking to alleviate the difficulty of the text by stressing Pharaoh’s will. He sees no exegetical justification for this emphasis.⁵² In fact, he asserts that interpretations of this ilk reflect a “spiritual arrogance” (*geistige Überheblichkeit*) in that these readings assume a moral right to judge the text as it stands⁵³; in the process, they overlook the “essential testimony in the text” which is that “Pharaoh can do nothing against YHWH’s will.”⁵⁴

⁴⁷ Piper, *Justification of God*, 174.

⁴⁸ Edgar Kellenberger, *Die Verstockung Pharaos. Exegetische Und Auslegungsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen Zu Exodus 1–15*, BWA(N)T 11 (Stuttgart, Germany: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 2006), 45–47, 178.

⁴⁹ Kellenberger, *Die Verstockung Pharaos*, 92–94.

⁵⁰ Kellenberger, *Die Verstockung Pharaos*, 90, 178.

⁵¹ Kellenberger, *Die Verstockung Pharaos*, 179.

⁵² Kellenberger, *Die Verstockung Pharaos*, 283.

⁵³ Kellenberger, *Die Verstockung Pharaos*, 180.

⁵⁴ “Dass Pharaos nichts gegen JHWHs Willen tun kann, ist die lebenswichtige Aussage im Text.” Kellenberger, *Die Verstockung Pharaos*, 280.

The book of Isaiah has also been examined with an eye towards its witness to divine hardening.⁵⁵ Cuthbert Lattey suggests that the defective Hebrew language is the culprit behind “sweeping statements” like those found in Isaiah 6:10.⁵⁶ Lattey however provides little evidence to substantiate such a claim. Andrew Key takes a step in the right direction when he argues regarding Isaiah 6:10, “the oracle itself is the means through which God’s plan is to be carried out. . . . The words (be they entirely of doom or be a remnant included) are to be delivered in such a manner that the people cannot repent, for then God would have to change the course of events which he has planned.”⁵⁷ He is mistaken to claim however that Isaiah is himself controlling the future by the use of magic, for the book itself makes clear that only YHWH directs the course of history (cf. Isa 41:21–29; 44:6–8; 45:18–21; 46:8–11).⁵⁸ Beale furthers the discussion by making the case that Isaiah 6:9–13 depicts God’s judgment on Israel for the specific sin of idolatry.⁵⁹ He supports his thesis with five pieces of evidence: (1) the verbal parallels between Isaiah 6:9–13 and Psalm 135:16–17,⁶⁰ (2) the conceptual resemblance between Isaiah 6:9–13 and Psalm 135:15–18,⁶¹ (3) the use of the metaphor of sensory malfunction in contexts connected to idolatry in Isaiah 42–48,⁶² (4) the references to sensory malfunction in the

⁵⁵ Torsten Uhlig rightly states that “the theme of hardening is a central and significant issue of the Book of Isaiah.” Torsten Uhlig, *The Theme of Hardening in the Book of Isaiah: An Analysis of Communicative Action*, vol. 39, FAT 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 317.

⁵⁶ Cuthbert Lattey, “Did God Harden the Heart of Israel?,” *Scr* 3, no. 2 (1948): 48–50.

⁵⁷ Andrew F. Key, “Magical Background of Isaiah 6:9-13,” *JBL* 86, no. 2 (1967): 203.

⁵⁸ Key, “Magical Background,” 199, 202–3.

⁵⁹ G. K. Beale, “Isaiah VI 9-13: A Retributive Taunt against Idolatry,” *VT* 41, no. 3 (1991): 258.

⁶⁰ Beale, “Isaiah VI 9-13,” 258.

⁶¹ Beale, “Isaiah VI 9-13,” 258–59.

⁶² Beale, “Isaiah VI 9-13,” 272.

prophetic literature as a whole,⁶³ and (5) other ironic patterns of judgment found in the prophets.⁶⁴ While I agree that Isaiah's commission is given as an act of retributive justice, I am not persuaded that one can specifically pinpoint idolatry as the sin being condemned.⁶⁵ Similarly to Beale, Geoffrey Robinson argues that God's actions in Isaiah 6 are retributive and that affinities exist between Isaiah 6:9–10 and Psalm 135:15–18. But unlike Beale, Robinson seems to argue that the self-blindness is itself the sin for which Israel is judged.⁶⁶ He states, "If the people persist in their willful blindness, then God confirms them in their chosen state."⁶⁷ He attempts to prove that "deafness and blindness represent a divine response of judgment to the people's choice to be deaf and blind to the presence and claims of God."⁶⁸ On Robinson's reading, it becomes difficult to understand what God's judgment actually consists of, especially when he argues that the very same people who were "blinded" can receive sight once more,⁶⁹ and when he

⁶³ Beale, "Isaiah VI 9-13," 274.

⁶⁴ Beale, "Isaiah VI 9-13," 276.

⁶⁵ Both Hayes and McLaughlin understand the behaviors described in Isa 5:8–24 to be the reason for the divinely induced stupor depicted in Isa 6:9–10. See Katherine M. Hayes, "A Spirit of Deep Sleep': Divinely Induced Delusion and Wisdom in Isaiah 1–39," *CBQ* 74, no. 1 (2012): 44–46; McLaughlin, "Their Hearts Were Hardened," 21–22. Meanwhile, Uhlig argues that Isa 6:5–7 implies that hardening was meted out as "the judgment of perverted communicative interaction." Uhlig, *Theme of Hardening*, 117.

⁶⁶ Robinson seems quite concerned about "the danger of interpreting Isa 6:9–10 in strongly deterministic terms." Geoffrey D. Robinson, "The Motif of Deafness and Blindness in Isaiah 6:9–10: A Contextual, Literary, and Theological Analysis," *BBR* 8 (1998): 186. Why this is so dangerous, Robinson does not say. Unfortunately, the attempt to steer clear of "an absolute view of divine sovereignty" leads Robinson to miss the fundamental emphasis of Isa 6.

⁶⁷ Robinson, "Motif of Deafness and Blindness," 179.

⁶⁸ Robinson, "Motif of Deafness and Blindness," 180.

⁶⁹ Robinson argues in fact that the disciples themselves could have been hardened in the same way. In my view, this represents a failure to understand that hardening language does not always imply divine reprobating activity. See Robinson, "Motif of Deafness and Blindness," 181, 185.

denies that Isaiah 6 refers to God preventing repentance through Isaiah's ministry.⁷⁰ More convincing is the work of Katherine Hayes, who has argued that the motif of divinely imposed delusion in Isaiah 1–39 is linked with the motif of wisdom.⁷¹ She examines three Isaianic texts which depict divine stupefaction: Isaiah 6:9–10, 19:14–15, and 29:9–10.⁷² She argues that the sins addressed in Isaiah 5 set the stage for Isaiah 6, wherein God uses the prophetic word itself as an instrument of divine delusion.⁷³ This delusion renders judgment inescapable, while the judgment in turn will bring an end to the people's hardened state.⁷⁴ Likewise, Craig Evans argues that the Hebrew text of Isaiah 6:9–10 "was intended to convey the idea that it was God's purpose that his prophet deepen Israel's obduracy."⁷⁵ He understands Isaiah 1–5 as laying the groundwork for the word of judgment that comes in Isaiah 6.⁷⁶ He believes that the obduracy theme in Isaiah reflects the prophet's convictions that "God is sovereign and absolute, and is not bound to a particular people, but is Lord over all peoples."⁷⁷ Despite the severity of Isaiah's message however, hope remains because God has promised an eventual softening after

⁷⁰ Robinson, "Motif of Deafness and Blindness," 186n50.

⁷¹ Hayes concludes that Isaiah borrows language from the wisdom tradition while departing from it by noting God's own role in handing men over to folly. See Hayes, "Spirit of Deep Sleep," 54.

⁷² Hayes makes the noteworthy observation that Isa 19 and 29 differ from Isa 6 in that the two do not emphasize human sin as the reason for God's hardening action. See Hayes, "Spirit of Deep Sleep," 46–47; 49–50.

⁷³ Hayes, "Spirit of Deep Sleep," 43–46.

⁷⁴ Hayes, "Spirit of Deep Sleep," 46.

⁷⁵ Craig A. Evans, *To See and Not Perceive: Isaiah 6.9-10 in Early Jewish and Christian Interpretation*, JSOTSup 64 (Sheffield, England: JSOT, 1989), 163.

⁷⁶ Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 42.

⁷⁷ Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 52.

judgment.⁷⁸ John McLaughlin also sees divine hardening as an important theme in Isaiah, as the motif “adds to the body of evidence that the association of chaps. 40–66 with the rest of the Book of Isaiah was not the result of chance but of design.”⁷⁹ He states that according to Isaiah 6:9–10, the prophet Isaiah was commissioned to be the agent through whom God would accomplish His divine decision to mete out punishment upon His people.⁸⁰ This theme of judgment then recurs in Isaiah 29:9–10, 44:18, and 63:17, although the book of Isaiah also depicts the reversal of this condition once the divine penalty has been fully paid.⁸¹ Willem A. M. Beuken also stresses the hope of future reversal after the people experience “devastation and abandonment to a degree that defies all understanding.”⁸² Though Isaiah is commissioned to make conversion impossible for his contemporaries, Yahweh’s absolute holiness, dominion over the whole earth, and his election of Israel, make it certain that “the Lord will create a new seed that will live in obedience to him.”⁸³ Meanwhile, Francis Landy views Isaiah 6:9–10 as paradigmatic of the book of Isaiah and of prophecy as a whole.⁸⁴ He begins by noting that “the divine trap” is a motif that is pervasive in the Scriptures.⁸⁵ He then posits that

⁷⁸ Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 52.

⁷⁹ McLaughlin, “Their Hearts Were Hardened,” 24. See also Uhlig, *Theme of Hardening*, 66–72, 316–20.

⁸⁰ McLaughlin, “Their Hearts Were Hardened,” 2–6.

⁸¹ McLaughlin, “Their Hearts Were Hardened,” 17–21.

⁸² Willem A. M. Beuken, “The Manifestation of Yahweh and the Commission of Isaiah: Isaiah 6 Read against the Background of Isaiah 1,” *CTJ* 39 (2004): 77.

⁸³ Beuken, “The Manifestation of Yahweh,” 84.

⁸⁴ Though he believes Deutero- and Trito-Isaiah attempt to reverse the commission, Landy concludes that their attempt ultimately fails. As a result, the book remains impenetrable. See Francis Landy, “Prophecy as Trap: Isaiah 6 and Its Permutations,” *ST* 69, no. 1 (2015): 82–83.

⁸⁵ Landy, “Prophecy as Trap,” 75.

Isaiah's ministry exemplifies this motif: "the prophet is called upon to be an un-prophet, to communicate and not to communicate at the same time, to convey God's ill-will, to frustrate the people's natural capacity to return and be healed."⁸⁶ He claims that several passages reflect Isaiah's un-prophetic vocation, and he provides two examples in particular: Isaiah 7:14–15 and 29:11–12.⁸⁷ While Landy helpfully wrestles with the motif of the "divine trap," his pessimistic outlook on the entirety of the book of Isaiah is unwarranted given that YHWH Himself set limits on the prophet's negative commission (Isa 6:11–13).⁸⁸ Furthermore, he overlooks the possibility that a group within Israel would have been divinely exempt from the hardening influence of Isaiah's ministry⁸⁹—a possibility which may in fact be suggested by Isaiah's characterization of Hezekiah (Isa 37–39) and by the reference to YHWH's "disciples" (לְמִדִּים) in Isaiah 8:16.⁹⁰ In contrast

⁸⁶ Landy, "Prophecy as Trap," 78.

⁸⁷ Landy, "Prophecy as Trap," 79–82.

⁸⁸ As McLaughlin observes, "This hardening is meant to last until the divine judgment has been fully implemented." McLaughlin, "Their Hearts Were Hardened," 6.

⁸⁹ Rightly Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, NAC (Nashville: B & H, 2007), 195. The notion of exemptions from the hardening-impact of Isaiah's ministry may be theologically connected to the concept of the remnant; just as God would sovereignly preserve a group through the judgment, so also may he have spared some within Israel from the negative influence of Isaiah's ministry of judgment. In fact, Schmidt posits that Isa 6:13 lends some credence to this reasoning. See Joh. Michael Schmidt, "Gedanken Zum Verstockungsauftrag Jesajas (Is. VI)," *VT* 21, no. 1 (1971): 85–86. For the importance of theme of the remnant in Isaiah, see Gerhard F. Hasel, *The Remnant: The History and Theology of the Remnant Idea from Genesis to Isaiah*, Andrews University Monographs (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1972), 216–372; Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 333–34; Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1998), 276–81; Craig A. Evans, "Isa 6:9–13 in the Context of Isaiah's Theology," *JETS* 29, no. 2 (1986): 140–44; Andrew M. King, "A Remnant Will Return: An Analysis of the Literary Function of the Remnant Motif in Isaiah," *Journal for the Evangelical Study of the Old Testament* 4, no. 2 (2015): 145–46.

⁹⁰ Contra Uhlig, *Theme of Hardening*, 121–31. For others who interpret the לְמִדִּים to be an audience within Israel who were faithful to YHWH, see Hasel, *Remnant*, 232; Csaba Balogh, "Isaiah's Prophetic Instruction and the Disciples in Isaiah 8:16," *VT* 63 (2013): 8–12; Evans, "Isa 6:9–13 in Isaiah's Theology," 142; J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1993), 95–96.

to Landy's perspective, Uhlig finds that the book of Isaiah as a whole is intended to proclaim and perform the restoration of "connective righteousness" through de-hardening God's people.⁹¹ Uhlig posits that the book of Isaiah reflects two communicative agents: Isaiah ben Amoz (Isa 1–39) and "a prophetic voice" (Isa 40–66).⁹² Originally, the historical prophet Isaiah was given a negative commission as an act of retribution against God's people for their "perverted acts of communication"; such a commission ensured that Isaiah's ministry would have the perlocutionary effect of stupefying his audience and rendering them incapable of repentance.⁹³ The hardening impact of Isaiah's ministry would continue to be felt long after the death of Isaiah.⁹⁴ However, during the time of Cyrus, the message of Isaiah ben Amoz (i.e., Isa 1–39) was incorporated by a different "prophetic voice" into a book addressed to the exiles in Babylon (Isa 40–55) and to the leftovers in Judah (Isa 56–66).⁹⁵ In addressing both groups, the prophetic voice declared the solution to the problem of hardening which was rooted in the person and work of the Servant (Isa 50:1–11; 52:13–53:12).⁹⁶ Moreover, the prophetic proclamation itself had the perlocutionary function of overcoming hardening, which was evidenced when the addressees joined in the testimony about the Servant.⁹⁷

⁹¹ Uhlig, *Theme of Hardening*, 56, 71–72, 317–20.

⁹² Uhlig, *Theme of Hardening*, 45–52.

⁹³ Uhlig, *Theme of Hardening*, 141–42.

⁹⁴ Uhlig, *Theme of Hardening*, 140.

⁹⁵ Uhlig, *Theme of Hardening*, 45–52.

⁹⁶ As Uhlig states, "In the ministry and person of the individual Servant, YHWH has initiated the overcoming of hardening (Isa 50:4-9), and through his suffering and death their sins are forgiven and they are made righteous (Isa 52:13-53:12)." Uhlig, *Theme of Hardening*, 247.

⁹⁷ Uhlig, *Theme of Hardening*, 247–48, 279–81, 285–86.

More can be said about the state of scholarship on the subject of divine hardening. Nevertheless, I believe a few conclusions can be drawn from this brief overview. First, none of the major studies of divine hardening can be equated with a canonical overview of DRA. Though Räisänen and Meadors have attempted to study divine hardening throughout the canon, they fail to fairly assess all the data (Räisänen) and they mistakenly assume that all hardening language refers to the same phenomenon (Meadors). Furthermore, neither work focuses specifically on divine hardening for the purpose of condemnation. Second, the vast majority of the work that has been done on the issue of divine hardening has been limited to the exegesis of a few key passages. This in turn means that little has been done to compare and contrast the various biblical perspectives on hardening in general or of DRA in particular. In fact, I would argue that there is currently no study available that explores the diversity of the biblical witness regarding DRA while also accounting for the theological unity that undergirds this important theme. Moreover, no one has attempted to catalogue the various nuances that characterize depictions of DRA through the Scriptures (i.e., retributive versus non-retributive, mediate versus immediate, active versus passive, eternal versus non-eternal). Third, a significant number of scholars continue to dismiss the notion of non-retributive hardening. This is seen most clearly in the studies available on the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. While a minority recognize such a phenomenon in Exodus 4–14, most still argue that Pharaoh was treated this way because of his own self-willed obstinacy. Thus, more work needs to be done to demonstrate the existence of more severe strains of DRA in the Scriptures. On the basis of these observations, I therefore contend that a study of DRA remains pertinent and may further the conversation regarding divine hardening.

Predestination

The subject of predestination is intimately connected to the concept of DRA. This is because a theologian's predestinarian views often reflect his thoughts on DRA.

For instance, the way in which a theologian approaches the doctrine of reprobation may reveal whether or not he would affirm retributive or non-retributive DRA, active or passive DRA, immediate or mediate DRA, or eternal or non-eternal DRA; furthermore, the different approaches to the topic also demonstrate that at least some of these polarities need not be mutually exclusive. For these reasons, a survey of works on predestination pertains to the present study. I will begin with an overview of important works on predestination from the premodern era, distinguishing between those who affirm eternal, non-retributive DRA,⁹⁸ and those who deny this configuration of DRA. This will then be followed by a review of studies on predestination conducted within the last two hundred years.

Premodern Era

Affirmations of eternal, non-retributive DRA. An early expression of eternal, non-retributive DRA within Christian theology comes from the writings of Augustine of Hippo (AD 354–430). Augustine’s articulation of double predestination evinces his views on DRA.⁹⁹ Some of his statements seem to acknowledge a passive

⁹⁸ Eternal, non-retributive DRA is closely related to the doctrine of reprobation or negative predestination. For the most comprehensive treatment of reprobation up until the 1600s, see Donald W. Sinnema, “The Issue of Reprobation at the Synod of Dort (1618–19) in Light of the History of This Doctrine” (PhD diss., Toronto School of Theology, 1985). Because of his excellent treatment, I do not endeavor to provide an exhaustive overview of premodern views.

⁹⁹ “Double predestination” refers to the position of those who posit that God made separate decrees with respect to the elect and the reprobate; “single predestination” then refers to the belief that God only decreed the salvation of the elect (though He willingly passed over those who were not predestined). J. V. Fesko has argued that Augustine was an advocate of single predestination because he generally defined eternal rejection in terms of preterition rather than predestination. See J. V. Fesko, introduction to *Diversity within the Reformed Tradition: Supra- and Infralapsarianism in Calvin, Dort, and Westminster* (Greenville, SC: Reformed Academic Press, 2001), xxiii–xxiv; see also Fesko, 19. Fesko’s argument fails however, since he does not account for the places where Augustine speaks of God’s predestination of the reprobate. For instance, Augustine contrasts the reprobate Tyrians and Sidonians with elect infants when he says, “And those who are older, even those whom he foresaw would believe in his miracles if they were performed among them, whom he does not wish to help, he does not help, since *in his predestination* [emphasis added] he has, secretly indeed, but justly, determined otherwise concerning them.” Augustine, “On the Gift of Perseverance,” in *St. Augustine: Four Anti-Pelagian Writings*, trans. John A. Mourant and William J. Collinge, FC, vol. 86 (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1992), 291–92.

form of DRA. In response to the position of the Semi-Pelagians, Augustine notes that faith, “both in its beginning and in its completion,” is a gift of God.¹⁰⁰ But faith is not given to all; in an act of divine judgment, God leaves some “in the mass of perdition” by withholding from them the means to believe.¹⁰¹ God then abandons those who are “vessels of wrath” to their own sinful desires, while He graciously works a good will in those who are predestined to be conformed to the image of the Son.¹⁰² However, other evidence exists that Augustine also posited an active form of DRA. As he states,

God works in human hearts to incline their wills to whatever He wills, either to good due to His mercy or to evil due to their deserts. . . . When you read in the texts of Truth that people are led astray by God, or that their hearts are dulled or hardened, have no doubt that their evil deserts came first, so that they suffered these things justly.¹⁰³

The activities predicated of God in this case seem to go beyond mere abandonment and should therefore be understood as active DRA. Additionally, despite Augustine’s statements to the effect that a person’s evil merits come before hardening,¹⁰⁴ there are three reasons to believe that his predestinarian theology includes non-retributive DRA.¹⁰⁵

For others who understand Augustine to be a double predestinarian, see Sinnema, “Issue of Reprobation,” 13–14; Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (1938; repr., East Peoria, IL: Banner of Truth, 2012), 109–10; Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. 1, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100–600)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 297–98.

¹⁰⁰ Augustine, “On the Predestination of the Saints,” in *St. Augustine*, 237–38.

¹⁰¹ Augustine provides Tyre and Sidon as examples of those from whom miracles were withheld despite the fact that they would have believed had they seen a display of Christ’s power. See Augustine, “On the Gift of Perseverance,” 303.

¹⁰² Augustine, “On the Proceedings of Pelagius,” in *St. Augustine*, 117–18.

¹⁰³ Augustine, “On Grace and Free Choice,” in *On The Free Choice of the Will, On Grace and Free Choice, and Other Writings*, trans. Peter King, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 180–81.

¹⁰⁴ See also Augustine, “On the Predestination of Saints,” 241.

¹⁰⁵ I should clarify once more that in speaking of non-retributive DRA, I do not mean that God influenced the innocent to become wicked in order that they may be condemned. I am merely observing that DRA is not always said to be God’s judicial response to particular sins committed willfully. Thus, to make use of categories from systematic theology, I would argue that the objects of non-retributive DRA are

First, Augustine believed that both the elect and the reprobate deserve the same judgment; thus, God cannot be said to have distinguished between the two groups on the basis of their deserts.¹⁰⁶ Second, though Augustine maintains that those who are hardened by God receive a judgment which they rightly deserve, he also emphasizes that original sin *by itself* renders fallen humanity worthy of such treatment. In fact, Augustine posits that some are reprobated and condemned *solely* for their sin in Adam, which both the elect and the reprobate share.¹⁰⁷ Third, while Augustine insists that all God's actions are completely just, he confesses that only God knows why one person is predestined for life while another is predestined for condemnation.¹⁰⁸ Such evidence therefore suggests that Augustine did not understand God's reprobating activity to be a response to willful sin. Since the condemnation Augustine has in mind is clearly eternal, one can detect the existence of non-retributive, eternal DRA in his thought.¹⁰⁹

Augustinian views on predestination continued to be embraced after his death. For instance, Fulgentius of Ruspe (AD 468–533) stood as a proponent of double predestination during this period,¹¹⁰ and his writings on the topic reveal his views on

still fallen, corrupt individuals who deserve condemnation because they are in Adam. It is for this reason that I believe non-retributive DRA is consistent with Augustine's views on reprobation. See Augustine, "On the Gift of Perseverance," 291–92.

¹⁰⁶ Augustine, "On the Gift of Perseverance," 292.

¹⁰⁷ Since I limit retributive DRA to instances where God judges individuals or groups for particular sins they have willfully committed, Augustine may be said to be a proponent of what I call non-retributive DRA. See Augustine, "On the Gift of Perseverance," 291–92.

¹⁰⁸ Augustine, "On the Predestination of Saints," 238.

¹⁰⁹ For example, Augustine's discussion of reprobate infants demonstrates clearly that he has eternal condemnation in mind, as he discusses the punishments they will face after death. See Augustine, "On the Predestination of Saints," 244–48.

¹¹⁰ Even within his early thought (wherein he asserted God's universal saving will), Fulgentius still affirmed that God predestined certain ones to punishment. See Fulgentius, "Fragments to Eugippius," in *Fulgentius of Ruspe on the Saving Will of God: Development of a Sixth-Century African Bishop's Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:4 during the Semi-Pelagian Controversy*, trans. Francis X. Gumerlock (Lampeter, Wales: Edwin Mellen, 2009), 149–52; Fulgentius, "The Truth about Predestination and Grace,"

DRA.¹¹¹ Like Augustine, Fulgentius also posited a passive, eternal form of DRA. On the one hand, those predestined for salvation are granted faith and perseverance, not on the basis of any “preceding meritorious deeds of the human will,” but on the basis of God’s will alone.¹¹² On the other hand, though God does provide some revelation of himself to all men, He does not give saving grace or special revelation to those who are “vessels of wrath fitted for destruction.”¹¹³ Instead, He hardens them, not by compelling them to sin, but by refusing to snatch them away from their iniquity.¹¹⁴ Though Fulgentius undoubtedly affirmed that reprobation was just, he also seems to maintain non-retributive DRA. First of all, Fulgentius denounced the semi-Pelagian claim that election and reprobation are based on the divine foreknowledge of future works.¹¹⁵ He understood Romans 9:10–13 to mean that “salvation is not thus bestowed on the former group [i.e., the elect] because of works, just as condemnation is not rendered to the latter [i.e., the

in *Fulgentius of Ruspe and the Scythian Monks: Correspondence on Christology and Grace*, trans. Rob Roy McGregor and Donald Fairbairn, FC, vol. 126 (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2013), 205; Gumerlock, *Fulgentius of Ruspe*, 44–47. Later in his career, Fulgentius adopted a more stringent view, wherein God wills to save some and wills not to save others. He in fact states that those who are “vessels of wrath” were “created for dishonor” and were predestined for judgment. Fulgentius, “Predestination and Grace,” 126, 205.

¹¹¹ It is worth noting as well that one of Fulgentius’ correspondents, Monimus, appears to have held to a more extreme form of double predestination than Fulgentius. On the one hand, Monimus seems to affirm symmetrical double predestination, arguing that God predestined both good and evil in like manner. On the other hand, Fulgentius affirmed that God predestined the good, but denied that people were predestined to commit evil. Interestingly, despite Monimus’ strict predestinarian views, Fulgentius seems to have regarded him as a friend in the faith. See Gumerlock, *Fulgentius of Ruspe*, 30–35.

¹¹² Fulgentius, “First Letter to the Scythian Monks,” in McGregor and Fairbairn, *Fulgentius of Ruspe and Scythian Monks*, 105–6; Gumerlock, *Fulgentius of Ruspe*, 63–65.

¹¹³ Gumerlock, *Fulgentius of Ruspe*, 111–13.

¹¹⁴ Fulgentius argues strongly that predestination to life and to death are asymmetrical. Unlike with the elect, whose good works are freely given by God, God does not prepare evil works for the reprobate, nor does He plant evil wills in them. See Fulgentius, “Predestination and Grace,” 130; Fulgentius, “Second Letter to the Scythian Monks,” in McGregor and Fairbairn, *Fulgentius of Ruspe and Scythian Monks*, 115.

¹¹⁵ Gumerlock, *Fulgentius of Ruspe*, 109.

reprobate] because of works.”¹¹⁶ Furthermore, he observes that Mal 1:2–3a makes no mention of Esau’s works and instead emphasizes his fraternity with Jacob. Given that both are born in sin, the brothers should be understood to have been born “bound into the lump of condemnation.” Therefore, the difference in God’s attitude and actions towards the two (and towards the elect and the reprobate) cannot be explained by appealing to their respective merits.¹¹⁷ Secondly, Fulgentius uses the example of children who die without baptism before reaching the age of reason to demonstrate that God predestines some to the eternal fires apart from any consideration of willful evil.¹¹⁸ Thus, Fulgentius did not view God’s reprobating work as being a form of retribution for personal sin. All of this demonstrates that Fulgentius’s rich predestinarian theology included within it an affirmation of passive, eternal, non-retributive DRA. Interestingly enough, Fulgentius’s works on predestination and grace were commissioned by Christians seeking his help in defending Augustinianism against Semi-Pelagian doctrines; this then may suggest that he was not alone in holding these views.¹¹⁹

Isidore of Seville (AD 560–636) was familiar with both Augustine’s and Fulgentius’s works, and they may have played a role in his adoption of double predestination.¹²⁰ Isidore makes his views plain in the following:

¹¹⁶ Fulgentius, “Predestination and Grace,” 130; see also 125.

¹¹⁷ Fulgentius, “Predestination and Grace,” 127–28. According to Fulgentius, God nevertheless acts justly in reprobation because original sin renders both the elect and the reprobate worthy of condemnation (130–31).

¹¹⁸ Fulgentius, “First Letter,” 99–100; Fulgentius, “Predestination and Grace,” 142–43, 145–46.

¹¹⁹ See Rob Roy McGregor and Donald Fairbairn, trans., “Letter from the Scythian Monks to the Bishops,” in *Fulgentius of Ruspe and Scythian Monks*, 25–42; Gumerlock, *Fulgentius of Ruspe*, 84–92, 107–10.

¹²⁰ So for instance, Isidore mentions in a letter that Fulgentius’s book *On the Truth of Predestination* “demonstrated that the grace of God comes before the human will in good actions, and that God chose some beforehand, justifying them by the gift of his predestination, but by a certain hidden judgment left others in their wicked ways.” Isidore of Seville, “On Illustrious Men,” in Gumerlock,

In a wonderful way the Creator who is just to all, predestines some to life, others He abandons in their wicked ways to their rightful judgment . . . for some are predestined to His most gracious mercy . . . and made vessels of mercy; others however who are considered reprobate are predestined to punishment, condemned, and are made vessels of His wrath.¹²¹

Those predestined to life are provided by God with faith, spiritual growth, meritorious works, and perseverance.¹²² Meanwhile, those who are predestined to death are not granted any of these graces; instead, “[God] permits the damned, by abandoning him, to take delight always in lower and exterior things.”¹²³ By forsaking the reprobate, God also permits demons and unclean spirits to further ensnare them so that they are unable to repent.¹²⁴ The Lord also gives the damned power to accomplish their evil desires so that He might discipline His elect while He prepares eternal punishment for the wicked.¹²⁵ These sorts of statements suggest that God accomplishes His predestination of the wicked through non-retributive, passive, mediate DRA. However, Isidore also believes that God punishes sins with even more sins by blinding and hardening.¹²⁶ Putting it all together, Isidore seems to hold that those predestined to death are abandoned by God to their wicked passions so that they live sinfully; they are then punished for their personal sins by further hardening, so that they acquire for themselves more dreadful punishments in

Fulgentius of Ruspe, 148. For others who note Augustine’s influence on Isidore, see Thomas L. Knoebel, introduction to *Sententiae*, by Isidore of Seville, ACW 73 (New York: Newman, 2018), 26–30; Fesko, *Diversity within Reformed Tradition*, 22–24.

¹²¹ Isidore of Seville, “Differentiarum,” in Fesko, *Diversity within Reformed Tradition*, 23.

¹²² Isidore of Seville, *Sententiae*, 88–90.

¹²³ Isidore of Seville, *Sententiae*, 90.

¹²⁴ Isidore of Seville, *Sententiae*, 103–4.

¹²⁵ Isidore of Seville, *Sententiae*, 209–10.

¹²⁶ As he states, “It is not that there are any who are just who are driven away from God so that they become evil; rather, those who are already evil are hardened so that they exist in an even worse state . . . God makes those people to sin, but only in those people where such kinds of sins have preceded, that by his just judgment they might merit to go to a worse place.” Isidore of Seville, *Sententiae*, 108.

the next life. This would then suggest that non-retributive and retributive forms of DRA work together in Isidore's double predestinarian theology.

Controversy surrounding predestination blazed during the ninth century, due in part to the preaching and writings of Gottschalk (AD 808–867).¹²⁷ The Saxon monk's views were highly controversial, and his convictions eventually led to imprisonment, public flogging, and deposition from the priesthood.¹²⁸ Gottschalk's affirmation of a twofold predestination stood as the primary reason for his condemnation.¹²⁹ He states his view when he says,

I believe and confess that the omnipotent and immutable God has gratuitously foreknown and predestined the holy angels and elect human beings to eternal life, and that he equally predestined the devil himself, the head of all the demons, with all of his apostate angels and also with all reprobate human beings, namely, his members, to rightly eternal death, on account of their own future, most certainly foreknown evil merits, through his most righteous judgment.¹³⁰

Does Gottschalk's statement mean that negative predestination is an act of retribution based on God's foreknowledge of evil works? There are good reasons to think otherwise.

¹²⁷ Evidence suggests that twofold predestination continued to be affirmed during the seventh and eighth centuries as well. For example, during the Spanish predestination controversy of the late eighth century, Pope Hadrian (who reigned from AD 772–795) adopted and commended Fulgentius's predestinarian views as the solution to the ongoing debate. For a full exploration of this issue, see Francis X. Gumerlock, "Predestination in the Century before Gottschalk (pt. 2)," *EvQ* 81, no. 4 (2009): 319–37.

¹²⁸ For an overview of this period of Gottschalk's life, see Victor Genke, "Introduction: Gottschalk and the Controversy over His Teaching," in *Gottschalk and a Medieval Predestination Controversy: Texts Translated from the Latin*, ed. and trans. Victor Genke and Francis X. Gumerlock, vol. 47, *Mediaeval Philosophical Texts in Translation* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2010), 38–45. It is noteworthy that just the century before, Pope Hadrian embraced the predestinarian views of Fulgentius and claimed that it was the duty of all the faithful to do so as well. See Gumerlock, "Predestination in Century before Gottschalk," 322.

¹²⁹ Gottschalk posits a single act of predestination that is nevertheless twofold. For his explanation, see Gottschalk, "Another Treatise on Predestination," in Genke and Gumerlock, *Gottschalk and Medieval Predestination Controversy*, 161–62.

¹³⁰ Gottschalk, "Shorter Confession," in Genke and Gumerlock, *Gottschalk and Medieval Predestination Controversy*, 71. See also Gottschalk, "Answers to Various Questions," in Genke and Gumerlock, *Gottschalk and Medieval Predestination Controversy*, 103–4. According to Genke, these are the only two places in the extant literature where Gottschalk seems to ground predestination in divine foreknowledge. See Genke, "Introduction," 56–58.

First, Gottschalk's opponents understood him to be propounding non-retributive DRA.¹³¹ So for instance, Amolo of Lyons (d. AD 852) seems to distance his own predestinarian views from Gottschalk's by appealing to God's foreknowledge of the evil merits of the reprobate.¹³² Furthermore, if Gottschalk believed that predestination was based on foreseen merit, it would be difficult to explain why his predestinarian views were so controversial. Second, Gottschalk explicitly denies that predestination is on the basis of human works when he says, "Likewise you say: Behold, I come quickly and my reward is with me to render to each according to his works (Rv 22:12) . . . *except in predestination* [emphasis added] which you have unchangeably ordered by an irrevocable foreordination."¹³³ Third, Gottschalk appeals to God's will as the ultimately reason for any distinction between the elect and the reprobate. Like Augustine, Gottschalk argued that all humanity is fallen and "held captive under the devil."¹³⁴ Some however are given saving help while others are not.¹³⁵ The reason some receive saving help and others are hardened rests in God's predestinating will rather than in human merits.¹³⁶ Fourth, the statement in question may in fact mean that the act of predamnation rather than the act of

¹³¹ For the predestinarian views of Gottschalk's opponents, see the discussion to follow.

¹³² Amolo of Lyons, "Letter to Gottschalk," in Genke and Gumerlock, *Gottschalk and Medieval Predestination Controversy*, 191–94.

¹³³ Gottschalk, "Longer Confession," in Genke and Gumerlock, *Gottschalk and Medieval Predestination Controversy*, 80.

¹³⁴ Gottschalk, "Tome to Gislemar," in Genke and Gumerlock, *Gottschalk and Medieval Predestination Controversy*, 69. See also Gottschalk, "On Predestination," in Genke and Gumerlock, *Gottschalk and Medieval Predestination Controversy*, 115.

¹³⁵ As he states, "Anyone who has been chosen vivifies his soul and sanctifies himself only when God helps him, when he inspires his will, when he gives him the ability, and when he makes him do so. For unless he always gratuitously helps us, a person can do nothing but become more and more guilty." Gottschalk, "On Predestination," 155.

¹³⁶ In fact, Gottschalk says that those who ground the distinction between the elect and the reprobate on human willing nullify both God's grace and His power. See Gottschalk, "On Predestination," 120, 144–46.

reprobation depends on foreknowledge of human merits.¹³⁷ In other words, Gottschalk may be claiming that God foreordains *the specific judicial penalty* to be received by the reprobate on the basis of their foreseen evil merits—a sentiment which is not inconsistent with the conviction that God predestines some to wrath and others to salvation for no other reason than His good pleasure.¹³⁸ His statement would then simply be an affirmation of God’s justice in determining the divine penalty even before the beginning of creation.¹³⁹ Lastly, care must be taken in appealing to Gottschalk’s statements regarding foreknowledge because his understanding of divine omnipotence leads him to treat divine foreknowledge and divine foreordination somewhat synonymously.¹⁴⁰ Thus, he can pray to God saying “with your omnipotence, *to foreknow is the same as to will* [emphasis added] . . . and since for you to will is also the same as to have done . . . it is undoubtedly clear that whatever is going to be externally in your works has already been done by you in predestination.”¹⁴¹ These pieces of evidence suggest therefore that

¹³⁷ For the distinction between predamnation and reprobation, see Sinnema, “Issue of Reprobation,” 5.

¹³⁸ His subsequent argument gives this impression as well, as he explains and says, “Again the Truth himself says concerning the reprobate: But the one who does not believe has already been judged (John 3:18), that is, as [Augustine] explained: ‘Has already been condemned.’ ‘The judgment,’ he says, ‘has not yet appeared, but judgment has already taken place.’” Gottschalk, “Shorter Confession,” 71–72. For examples of others who makes a similar distinction, see Sinnema’s discussion of Franciscus Junius and Festus Hommius in Sinnema, “Issue of Reprobation,” 137–39, 171–73.

¹³⁹ His meaning therefore may be similar to his statement elsewhere that “the same immutable God through his just judgment likewise immutably predestined to *deservedly eternal death* absolutely all the reprobate, who at the judgment day will be condemned *because of their evil merits*” [emphasis added]. Gottschalk, “Confession of Faith at Mainz,” in Genke and Gumerlock, *Gottschalk and Medieval Predestination Controversy*, 68.

¹⁴⁰ Genke, “Introduction,” 56–58.

¹⁴¹ Gottschalk, “Longer Confession,” 76. In another place, he expounds Augustine’s views by saying, “Hence, as for that which your same blessed servant, Augustine, also strove to present truthfully, namely, that the reprobate have been condemned by foreknowledge, although here and there he admits that they have been condemned to death by predestination, each of them is of course true, because each of them is true here. *For foreknowledge is sometimes put in place of predestination* [emphasis added], as he wisely and truthfully admits.” Gottschalk, “Longer Confession,” 82.

Gottschalk did not view negative predestination as an act of retribution based on divine foreknowledge; instead, reprobation operates through a non-retributive, eternal form of DRA.¹⁴²

Similar views on predestination seem to have been affirmed through the rest of the middle ages. In wrestling with the relationship of foreknowledge, predestination, and free will, Anselm (AD 1033–1109) argues that what God predestines necessarily occurs, although by a necessity that does not violate human freedom. As he states, “He causes them not by constraining or restraining the will but by leaving the will to its own power. But although the will uses its own power, it does nothing which God does not cause—in good works by His grace, in evil works not through any fault of His but through the will's fault.”¹⁴³ Furthermore, he affirms in particular that God does predestine both good and evil men along with their works. But unlike God’s influence on those who do good, God efficaciously influences the wicked in a passive manner.¹⁴⁴ Nevertheless, he explains that since creatures cannot have uprightness from themselves or from other creatures, they depend entirely on God’s grace to make their wills upright. And while God does give this saving grace to some, He does not give it to all, “for ‘He shows mercy to whom He wills to, and He hardens whom He wills to.’”¹⁴⁵ These statements on Anselm’s part seem to indicate a passive, non-retributive, eternal form of DRA. Aquinas (AD 1225–1274) held a

¹⁴² Additionally, since Gottschalk approves of Isidore when the latter claims that reprobation is accomplished by divine abandonment, one could probably conclude that Gottschalk also assented to a passive form of DRA. See Gottschalk, “Answers to Various Questions,” 103.

¹⁴³ Anselm, “The Harmony of the Foreknowledge, the Predestination, and the Grace of God with Free Choice,” in *Complete Philosophical and Theological Treatises of Anselm of Canterbury*, trans. Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson (Minneapolis: Arthur J. Banning, 2000), 548.

¹⁴⁴ As he states, “We must notice that predestination can be said [to apply] not only to good men but also to evil men—even as God is said to cause (because He permits) evils which He does not cause. For He is said to harden a man when He does not soften him, and to lead him into temptation when He does not deliver him.” Anselm, “Harmony,” 547.

¹⁴⁵ Anselm, “Harmony,” 552.

comparable view. He argued on the basis of both Scripture and the doctrine of divine providence that God did predestine some to eternal life and reprobate others to eternal death.¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, God’s reprobating work was more than bare foreknowledge; instead, it “includes the will to permit a person to fall into sin, and to impose the punishment of damnation on account of that sin.”¹⁴⁷ Furthermore, Aquinas strongly denies that predestination or reprobation are on the basis of foreknown merits.¹⁴⁸ However, this should not call God’s justice into question because reprobation does not cause sinful actions; it merely causes abandonment by God. Therefore, “guilt proceeds from the free choice of the person who is reprobated and deserted by grace.”¹⁴⁹ In this way, reprobation differs from predestination to life; the latter causes grace for good in the present and but the former does not cause a man to sin.¹⁵⁰ Aquinas therefore seems to also fold into his predestinarian theology a passive, eternal, non-retributive form of DRA.

The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries saw significant contributions made to the doctrine of reprobation. Thomas Bradwardine (1300–1349) understood reprobation in two senses: (1) reprobation referred to God’s eternal refusal to grant grace to the non-elect, and (2) to the effect in time of this unwillingness (i.e., hardening). In neither case is reprobation dependent upon God’s foreknowledge, for the act of reprobation rested solely on the divine will. God does no injustice in acting in this way however, for the actual

¹⁴⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica*, ed. Daniel J. Sullivan, vol. 1, Great Books of the Western World 19 (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952), 134.

¹⁴⁷ Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica*, 1:134.

¹⁴⁸ As he states, “It is impossible that the whole of the effect of predestination in general should have any cause as coming from us, because whatsoever is in man ordering him towards salvation is included wholly under the effect of predestination.” Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica*, 1:137.

¹⁴⁹ Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica*, 1:134.

¹⁵⁰ Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica*, 1:134–35.

damnation experienced by the reprobate occurs on account of their sins.¹⁵¹ Nicholas of Lyra (1270–1349) also conceived of two different aspects of reprobation. The first was understood as a “negation to glory,” which was not grounded in anything in man or by God’s foreknowledge of human sin. The second referred to an ordination to punishment and did depend upon God’s foreknowledge of human sin.¹⁵² Decades later, Etienne Brulefer (d.1499) would use the labels “negative reprobation” and “affirmative reprobation” to describe a similar distinction. According to Brulefer, negative reprobation referred to God’s will not to grant eternal glory. This decision did not depend in any way upon man’s merit or man’s choices. Affirmative reprobation on the other hand referred to God’s will to damn or to punish particular individuals for their sins. Unlike negative reprobation, this divine decree was made with reference to human sin.¹⁵³ We can see in the theology of these three men a form of passive, eternal, non-retributive DRA in God’s refusal to grant saving grace, which leads inevitably to sin and damnation for the reprobate.

As is commonly acknowledged, most of the Reformers affirmed an absolute form of predestination.¹⁵⁴ For instance, Martin Luther (1483–1546) argued that God’s determination of all things includes the matter of man’s eternal destiny.¹⁵⁵ Luther asserts that “God foreknows nothing contingently, but . . . He foresees, purposes, and does all

¹⁵¹ Sinnema, “Issue of Reprobation,” 31–32.

¹⁵² See the discussion in Sinnema, “Issue of Reprobation,” 33.

¹⁵³ Sinnema, “Issue of Reprobation,” 35–36.

¹⁵⁴ Space does not permit a thorough engagement with the Reformers; as a result, I will interact with just a few. For an in-depth discussion, see Sinnema, “Issue of Reprobation,” 52–135.

¹⁵⁵ For an exposition on Luther’s predestinarian views, see Joel R. Beeke, *Debated Issues in Sovereign Predestination: Early Lutheran Predestination, Calvinian Reprobation, and Variations in Genevan Lapsarianism*, Reformed Historical Theology, vol. 42 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017), 17–24.

things according to His own immutable, eternal and infallible will.”¹⁵⁶ On the one hand, God works in the hearts of some to change their evil wills by the influence of the Spirit of God.¹⁵⁷ On the other hand, God purposefully hardens the hearts of others, not by working fresh evil in them, but by withholding His Spirit, impelling them to voluntarily act according to their corrupt natures, and bringing those things into their lives that cause them to grow more callous in their wickedness.¹⁵⁸ This latter statement makes plain Luther’s acknowledgement of eternal DRA.¹⁵⁹ Significantly, Luther concludes on the basis of Romans 9:12ff that God’s actions towards the two groups (i.e., the reprobate and the elect) depend ultimately on God’s sovereign choice to love or not to love rather than on merits of any kind.¹⁶⁰ Thus, Luther seems to believe that God employs non-retributive, eternal DRA as the vehicle through which He accomplishes negative predestination. Likewise, John Calvin (1509–1564), the most famous predestinarian in history, defined predestination as “God’s eternal decree, by which he compacted with himself what he willed to become of each man. For all are not created in equal condition; rather, eternal life is foreordained for some, eternal damnation for others.”¹⁶¹ Calvin stresses that predestination is not based on human merits.¹⁶² In the end, the elect and the reprobate are

¹⁵⁶ Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, trans. J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1998), 80.

¹⁵⁷ Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, 103.

¹⁵⁸ Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, 203–10.

¹⁵⁹ Interestingly, these declarations seem to reflect the presence of immediate and mediate, as well as active and passive, forms of DRA in Luther’s thought.

¹⁶⁰ Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, 222–29. In fact, Luther goes so far as to defend God’s right to condemn the undeserving. See *The Bondage of the Will*, 232–35.

¹⁶¹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, LCC (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 2:926.

¹⁶² John Calvin, *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, trans. J. K. S. Reid (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 120.

distinguished by God’s will alone, which is the ultimate cause of all things that are.¹⁶³ So on the one hand, God willed to display his grace and free mercy by predestining the salvation of the elect apart from any consideration of human worth or works.¹⁶⁴ On the other hand, God has also chosen to show forth his glory by giving over the reprobate to their depravity so that they might be justly condemned.¹⁶⁵ In those not chosen for salvation, God works out His immutable decree by “depriving them of the capacity to hear his word” or by “blind[ing] and stun[ning] them by the preaching of it.”¹⁶⁶ Moreover, God enlists Satan as his minister of wrath, so that the latter carries out the Lord’s judgments in hardening those predestined for condemnation.¹⁶⁷ Thus, the final reason why some sinners are “bent to obedience” while others “remain obdurate” rests in divine predestination.¹⁶⁸ Calvin therefore unambiguously embraced an eternal, non-

¹⁶³ Calvin, *Institutes*, 2:946–47, 949–50.

¹⁶⁴ According to Calvin, the fact that God elects us “before the creation of the world,” in Christ, and “to be holy” (Eph 1:4), renders untenable all formulations of predestination that base God’s decision on foreseen merit. In addition, election based on foreseen merit is impossible since fallen man has no merits for God to foresee; the only good present in man is that which God determines to grant based on divine grace. See Calvin, *Institutes*, 2:937.

¹⁶⁵ Calvin, *Institutes*, 2:981.

¹⁶⁶ See Calvin, *Institutes*, 2:978.

¹⁶⁷ See Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:311–13.

¹⁶⁸ God’s decree does not nullify human guilt or call into question God’s justice, since “their perdition depends upon the predestination of God in such a way that the cause and occasion of it are found in themselves.” Calvin, *Institutes*, 2:957. Moreover, the motivations and aims guiding the wicked differ from God’s motives and purposes. On the one hand, fallen humanity strives against God because it is motivated by evil inclinations and unbridled lust; on the other hand, God in His wisdom uses depraved men and their acts of depravity as instruments to accomplish His noble purposes (Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:217). Calvin also observes that God does no injustice since the divine act of condemnation itself takes place according to works. See Calvin, *Concerning Eternal Predestination of God*, 99–100; Calvin, *Institutes*, 2:979. He also distinguishes between remote and proximate causality, arguing that, as the remote cause of evil, God is guilty of no sin, while the reprobate are worthy of condemnation since their own natures and wills are the proximate cause of their evil deeds (*Concerning Eternal Predestination of God*, 100). Finally, Calvin asserts that all that God does is right and just and He must be trusted especially when the finite reason of man cannot fathom the infinite reasons of God (*Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, 119).

retributive form of DRA. The Italian Reformer Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499–1562) also posits eternal, non-retributive DRA in his statements on reprobation.¹⁶⁹ Vermigli describes reprobation as “the most wise purpose of God by which he has before all eternity constantly decreed, without any injustice, not to have mercy on those whom he has not loved, but passes over them, that by their just condemnation he might declare his wrath towards sins and also his glory.”¹⁷⁰ This act of God is non-retributive: while sins are the cause of men’s damnation, they cannot be the cause of the decree of reprobation since the elect are also sinners from birth.¹⁷¹ Furthermore, Vermigli does not shy away from affirming God’s governance over both the ends and the means of his decrees; thus, with respect to the reprobate, “[God] is the cause of those actions which to us are sins.”¹⁷² Furthermore, God commits no injustice when he withholds his saving grace (which alone turns fallen men from their sins), since He does not owe such kindness to any of Adam’s posterity.¹⁷³ In any event, these declarations strongly imply the presence of eternal, non-retributive DRA in Vermigli’s theology of predestination.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁹ Properly speaking, Vermigli believed that the term *predestination* should be used only with reference to the elect since the Scriptures speak predominantly in this way. Nevertheless, he maintained that God did appoint wicked men unto their damnation. See Peter Martyr Vermigli, *Predestination and Justification: Two Theological Loci*, trans. Frank A. James III, vol. 8 of The Peter Martyr Library (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2003), 15–16.

¹⁷⁰ Vermigli, *Predestination and Justification*, 24.

¹⁷¹ Vermigli, *Predestination and Justification*, 27.

¹⁷² Despite this being the case, Vermigli denies that God himself has sinned because God does not pour any “new malice” into sinners; instead, “we have the true cause of sins sufficiently in ourselves.” Vermigli, *Predestination and Justification*, 23–24, 45–46, 49.

¹⁷³ Vermigli, *Predestination and Justification*, 24, 59.

¹⁷⁴ For two other Reformers who affirmed eternal, non-retributive DRA, see Jerome Zanchius, *Absolute Predestination* (Mobile, AL: R E Pub., 1984), 89–90, 101–3. Juan de Valdes, *Life and Writings of Juan de Valdes: Otherwise Valdesso, Spanish Reformer in the Sixteenth Century*, trans. John T. Betts (Miami: HardPress, 2013), 348–53.

The decades following the Reformation saw a significant stream of protestant churches embrace the doctrine of absolute predestination, along with eternal, non-retributive forms of DRA. This is evidenced by several confessions of faith that were produced during this period. The Lambeth Articles (1595) serve as an early example.¹⁷⁵ Article 1 states that “God from eternity has predestined some persons to life; some persons He has reprobated to death.” Article 2 clarifies that predestination to life is caused by “solely the desire of God’s good pleasure” and not by “anything which is in the persons predestinated.” The Irish Articles (1615) make similar affirmations. They assert that “God from all eternity did, by His unchangeable counsel, ordain whatsoever in time should come to pass.”¹⁷⁶ They then claim that “by the same eternal counsel God has predestinated some unto life, and reprobated some unto death.”¹⁷⁷ The Scottish Confession (1616) likewise asserts,

Before the foundation of the world was laid, according to the good pleasure of His will, for the praise of the glory of His grace, [God] did predestinate and elect in Christ some men and angels unto eternal felicity, and others He did appoint for eternal condemnation, according to the counsel of His most free, most just, and holy will, and that to the praise and glory of His justice.¹⁷⁸

Famously, the Canons of Dort (1618–1619) state,

That some receive the gift of faith from God, and others do not receive it, proceeds from God’s eternal decree. . . . According to which decree He graciously softens the

¹⁷⁵ Citations of the Lambeth Articles are from James T. Dennison Jr., ed., *Reformed Confessions of the 16th and 17th Centuries in English Translation*, vol. 3, 1567–1599 (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2012), 746–47.

¹⁷⁶ They go on to clarify that “no violence is offered to the wills of the reasonable creatures, and neither the liberty nor the contingency of the second cause is taken away, but established rather.” “Irish Articles,” in James T. Dennison Jr., ed., *Reformed Confessions of the 16th and 17th Centuries in English Translation*, vol. 4, 1600–1693 (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2014), art. 11. All citations of the Irish Articles are from Dennison.

¹⁷⁷ “Irish Articles,” art. 12. Additionally, the articles explicitly claim that God’s predestination is not based on foreseen merits, but on God’s good pleasure. See art. 14.

¹⁷⁸ “Scottish Confession,” in Dennison, *1600–1693*, 109.

hearts of the elect . . . while He leaves the non-elect in His just judgment to their own wickedness and obduracy.¹⁷⁹

The Canons go on to deny that election to life is based on any foreseen merits. Indeed, the decree of election is said to be the “foundation of every saving good, from which proceed faith, holiness, and the other gifts of salvation, and finally eternal life itself.”¹⁸⁰

With regard to decree of reprobation, the Canons of Dort posit a passive form of non-retributive DRA by which God, “out of His sovereign, most just, irreprehensible, and unchangeable good pleasure, has decreed to leave [the reprobate] in the common misery into which they have willfully plunged themselves, and not to bestow upon them saving faith and the grace of conversion.”¹⁸¹ The Westminster Confession of Faith (1646) also affirms that some are “predestinated unto everlasting life” while others are “foreordained to everlasting death.”¹⁸² The confession continues,

The rest of mankind [i.e., the non-elect] God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of His own will, whereby He extendeth or withholdeth mercy, as He pleaseth, for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures, to pass by; and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sins, to the praise of His glorious justice.¹⁸³

Examples of this sort can be multiplied.¹⁸⁴ In any event, the preceding citations demonstrate that double predestination (along with eternal, non-retributive DRA) continued to be maintained during the post-Reformation era.

¹⁷⁹ “Canons of Dort,” I.6, in Dennison, *1600–1693*; all citations of the Canons of Dort are from Dennison, *1600–1693*.

¹⁸⁰ “Canons of Dort,” I.9.

¹⁸¹ “Canons of Dort,” I.15. In addition, the Canons specifically reject the claim that God did not leave anyone in the fall of Adam “simply by virtue of His righteous will” (Canons of Dort, Rejection I.8). For an analysis of reprobation in the Canons, see Sinnema, “Issue of Reprobation,” 391–446.

¹⁸² “Westminster Confession of Faith,” in Dennison, *1600–1693*, III.3. All citations of the Westminster Confession are from Dennison, *1600–1693*.

¹⁸³ “Westminster Confession of Faith,” III.7.

¹⁸⁴ Other reformed confessions that affirm absolute predestinarian views include the Bremen Consensus (1595), the Second Confession of the London–Amsterdam Church (1596), the Stafforts Book (1599), the London Baptist Confession (1644), the London Confession (1646), the Savoy Declaration

Denials of eternal, non-retributive DRA. While double predestination has garnered representation throughout the history of the church, the doctrine has also been consistently met by significant opposition. In particular, many have voiced concern, even outrage, at the notion of eternal, non-retributive DRA. Prominent theologians have argued that this form of divine agency besmirches God’s character, threatens Christian sanctification, makes a mockery of gospel invitations, and misrepresents the testimony of the Scriptures. Given such pointed criticism, it is not surprising that predestinarian schemes without these offending features have also been forwarded throughout church history.

In the middle of the third century, Origen (AD 184–253) evidences an aversion towards certain predestinarian views which “deny that it lies within man’s power to be saved.”¹⁸⁵ So for instance, he takes umbrage at the “popular understanding” of foreknowledge and predestination which suggests that these acts of God are the decisive reason for man’s calling, justification, and ultimate glorification.¹⁸⁶ He argues instead that predestination to life is based on divine foreknowledge, which refers to God’s decision to set his affection on those who merit it through their good will. He argues that Romans 9:14–19 represents the perspective of Paul’s opponent, who mistakenly claims that salvation and damnation lie outside of man’s self-determining power.¹⁸⁷ On the contrary, the apostle clarifies (2 Tim 2:20–21) that a person becomes a vessel of mercy by cleansing himself of the defilements of sin.¹⁸⁸ On the other hand, a man is made a vessel

(1658), and the Waldensian Confession (1662).

¹⁸⁵ Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans: Books 6–10*, trans. Thomas P. Scheck, FC, vol. 104 (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2002), 87–88.

¹⁸⁶ Origen, *Romans 6–10*, 87–88.

¹⁸⁷ Origen, *Romans 6–10*, 114–15.

¹⁸⁸ This is in fact how Origen understands Jacob’s election over against Esau: the younger was chosen over the older not arbitrarily, but because God foresaw that he would purify himself. See Origen,

of wrath “in consequence of the fact that through his own hardened and impenitent heart he stores up for himself wrath.”¹⁸⁹ Pharaoh serves as an example of one such vessel. God did not create him for wrath, but since God foreknew his character, He raised him up for a purpose suitable to the malice of his own mind.¹⁹⁰ Furthermore, God did not intend to influence the Egyptian towards sin; instead, hardening refers to the effect of divine patience when met with increasing measures of contempt.¹⁹¹ It seems then that Origen denied not only non-retributive, eternal DRA, but eternal DRA altogether.

The influential monk John Cassian (AD 360–435) seems to have also rejected the suggestion that God may influence some individuals towards destruction.¹⁹² He discusses the matter briefly in his Thirteenth Conference, which deals primarily with the relationship between free will and divine grace.¹⁹³ In it, he asserts that God intended to create human beings to enjoy eternal life and that God is not dissuaded from His original purpose by human sin.¹⁹⁴ He denounces as a “great sacrilege” the view that God’s saving will is limited in scope; instead, Cassian claims that those who perish do so against God’s

Romans 6–10, 122.

¹⁸⁹ Origen, *Romans 6–10*, 126.

¹⁹⁰ Origen, *Romans 6–10*, 117.

¹⁹¹ Origen, *Romans 6–10*, 117–18.

¹⁹² While Cassian does not address the matter of predestination directly, I have included his thought in this section because his work seems to be a response to Augustinian predestinarian theology. See Boniface Ramsey, introduction to *John Cassian: The Conferences*, ACW 57 (New York: Newman, 1997), 10–11; Rebecca Harden Weaver, *Divine Grace and Human Agency: A Study of the Semi-Pelagian Controversy*, Patristic Monograph 15 (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1996), 110.

¹⁹³ Ramsey rightly notes an inconsistency in Cassian’s claims regarding grace and free will. See Boniface Ramsey, “Thirteenth Conference: Translator’s Introduction,” in *John Cassian*, 460. He initially seems to affirm the priority of grace, but subsequently argues that the interplay between grace and freedom varies depending on the particular circumstances. In other words, sometimes grace precedes free will and sometimes free will precedes grace. See John Cassian, “Thirteenth Conference: On God’s Protection,” in *John Cassian*, 488–90.

¹⁹⁴ Cassian, “Thirteenth Conference,” 472.

will.¹⁹⁵ In fact, according to Cassian, if God's saving call was not universal, it would only prove that some men were not burdened by sin.¹⁹⁶ But since the Scriptures clearly state that all are under sin, no limitation can be placed on God's saving will. Furthermore, according to the biblical witness, so far is God's grace deterred by sin that it is actually emboldened by human depravity.¹⁹⁷ Because Cassian depicts God as always having a salvific disposition towards all men without exception, it seems safe to conclude that no version of DRA would be amenable to his theology.

In the late fifth century, Faustus of Riez (circa AD 403–490) wrote his treatise *De gratia* in opposition to Lucidus, a Gallic priest who approved of double predestination.¹⁹⁸ Faustus argued that in creation, God graciously conferred on human beings a freedom and a capacity to reason that could not be lost. Though Adam's sin has made obedience to God's law more difficult, the possibility remains for fallen men to act and live righteously on the basis of this primal grace.¹⁹⁹ Furthermore, he also argued that God's fundamental, unalterable disposition towards all men was one of good will. As such, saving grace must be offered to all men at all times, though only some respond to

¹⁹⁵ Cassian, "Thirteenth Conference," 472.

¹⁹⁶ Cassian's argument seems to be based on a few hidden premises. His logic seems to require that (1) God loves all without exception, (2) love must express itself in providing for the needs of its objects, and (3) only those burdened by sin need to be saved. Given these three premises, it would seem to follow that a limitation in the scope of God's saving call would imply that some were free from the stain of sin. See Cassian, "Thirteenth Conference," 472.

¹⁹⁷ So for instance, on the basis of the second chapter of Hosea, Cassian compares God to a husband who "is all the more vehemently inflamed with desire for [his wife] the more he feels that he is neglected and despised by her." Cassian, "Thirteenth Conference," 473–74.

¹⁹⁸ For a discussion of the circumstances surrounding the production of *De gratia*, see Thomas A. Smith, *De Gratia: Faustus of Riez's Treatise on Grace and Its Place in the History of Theology* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 21–60; Weaver, *Divine Grace and Human Agency*, 162–65.

¹⁹⁹ See Faustus of Riez, *De Gratia*, in *Fausti Reiensis Praeter Sermones Pseudo-Eusebianos Opera*, ed. August Engelbrecht, vol. 21, CSEL (Vienna, 1891), 29; Smith, *De gratia*, 165–66.

God's kindness appropriately.²⁰⁰ These convictions shaped Faustus's formulation of the doctrine of predestination. God does not arbitrarily predestine some to salvation and others to condemnation; on the contrary, predestination according to Faustus refers to God's just treatment of men based on their response to his proffered gifts.²⁰¹ Furthermore, Faustus rejected all forms of DRA as he denied that God ever intentionally influences men towards their damnation since the divine benevolence extends to all.²⁰² Even the biblical references to divine hardening are not evidence to the contrary; instead, readers must understand language of this sort as a mere figure of speech.²⁰³ In reality, God offers mercy towards all, and those who refuse that mercy contradict God's purpose and prove to have been "hardened" by God's saving grace.²⁰⁴

The opponents of Gottschalk of Orbais denounced non-retributive, eternal DRA while embracing retributive, eternal DRA in its stead.²⁰⁵ Hincmar (AD 806–882)

²⁰⁰ Faustus, *De gratia*, 60–61; Smith, *De gratia*, 158–59.

²⁰¹ So for instance, Faustus argues that God elected Jacob rather than Esau because the former chose to believe while the latter did not. He states, "But you say 'when they had not yet done any sort of good or evil' means they are already assigned to predetermined parties. Yet what is remarkable if he foresees the actions of those whose end he foretells, and thus, as it is agreed that the course of their life is to be disposed by their own choice of will, so according to God's power they are foreknown, and according to justice they are foreordained? All of this is predicted of them, not prefixed." Trans. Smith, *De gratia*, 184; Faustus, *De gratia*, 74.

²⁰² While Faustus is willing to admit that God permits his creatures to do evil, he denies that God in any way wills for his creatures to do evil. See Faustus, *De gratia*, 61–63.

²⁰³ Faustus states, "In the same way we sometimes, in common conversation, adopt this manner of speaking. We may, for example, charge stubborn servants with our own mildness, saying: 'I have made you worse with my patience; I have nourished your malice and pride by my remission; I have made you stubborn by my indulgence; by my indifference I have stirred up your heart to be hardened against me.'" Trans. Smith, *De gratia*, 88–89. See Faustus, *De gratia*, 59.

²⁰⁴ Faustus, *De gratia*, 58–61; Smith, *De gratia*, 88–89, 158–59.

²⁰⁵ For a sampling of accusations against Gottschalk, see Hincmar, "Letter to the Monks and Simple Folk of His Diocese," in Genke and Gumerlock, *Gottschalk and Medieval Predestination Controversy*, 170; Hincmar, "Letter to Pope Nicholas," in Genke and Gumerlock, *Gottschalk and Medieval Predestination Controversy*, 176–77; Amolo of Lyons, "Letter to Gottschalk," 191.

believed that those who are abandoned by God merit such treatment because of their works.²⁰⁶ Divine hardening operates, not by the provision of malice, but by God's decision not to give heart-softening mercy "out of the retribution of justice."²⁰⁷ Hincmar therefore argues for retributive, passive, eternal DRA in his doctrine of predestination. Similarly, Amolo of Lyons believed that the doctrine of reprobation held by Gottschalk made God blameworthy because, if it were true, then God would have imposed a necessity that made it impossible for some to repent. Amolo argued instead that God eternally foreknew the evil merits of those to be condemned. He then predestines appropriate punishment on the basis of the wicked course which men would choose for themselves.²⁰⁸ Assuredly then, Amolo also rejected the concept of non-retributive DRA.²⁰⁹

Jacob Arminius (1559–1609) famously rejected the absolute predestinarian theology of the Reformers and their followers.²¹⁰ In its place, Arminius constructed a doctrine of predestination that privileges God's work of creation and that subjects God's power to the limits of His own perfections.²¹¹ He posits that the divine decree to elect or

²⁰⁶ Hincmar, "Letter to Egilo," in Genke and Gumerlock, *Gottschalk and Medieval Predestination Controversy*, 180–81.

²⁰⁷ Hincmar, "Letter to Egilo," 183.

²⁰⁸ Amolo of Lyons, "Letter to Gottschalk," 192.

²⁰⁹ For a similar perspective from a contemporary of Amolo, see Florus of Lyons, "Sermon on Predestination," in Genke and Gumerlock, *Gottschalk and Medieval Predestination Controversy*, 207–9.

²¹⁰ Arminius claimed that both supralapsarian and infralapsarian schemes of double predestination were untenable for a variety of reasons. Chief among these are (1) the two are contrary to the wisdom, justice, and goodness of God; (2) the two are contrary to the nature of man; (3) the two are opposed to the act of creation; (4) the two are repugnant to the glory of God since they make Him the author of sin; and (5) the two do not tend towards the salvation of men, and are in fact harmful to the cause of religion in general. See James Arminius, "Disputation IX: On the Righeousness and Efficacy of the Providence of God Concerning Evil," in *The Writings of James Arminius*, trans. James Nichols and W. R. Bagnall (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), 1:215–47.

²¹¹ See James Arminius, "The Apology or Defense of James Arminius," in Nichols and Bagnall, *Writings of James Arminius*, 1:297; Arminius, "Disputation IX," 1:223–26. For a similar analysis

to reprobate particular individuals is preceded by general decrees through which God appoints Christ to be the Mediator for men, makes faith in Christ and repentance from sin the necessary conditions for salvation, and provides the necessary and sufficient grace for all to be able to repent and believe. Furthermore, Arminius contends that God's predestinating decree must be based on His foreknowledge of free human choices.²¹² Thus, God's decision to elect or to reprobate should not be thought of as absolute; in both cases, God's action is contingent upon each individual's response to God's sufficient grace. This then amounts to a rejection of non-retributive, eternal DRA. Nevertheless, Arminius may have accepted a form of retributive, eternal DRA. In his disputations, Arminius affirms that God's providence extends over the commission of sinful acts.²¹³ In one particular case, Arminius states that "it was the divine will, that Ahab should fill up the measure of his iniquities, and should accelerate his own destruction and that of his family."²¹⁴ Since he later refers to divine spiritual punishments as "such a chastisement of sin, as to be also a cause of other [sins] which follow, on account of the wickedness of him on whom it is inflicted," it seems reasonable to detect retributive DRA in his

of Arminius's views, see Richard A. Muller, *God, Creation, and Providence in the Thought of Jacob Arminius: Sources and Directions of Scholastic Protestantism in the Era of Early Orthodoxy* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 235–68.

²¹² James Arminius, "A Declaration of the Sentiments of Arminius," in Nichols and Bagnall, *Writings of James Arminius*, 1:248; Arminius, "Nine Questions," in Nichols and Bagnall, *Writings of James Arminius*, 1:380; Arminius, "Apology," 1:285–89.

²¹³ He discusses God's providence over the beginning of sin, the progress of sin, and the completion of sin. God's providence over the beginning of sin consists in (1) hindrances, (2) permission, (3) arrangement of occasions and inducements, and (4) concurrence. His providence over the progress of sin consists in (1) direction and (2) determination. Finally, his providence over the completion of sin refers to (1) punishment or (2) pardon. See both Arminius, "Disputation IX"; Arminius, "Disputation X: On the Righeousness and Efficacy of the Providence of God Concerning Evil," in Nichols and Bagnall, *Writings of James Arminius*, 1:510–23.

²¹⁴ Arminius, "Disputation IX," 1:502.

statement about Ahab.²¹⁵ This conclusion is likewise suggested by his exposition of Romans 9. There, Arminius posits that God cannot be justly angry with a man who is moved by God's omnipotent will towards sin. However, God's just wrath can remain upon one who merited divine hardening by first freely resisting God's will.²¹⁶ Thus, according to Arminius, "They, whom God hardens, have merited that hardening, and God is free to inflict upon them, according to their merits, in whatever way it may seem good to Him."²¹⁷

Modern Era

The discussion regarding predestination did not cease during the post-Reformation period. Instead, debates have continued even up until the present. These debates remain relevant to the present study because one can detect in them various arguments for or against eternal, non-retributive DRA. P. H. Mell provides a study of predestination from the mid-1800s, arguing that positive and negative predestination "necessarily grows out of the character of God, and his connection with the universe as its creator, upholder, and governor."²¹⁸ He also reasons that reprobation does not sully God's character because "those not elected have no active principle of disobedience imparted to them, and feel no restraint upon their wills—they are simply passed by, and permitted to follow the inclinations of their own hearts."²¹⁹ Mell therefore seems to

²¹⁵ Arminius, "Disputation IX," 1:508; brackets original.

²¹⁶ Arminius, "Analysis of the Ninth Chapter of the Epistle to the Romans," in Nichols and Bagnall, *Writings of James Arminius*, 3:550–51, 558–59.

²¹⁷ Arminius, "Analysis of Ninth Chapter," 3:564.

²¹⁸ Patrick Hues Mell, *Predestination and the Saints' Perseverance, Stated and Defended from the Objections of Arminians, in a Review of Two Sermons, Published by Rev. Russell Reneau* (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle, 2003), 29–30.

²¹⁹ Mell, *Predestination and the Saints' Perseverance*, 31–32.

affirm passive, eternal, non-retributive DRA. Vos and Warfield see matters similarly, as both argue on the basis of theological inference and on the basis of biblical data that God does predestine some for destruction.²²⁰ Bernhard Mayer on the other hand argues that Paul at least never clearly articulates negative predestination. He notes that Paul's discussion of predestination is never theoretical; it is always meant to strengthen churches and to meet specific needs. Thus, he never speculates regarding the fate of those outside the church.²²¹ Eugene Merrill explores the issue of predestination in the Thanksgiving Hymns (1QH). He says that "for the unrighteous 'Sons of Darkness,' there appears something very close to 'double predestination'; i.e., that the wicked are predestined to destruction just as the righteous are to salvation."²²² While it may come close, Merrill believes that *Hodayot* ultimately stops short of teaching eternal, non-retributive DRA. He states instead that "in His prescience [God] knows who among men will react favorably to beneficent influences and who will spurn them and continue in wickedness. . . . [The wicked] are rejected from the womb even unto death because their tendency is to do evil always."²²³ Philip Alexander disagrees with that assessment, but instead argues that the Qumran community shows an "incredibly consistent" double predestinarianism.²²⁴ Timo Eskola goes a different route and redefines predestination entirely. He claims that

²²⁰ Geerhardus Vos, "The Biblical Importance of the Doctrine of Preterition," *Presbyterian* 70, no. 36 (1900): 9–10; B. B. Warfield, "Predestination," in *Biblical and Theological Studies*, ed. Samuel G. Craig (Philadelphia: P & R, 1952), 317–18, 326–27.

²²¹ Bernhard Mayer, *Unter Gottes Heilsratschluß. Prädestinationsaussagen Bei Paulus*, FB (Würzburg, Germany: Echter Verlag, 1974), 318–19.

²²² Eugene H. Merrill, *Qumran and Predestination: A Theological Study of the Thanksgiving Hymns*, vol. 8, *Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1975), 41.

²²³ Merrill, *Qumran and Predestination*, 51.

²²⁴ Philip S. Alexander, "Predestination and Free Will in the Theology of the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *Divine and Human Agency in Paul and His Cultural Environment*, LNTS 335 (London: T & T Clark, 2006), 48–49.

predestination could not have been deterministic in Paul, since the apostle believed that any human being could be saved through faith and repentance.²²⁵ Instead, predestination refers to two truths. First, it speaks of “*God’s coercive act where the whole of humankind is imprisoned in disobedience.*”²²⁶ Secondly, it refers to God’s decision to save all those who trust in Jesus.²²⁷ On the basis this reconstruction, Eskola denies negative predestination (and thus eternal, non-retributive DRA) in Paul.²²⁸ Thomas Talbott takes the nuclear option, claiming that the doctrine of predestination “is a form of blasphemy in this sense: those who accept the doctrine inevitably attribute Satanic qualities to God, they inevitably confuse the Father in heaven, whose essence is perfect love, with the Devil himself.”²²⁹ Matthew Levering disagrees, arguing that Paul and Scripture as a whole teach two truths related to predestination: “God’s eternal love for each and every

²²⁵ Timo Eskola, *Theodicy and Predestination in Pauline Soteriology*, WUNT 2, vol. 100 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 303.

²²⁶ Eskola, *Theodicy and Predestination*, 303. His view is more clearly stated here: “According to Paul’s radicalized concept of predestination, the judgment of God relates to all ungodliness, and every sinner is consigned to judgment and punishment. Due to the fall of Adam no human being can avoid this judgment. Instead, all men resemble Adam in that they live under the power of death even while they are still alive. Paul’s soteriology builds on pessimistic anthropology. All men die in Adam, and this is why no man can have hope without the righteousness that comes from God.” Eskola, *Theodicy and Predestination*, 297.

²²⁷ Thus, Eskola says in reference to 1 Thess 5:9, “The idea of Christocentric predestination is evident in this passage. Faith in Jesus (cf. 1 Thess. 1:3, 10) is the criterion for eschatological election.” Eskola, *Theodicy and Predestination*, 178; cf. 303–4.

²²⁸ In order to make his argument work, Eskola understands that he must offer his own interpretation of Rom 9. He claims that the metaphor of hardening does not refer to divine determinism. Instead, as the text unfolds, Paul explains that the reason for Israel’s state is their own unbelief. Furthermore, given Paul’s pessimistic anthropology, all humanity should be understood as “vessels of wrath.” Likewise, all who hear the gospel have the opportunity to become “vessels of mercy” through faith and repentance. See Eskola, *Theodicy and Predestination*, 149–59.

²²⁹ He goes on to say that “the Reformed doctrine of predestination is an expression of human rebelliousness, for it is simply not possible, not psychologically possible, not even logically possible, to love God with all one’s heart, to love one’s neighbor as oneself, and simultaneously to believe the Reformed doctrine of predestination.” Thomas Talbott, “On Predestination, Reprobation, and the Love of God,” *Reformed Journal* 33, no. 2 (1983): 11. For a response to Talbott, see John Piper, “How Does a Sovereign God Love: A Reply to Thomas Talbott,” *Reformed Journal* 33, no. 4 (1983): 9–13.

rational creature has no deficiency or stinginess, and God from eternity predestines some to union with him and permits others to rebel permanently. These two affirmations must be held in balance, so that the logic of one does not overpower the other.”²³⁰ Stephen Williams on the other hand claims that the NT only speaks of single predestination,²³¹ which in fact may not even be predestination to life; instead, it refers to God’s predetermination of who will reign with Him in the new heavens and the new earth.²³² Williams therefore is open to the possibility that those who have not been predestined may still be saved, though they will not rule alongside the elect.²³³

As this brief overview of predestinarian theology shows, much disagreement has always existed regarding eternal, non-retributive DRA. Yet throughout Christian history, this form of DRA has had its defenders in proponents of double predestination. In subsequent chapters, I will argue that the Scriptures do in fact attest to this absolute form of DRA. At the same time, I will also demonstrate that there are other kinds of DRA depicted within the Christian canon (which is a point often overlooked in discussions of predestination).

Election

Several monographs have been written on election in the OT, in Second Temple Judaism, and in the NT. These discussions have a bearing on DRA because of the close relationship election has traditionally had with predestination. However, I have

²³⁰ Matthew Levering, *Predestination: Biblical and Theological Paths* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 11.

²³¹ Williams argues that reprobation is neither taught in Scripture nor logically required by an affirmation of single predestination. See Stephen N. Williams, *The Election of Grace: A Riddle without a Resolution?* Kantzer Lectures in Revealed Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 73–84, 140–50.

²³² In view of the possibility of apostasy, Williams argues in fact that even positive predestination may not determine an individual’s actual destiny. See Williams, *The Election of Grace*, 165.

²³³ Williams, *The Election of Grace*, 101.

decided to treat the matter separately because some scholars have argued that biblical election does not in fact refer to the predestination of individuals. On this basis, many in turn claim that the Scriptures do not attest to non-retributive, eternal DRA. For this reason, a review of recent scholarship on the matter is appropriate.

H. H. Rowley rejects non-retributive DRA in his work on election. He argues that election in the canon was always election for service, never primarily for privilege.²³⁴ Furthermore, he emphasizes that God never chooses his servants arbitrarily; instead, He chooses fit instruments for the work that He intends.²³⁵ This means in turn that the “vessels of wrath” are those elected for service with no corresponding privilege because “[God] saw that the very iniquity of their heart would lead them to the course that He could use.”²³⁶ Shank meanwhile maintains that election in the NT does not speak primarily to the election of individuals; instead, the church is elect as a corporate body and individuals are elect insofar as they find themselves within the corporate body.²³⁷ Furthermore, biblical election must be regarded as conditional and potentially accessible to all men.²³⁸ Shank in turn denies that the Scriptures teach reprobation, as the doctrine is not required by conditional election, is not taught in the Bible, and is repugnant to God’s character.²³⁹ Sigurd Grindheim’s work on election calls into question the views of both

²³⁴ H. H. Rowley, *The Biblical Doctrine of Election* (London: Lutterworth, 1950), 45.

²³⁵ Rowley, *The Biblical Doctrine of Election*, 34–35.

²³⁶ Rowley, *The Biblical Doctrine of Election*, 128.

²³⁷ As proof, Shank argues that the NT plainly depicts the possibility of apostasy for genuine believers. On this basis, he reasons that individuals can remove themselves from the sphere of election by falling away from Christ. For his discussion, see Robert Shank, *Elect in the Son: A Study of the Doctrine of Election* (Springfield, MO: Westcott, 1970), 27–55.

²³⁸ Shank, *Elect in the Son*, 99–116.

²³⁹ Shank, *Elect in the Son*, 188–94.

Rowley and Shank.²⁴⁰ Grindheim argues that the idea of divine preference is implicit in the idea of election.²⁴¹ He states, “The privilege of election is the presupposition for the obligation of election.”²⁴² Moreover, he argues that it is unwarranted to claim that Romans 9–11 does *not* involve individual election since “Paul’s answer [i.e., to the problem of Israel’s election in the face of their unbelief] to a significant degree is to distinguish between elect and non-elect individuals within the individual descendants of Abraham and to apply this distinction to his contemporaries.”²⁴³ Joel Lohr limits his examination of election to the Pentateuch, arguing that the Torah does not present the non-elect as being necessarily destroyed by God. By examining what the texts have to say about Abimelech (Gen 20), Pharaoh’s daughter (Exod 2), Balaam (Num 22–24), and the nations (Deut 4, 7 and 10), Lohr concludes that the unchosen can respond correctly to God’s testing and receive blessing.²⁴⁴ A. Chadwick Thornhill seeks to examine the Pauline doctrine of election through first exploring the views on the subject prevalent in Early Judaism.²⁴⁵ He claims both Paul and his contemporaries understood election to be primarily corporate rather than individual; the difference between them is that Paul understood faith in Christ to be the condition by which an individual becomes a member

²⁴⁰ Grindheim helpfully emphasizes the cruciform nature of Pauline election. Election in Paul (as opposed to that in Second Temple Judaism) is paradoxical, as “God’s elect have been given an invisible status that contradicts their visible status.” Sigurd Grindheim, *The Crux of Election*, WUNT 2, vol. 202 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 195–97.

²⁴¹ Grindheim, *The Crux of Election*, 7.

²⁴² Grindheim, *The Crux of Election*, 13.

²⁴³ Grindheim, *The Crux of Election*, 137n5.

²⁴⁴ Joel N. Lohr, *Chosen and Unchosen: Conceptions of Election in the Pentateuch and Jewish-Christian Interpretation*, Siphut 2 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 194–99.

²⁴⁵ A. Chadwick Thornhill, “To the Jew First: A Socio-Historical and Biblical-Theological Analysis of the Pauline Teaching of ‘Election’ in Light of Second Temple Jewish Patterns of Thought” (PhD diss., Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013), 2–4.

of the elect people of God.²⁴⁶ Others however have contended that various biblical texts witness to unconditional, individual election to salvation. Robert W. Yarbrough finds evidence of this contention in each of the major sections of John's Gospel.²⁴⁷ Donald J. Westblade understands Paul to agree with the beloved apostle, as both Paul's negative anthropology and his view of God's sovereignty require this understanding.²⁴⁸ Both Thomas R. Schreiner and Mateen Assaad Ellass defend a Calvinistic reading of Romans 9–11, as each attempts to demonstrate that divine election in these chapters is unconditional, salvific and directed towards individuals.²⁴⁹ Meanwhile, G. C. Berkouwer also argued that divine election is individual and is not based on foreseen merits; nevertheless, he denied that reprobation should be asserted as a logical corollary or as a biblical teaching.²⁵⁰

This cursory survey of scholarship on election suggests some correlation between one's definition of election and one's views on negative predestination. Those who claim that election is corporate, conditional, indeterminate, or primarily for service, also tend to reject eternal reprobation (though some do affirm retributive forms of DRA).²⁵¹ It seems however that these descriptions of election are deficient, as are the

²⁴⁶ Thornhill, "To the Jew First," 296.

²⁴⁷ Robert W. Yarbrough, "Divine Election in the Gospel of John," in *Still Sovereign: Contemporary Perspectives on Election, Foreknowledge, and Grace*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce A. Ware (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 48–56.

²⁴⁸ Donald J. Westblade, "Divine Election in the Pauline Literature," in Schreiner and Ware, *Still Sovereign*, 87.

²⁴⁹ Thomas R. Schreiner, "Does Romans 9 Teach Individual Election unto Salvation? Some Exegetical and Theological Reflections," *JETS* 36, no. 1 (1993): 25–40; Mateen Assaad Ellass, "Paul's Understanding and Use of the Concept of Election in Romans 9–11" (PhD diss., Durham University, 1996), 269–72.

²⁵⁰ G. C. Berkouwer, *Divine Election*, Studies in Dogmatics (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 198–205.

²⁵¹ See for instance Thornhill, "To the Jew First," 259–60; Williams, *The Election of Grace*, 75–76; Shank, *Elect in the Son*, 171–75. This is not a perfect correlation, as Berkouwer's views do not fit

exegetical maneuvers made to deny non-retributive DRA in the Scriptures. In line with the arguments of others, I hope to prove the presence of non-retributive, eternal DRA in the biblical witness as part of my demonstration that DRA is the subject of various presentations within the canon.

Divine and Human Agency

Interest among scholars in the relationship between divine and human agency has resurfaced in recent years. New investigations of how the sovereign will of God relates to the free will of man continue to be conducted within biblical studies. Such explorations are intimately related to my study of DRA, since by definition DRA involves the interaction between divine willing and human willing.

D. A. Carson explores the relationship between divine sovereignty and human responsibility in the OT, in Early Judaism, and in the Johannine literature.²⁵² Carson notes the OT perspective, which is “that God really is the sovereign disposer of all,” though “the sovereignty of God . . . is not permitted to devour human responsibility.”²⁵³ While he acknowledges the variety of perspectives within Second Temple literature, Carson sees signs of “merit theology” on the rise: free will is stressed, election is depicted as a divine response, and there are “subtle fences built around God to protect him from charges of either finitude or of involvement with evil.”²⁵⁴ John, on the other hand, moves away from merit theology, as he holds men responsible for belief and repentance while depicting divine agency as the decisive matter in salvation and damnation.²⁵⁵ John Barclay

this pattern.

²⁵² D. A. Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility: Biblical Perspectives in Tension* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002), 4–5.

²⁵³ Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility*, 35.

²⁵⁴ Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility*, 120–21.

²⁵⁵ Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility*, 197–98. Carson also believes that

helpfully posits three models for how to understand the relationship between divine and human agency: (1) a competitive model, (2) a kinship model, and (3) a non-contrastive transcendence model.²⁵⁶ He also compares Philo to Paul on the matter of divine agency, concluding that “both Philo and Paul emphasize the priority of divine grace, as the originating cause of salvation, including human virtue.”²⁵⁷ This does not mean that their views on grace were identical however, as Paul lacks any concern with the worthiness of the recipients of grace, leaving him “at the risk of falling into a hard and arbitrary predestinarianism.”²⁵⁸ Philip Alexander fixes his attention on predestination and free will within the Dead Sea Scrolls. He views the scrolls as emphasizing divine agency at the expense of the human agent, as he states that “there is, apparently little room here for independent human agency: the good and the bad, men, angels and demons, act in the end only as agents of God's grand design. Divine agency is all.”²⁵⁹ Jason Maston believes that the Jews employed various strategies to account for divine and human agency. Some (like Ben Sira) saw the human agent as fundamental.²⁶⁰ Others (like the author of *Hodayot*) understood YHWH’s agency to be the basis for any human action.²⁶¹ By exegeting Romans 7:7–25, Maston concludes that Paul had more in common with the latter stream

John presents God as being somehow behind the fate of the unsaved, though his reprobating work and electing work are asymmetrical (195–97).

²⁵⁶ John M. G. Barclay, “Introduction,” in *Divine and Human Agency in Paul and His Cultural Environment*, ed. John M. G. Barclay and Simon Gathercole, LNTS 335 (London: T & T Clark, 2006), 6–7.

²⁵⁷ John M. G. Barclay, “‘By the Grace of God I Am What I Am’: Grace and Agency in Philo and Paul,” in Barclay and Gathercole, *Divine and Human Agency in Paul*, 156.

²⁵⁸ Barclay, “By the Grace of God,” 157.

²⁵⁹ Alexander, “Predestination and Free Will,” 48.

²⁶⁰ Jason Maston, *Divine and Human Agency in Second Temple Judaism and Paul: A Comparative Study*, WUNT 2, vol. 297 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 73.

²⁶¹ Maston, *Divine and Human Agency*, 122–23.

of Jewish thought, as the apostle criticizes the two-ways theology of Ben Sira and presents divine agency to be the solution to the human predicament.²⁶² Jarvis Williams explores the issue of agency in the OT, in early Judaism, and in Paul's letters. He concludes that in Paul, divine agency enjoys primacy of place without displacing the human agent.²⁶³ He argues as well that this is consistent with the perspective of the OT and with Early Jewish thought.²⁶⁴ Preston Sprinkle compares the Pauline and Qumran literature with respect to the ways in which divine and human agency impact their perspectives on salvation.²⁶⁵ He argues that the OT presents two streams of soteriological thought: the Deuteronomic stream (which posits that human repentance precedes divine restoration) and the Prophetic stream (which asserts that God will act unilaterally to save His people).²⁶⁶ Sprinkle then argues that Paul consistently emphasizes the latter as he asserts the priority of divine agency in matters of salvation. While some of the Qumran hymns share aspects of Paul's soteriological worldview, much of their didactic literature betray an emphasis on human initiative in salvation.²⁶⁷

The conversation regarding divine and human agency in the biblical documents and in Early Judaism needs to continue. While progress has been made and while most believe that Paul prioritized divine agency, much disagreement still litters the

²⁶² Maston, *Divine and Human Agency*, 153–54.

²⁶³ As he states, “Divine agency surrounds human agency. The human agent has an important role in Paul, but divine agency is the cause of human agency, and the latter is consequent to and the result of the former in Paul’s soteriology.” Jarvis J. Williams, “Divine and Human Agency in Paul’s Soteriology,” in *For Whom Did Christ Die? The Extent of the Atonement in Paul’s Theology*, Paternoster Biblical Monographs (Milton Keynes, England: Paternoster, 2012), 105.

²⁶⁴ Williams, “Divine and Human Agency,” 106–37.

²⁶⁵ Preston M. Sprinkle, *Paul and Judaism Revisited: A Study of Divine and Human Agency in Salvation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013), 36.

²⁶⁶ Sprinkle, *Paul and Judaism Revisited*, 38.

²⁶⁷ Sprinkle, *Paul and Judaism Revisited*, 240–43.

discussion.²⁶⁸ Though I do not aim to address the issue as a whole, I believe that an exploration of DRA could make a substantial contribution to an understanding of the subject since DRA represents perhaps the most problematic point of contact between divine and human agency.

Romans 9

Paul's discussion in Romans 9 continues to be the subject of much dispute. Historically, proponents of non-retributive, eternal reprobation have claimed to find much evidence for their views in this chapter. Nevertheless, a significant number of modern scholars deny the presence of double predestination in Paul's argument. Because this section of Paul's letter plays a prominent role in the conversation regarding reprobation, I will provide a selective overview of some modern treatments of this chapter, paying particular attention to their interpretation of Romans 9:14–23.

G. B. Caird makes the innovative claim that Arminian, Calvinist, and universalist readings of Romans 9–11 are all correct in what they affirm but mistaken in what they deny.²⁶⁹ Since he was no theologian, Paul felt comfortable simultaneously making three assertions that Westerners would view as logically incompatible²⁷⁰: (1) salvation is not a matter of human will or exertion, but of divine mercy; (2) due to self-wrought unbelief, the Jews themselves are to blame for their plight; and (3) the

²⁶⁸ Williams, for instance, sees a great deal of continuity between the OT, Early Judaism, and Paul on the matter of divine and human agency. Maston meanwhile sees two incompatible streams of thought within Judaism, with Paul basically subscribing to a Christological version of the view found in *Hodayot*. Sprinkle disagrees, as he claims that the didactic materials within the Dead Sea Scrolls reflect a Deuteronomic perspective, which sees human agency as being decisive in salvation. Carson, on the other hand, argues that a merit theology emerges in most Jewish literature, with the Dead Sea Scrolls being the jarring exception.

²⁶⁹ G. B. Caird, "Predestination—Romans ix.-xi.," *ExpTim* 68, no. 11 (1957): 324.

²⁷⁰ Caird believes that this pursuit of logical consistency is what has derailed interpretations of Paul. As he states, "It was this worship of consistency which led both Calvin and Arminius astray." Caird, "Predestination," 325.

rejection of Israel is not final, but is part of God’s plan of universal salvation.²⁷¹ Furthermore, while Calvinists are correct to emphasize the primacy of grace, Caird claims that they are utterly mistaken when they interpret Romans 9:14–23 as testifying to the doctrine of reprobation.²⁷² Roger T. Forster and V. Paul Marston agree with this last point. They contend that Romans 9:14–18 cannot refer to negative predestination since Exodus 33:19 does not concern anyone’s eternal destiny; instead, both texts are only claiming that God acts according to the strategy that he thinks is best, regardless of whether or not his servants agree.²⁷³ In addition, Paul’s reference to Pharaoh demonstrates that reprobation has no place in his thought since the Egyptian king hardened himself before YHWH gave him the courage to carry out his evil intentions.²⁷⁴ Lastly, Forster and Marston believe that in Romans 9:21–23, Paul alludes to Jeremiah 18:1–11 in order to say that “the basic lump that forms a nation will either be built up or broken down by the Lord, *depending on their own moral response.*”²⁷⁵

John Piper sees the matter quite differently. He understands Paul to be grappling with the problem of the faithfulness of God in the face of the condemnation of many within Israel (Rom 9:1–5).²⁷⁶ He then critiques the corporate view of election in Romans 9 as it fails to solve the dilemma facing Paul.²⁷⁷ Instead, Piper argues that Paul sees the unconditional predestination of individuals to salvation or to condemnation as

²⁷¹ Caird, “Predestination,” 324.

²⁷² Caird, “Predestination,” 326.

²⁷³ Forster and Marston, *God’s Strategy in Human History*, 63–67.

²⁷⁴ Forster and Marston, *God’s Strategy in Human History*, 69–75.

²⁷⁵ Forster and Marston, *God’s Strategy in Human History*, 82.

²⁷⁶ Piper, *Justification of God*, 47.

²⁷⁷ Piper, *Justification of God*, 63–67.

the means by which God secures his “purpose according to election.”²⁷⁸ Such an act would not compromise God’s righteousness, since in Piper’s view, “God’s righteousness consists in his unswerving commitment always to act for the glory of his name.”²⁷⁹ Thus, even God’s reprobating activity attested in Romans 9:14–23 is righteous because through it, God manifests a clear display of His glory for the sake of His elect.²⁸⁰ Schreiner too defends a more Calvinistic reading of Romans 9.²⁸¹ He argues that Romans 9–11 has to do with salvation rather than with the historical destiny of nations.²⁸² Additionally, Schreiner asserts that “the election Paul describes in this passage is both corporate and individual” and that “a reference to the former [i.e., corporate election] does not rule out the latter [i.e., individual election].”²⁸³ He also contends against the claim that election in Romans 9 refers to God’s choice of a corporate group as opposed to God’s election of individual persons.²⁸⁴ Those who prioritize corporate election maintain that God elects a corporate entity, while individuals make themselves members of this chosen group through the exercise of personal faith. According to Schreiner, such a view should be rejected since it misrepresents the relationship between corporate and individual election and it empties divine election of its saving importance.²⁸⁵ Ellass similarly argues for a

²⁷⁸ Piper, *Justification of God*, 51.

²⁷⁹ Piper, *Justification of God*, 100.

²⁸⁰ Piper, *Justification of God*, 186–89.

²⁸¹ Schreiner, “Romans 9”; see also Thomas R. Schreiner, “Corporate and Individual Election in Romans 9: A Response to Brian Abasciano,” *JETS* 49, no. 2 (2006): 373–86.

²⁸² Schreiner, “Romans 9,” 26–33.

²⁸³ Schreiner, “Romans 9,” 34.

²⁸⁴ Schreiner, “Corporate and Individual Election,” 376–77.

²⁸⁵ As he states, “Corporate election is rendered meaningless, on Abasciano’s scheme, for it constitutes the election of an empty set—a nullity. All the emphasis is placed on human faith, and the grace of God in electing his people to salvation is erased.” Schreiner, “Corporate and Individual Election,” 386. For Abasciano’s responses, see Brian J. Abasciano, “Corporate Election in Romans 9: A Reply to Thomas

Calvinistic understanding of Romans 9–11. In addition to some of the points made by Piper and Schreiner, Ellass also argues that the Qumran community proves that some pockets within Second Temple Judaism had developed highly individualistic notions of election and predestination.²⁸⁶ He believes that Paul’s argument in Romans 9–11 reflects these conceptions.²⁸⁷

Alternatively, J. Ross Wagner argues that the allusions and echoes within Romans 9–11 suggest a slightly different reading. Though he understands Romans 9:1–13 similarly to Piper and to Schreiner,²⁸⁸ Wagner does not believe Paul to refer to eternal reprobation in Romans 9:14–23. He argues that the citation of Exodus 33:19 means “not simply that God is free to be merciful to whom he will, but more specifically that God has freely chosen to be merciful to Israel and to keep his covenant with his people even in the face of their unfaithfulness and idolatry.”²⁸⁹ Additionally, because the potter metaphor in Romans 9:19–23 draws from Isaiah 29:16 and 45:9, Paul should not be understood as “representing a childish attempt by God to assert his sovereignty over his people through brute force”; instead, “the affirmation that God is Israel’s maker implies a far more intimate relationship. This is the language of election.”²⁹⁰ Brian Abasciano argues more forcefully against the Calvinist reading of Romans 9. Since he surmises that the phrase

Schreiner,” *JETS* 49, no. 2 (2006): 351–71; Brian J. Abasciano, “Clearing Up Misconceptions about Corporate Election,” *ATJ* 41 (2009): 59–90.

²⁸⁶ Ellass, “Concept of Election,” 102–9.

²⁸⁷ Ellass, “Concept of Election,” 121–22.

²⁸⁸ Wagner agrees with them regarding the presenting issue in Rom 9:1–5 and regarding the place of election as part of Paul’s solution in Rom 9:6–13. See J. Ross Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News: Isaiah and Paul in Concert in the Letter to the Romans*, NovTSup (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2002), 45–51.

²⁸⁹ Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News*, 53.

²⁹⁰ Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News*, 66.

“children of the promise” in 9:7 means “those who believe the promise,” he is led to interpret 9:10–13 to mean that human faith is the basis of divine election.²⁹¹ Moreover, God’s sovereignty in election does not refer to His right to decide between individuals, but to His prerogative to set or reset the conditions of membership into His people as He so pleases.²⁹² Hardening meanwhile is understood retributively and (in Rom 9 at least) refers specifically to God’s act of judgment against the Jews, which consisted of his decision to make faith in Christ the new condition for entry into His covenant people apart from works or ancestry.²⁹³

N. T. Wright also sees no place in Romans 9–11 for a doctrine of reprobation, as he offers an original take on these chapters. He believes most commentators have failed to see the main idea of Romans 9–11, which “is all about the fulfilment of Deuteronomy 30: in other words—though this is almost always missed by commentators!—*covenant renewal and the end of exile*.”²⁹⁴ Ultimately according to Wright, the apostle is making the same argument in both Romans 1–4 and in Romans 9–11.²⁹⁵ He maintains that Romans 9:1–23 would not have been controversial to any Second Temple Jew and that the objections anticipated by Paul in 9:14 and 9:19 reflect the perspective of the Gentiles.²⁹⁶ Romans 9:10–13 intimates God’s intention to call Gentiles into covenant membership apart from any consideration of merit.²⁹⁷ God has the right to do this, as His

²⁹¹ Abasciano, *Old Testament in Romans 9.10-18*, 53.

²⁹² Abasciano, *Old Testament in Romans 9.10-18*, 53.

²⁹³ See Abasciano, *Old Testament in Romans 9.10-18*, 203–10.

²⁹⁴ Wright, *Paul and Faithfulness of God*, 1164.

²⁹⁵ Wright, *Paul and Faithfulness of God*, 1164.

²⁹⁶ Wright, *Paul and Faithfulness of God*, 1184–87.

²⁹⁷ Wright, *Paul and Faithfulness of God*, 1188.

previous hardening of Pharaoh “is explicitly said to be in the service of the worldwide proclamation of God’s name.”²⁹⁸ Furthermore, Israel itself should be understood as the “vessel of wrath” and the “vessel of mercy”: as God’s elect people, the nation shares in the Messiah’s “casting away” because “the doctrine of election *always envisaged the elect themselves being the people through whom God would perform the negative task essential to rescuing the world, namely the outpouring of his anger and power.*”²⁹⁹ David R. Wallace reads Romans 9 to highlight God’s merciful character and his desire for humility from both Israel and the nations.³⁰⁰ He argues that the election of Jacob was an expression of mercy towards both of Rebecca’s sons, as it summoned both to humility. By quoting Malachi 1:2, Paul intends to indict both Jacob’s and Esau’s descendants for refusing to humble themselves. God then responds by judging the Edomites as a merciful warning to Israel.³⁰¹ A similar principle is at work in God’s actions towards Pharaoh, as God’s judgment against Egypt results in the merciful proclamation of His name to the “vessels of mercy,” namely, the Gentiles.³⁰² Thus, Romans 9 demonstrates God’s impartial mercy towards both Jews and Gentiles who prove themselves to be part of the “remnant” through their humility.³⁰³

Much more has been written on Romans 9 and much more could be said. Nevertheless, this brief summary of recent scholarship highlights some of the main contours of the discussion on Romans 9 as it relates to DRA. As is plain, many

²⁹⁸ Wright, *Paul and Faithfulness of God*, 1189.

²⁹⁹ Wright, *Paul and Faithfulness of God*, 1190–93.

³⁰⁰ For his interpretation of Rom 9, see David R. Wallace, *Election of the Lesser Son: Paul’s Lament-Midrash in Romans 9–11* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 55–100.

³⁰¹ Wallace, *Election of the Lesser Son*, 69–73.

³⁰² Wallace, *Election of the Lesser Son*, 77–78, 93–94.

³⁰³ Wallace, *Election of the Lesser Son*, 104.

interpreters agree that no trace of the doctrine of eternal reprobation can be found in Romans 9. Though they have this point in common, they diverge widely from one another in their reconstructions of the precise meaning of Romans 9:14–23. While each has their strengths, I am persuaded that these interpreters fail to account for Paul’s argument and they misconstrue the apostle’s testimony to DRA. As I will attempt to show, Romans 9:14–23 is best understood as affirming non-retributive, active, immediate, and eternal DRA. In so doing, I will provide further evidence that the biblical witness to DRA is multifaceted.

Summary

In this chapter, I provided an overview of the history of scholarship related to DRA. Since the subject has garnered relatively little direct attention from scholars, I have interacted with studies of five related issues: (1) divine hardening, (2) predestination, (3) election, (4) divine and human agency, and (5) the ninth chapter of Romans. My survey of these subjects has led to the following conclusions. First, no study yet available has provided a biblical-theological treatment of DRA specifically. Second, many biblical scholars and theologians continue to deny the existence of non-retributive, eternal DRA, despite what seems like strong textual evidence for the concept and despite its attestation through much of church history. Third, as of yet, no one has successfully attended to the unique nuances of the biblical authors’ perspectives on DRA while also forwarding a proposal for how their views might be complementary rather than mutually exclusive. These three observations convinced me of the need to turn to the Scriptures anew in order to search its witness regarding this divine activity.

CHAPTER 3

DIVINE REPROBATING ACTIVITY IN THE TORAH

As the preceding chapter demonstrates, the topic of DRA has not been the subject of much focused study. Though many theologians and scholars have studied particular expressions of this divine agency and some have interacted with the concept of DRA tangentially, I am unaware of any academic works that provide a biblical-theological account of DRA itself. It is to this task that I now turn, beginning with the testimony of the first five books of Moses.

As I mentioned previously, three criteria will be used to identify the presence of DRA in a given passage: (1) the text must depict God to be intentionally involved behind the activity of a created agent or group of agents; (2) the text must refer to an agent or a group of agents engaged in or predetermined to engage in condemnable activity as a result of divine influence; *and* (3) the text must indicate that the purpose or result of God's influence is or will be the condemnation of said agent(s). Several important texts within the Pentateuch meet these criteria, beginning with perhaps the OT's most notorious example: the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. As will be seen however, the books of Moses have more to say regarding DRA than is found in the exodus story. In fact, both the variegated nature and the significance of DRA receives attestation within the Torah.

DRA in Exodus

The account of God's dealings with Pharaoh in the exodus story meets the three criteria required for detecting DRA. These chapters satisfy the first requirement

since the author of Exodus repeatedly testifies to God’s involvement in and behind Pharaoh’s activities. He does this mainly (though not exclusively) through the language of divine hardening: the text repeatedly names YHWH as the subject acting upon the hearts of Pharaoh and his men.¹ Despite these plain statements, some scholars have argued that the divine hardening motif should be understood as a mere rhetorical device that is equivalent in meaning to self-hardening.² However, most scholars have rightly concluded that the original author probably used the motif to refer to some personal activity on God’s part. This is evidenced by the fact that the hardening of Pharaoh is said to occur according to God’s own purpose. So for instance, according to Exodus 10:1–2 (MT), the Lord hardened Pharaoh and his men “so that I might perform these signs of

¹ See Exod 4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8, 17. Within the exodus story, there are three Hebrew roots commonly translated “to harden” in most English Bibles: חזק (*qal*: “to be strong”), כבד (*qal*: “to be heavy”), and קשה (*qal*: “to be hard”). Various forms of חזק occur in relation to לב (“heart”) twelve times (Exod 4:21; 7:13, 22; 8:15; 9:12, 35; 10:20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8, and 17). The root כבד is paired with לב six times (7:14; 8:11, 28; 9:7, 34; and 10:1). Lastly, קשה is employed together with לב only once (Exod 7:3), but it is also used of Pharaoh in Exod 13:15. Though it is possible that each has a unique nuance, the author of Exodus probably used the terms as rough synonyms when employing them to describe the state of the heart. The seemingly free exchange of terms in Exod 7:13–14 and 9:34–10:1 supports this assertion. See also John D. Currid, “Why Did God Harden Pharaoh’s Heart?,” *BRev* 9, no. 6 (1993): 46–47; John Piper, *The Justification of God: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Romans 9:1–23*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1993), 160–61; Carl Philip Weber, “חזק,” in *TWOT*, 276; G. K. Beale, “An Exegetical and Theological Consideration of the Hardening of Pharaoh’s Heart in Exodus 4–14 and Romans 9,” *TJ* 5, no. 2 (1984): 147; Dorian Coover Cox, “The Hardening of Pharaoh’s Heart in Its Literary and Cultural Contexts,” *BSac* 163, no. 651 (2006): 304n33; William A. Ford, *God, Pharaoh and Moses: Explaining the Lord’s Actions in the Exodus Plagues Narrative* (Milton Keynes, England: Paternoster, 2006), 12.

² These readings leave no room for divine agency at all in accounting for Pharaoh’s moral state. See for instance Benno Jacob, *The Second Book of the Bible: Exodus*, trans. Walter Jacob (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1992), 246–47; U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, trans. Israel Abrahams, English ed. (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1967), 56. Other scholars come close to positing a purely rhetorical reading, but distinguish themselves by claiming that hardening occurs impersonally. So for instance, Nehama Leibowitz argues that hardening occurs on account of the way that God has made man so that the latter’s choices set him on a path that becomes increasingly difficult to abandon. Nehama Leibowitz, *Studies in Shemot*, trans. Aryeh Newman, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: World Zionist Organization, 1976), 156–58. Similarly, Rylaarsdam and Park suggest that God hardens Pharaoh “in the sense that the laws which determine the progressive degeneration of a self-willed personality, and make it the prisoner of its evil past, are laws of God.” J. Coert Rylaarsdam and J. Edgar Park, “The Book of Exodus,” in vol. 1 of *The Interpreter’s Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1952), 881–82.

mine in his midst, so that you might recount in the hearing of your son and your grandson my harsh dealings against Egypt and my signs which I set against them, so you will know that I am YHWH.”³ Given a hardening that is merely rhetorical, such statements of divine intention become difficult to comprehend. Furthermore, it is difficult to explain why the author of Exodus would have employed such a misleading expression if he did not intend to describe DRA. In addition, the text does not limit itself to hardening language in describing God’s influence over Pharaoh. In Exodus 9:15–16 (MT), God is said to have raised up (העמדתיו) Pharaoh so that He might display His power, presumably in acts of judgment against him and his people. Such action cannot be said to be merely rhetorical without emptying the significance of such a statement. Exodus also meets the second criteria of DRA, as it repeatedly depicts Pharaoh as engaged in condemnable behavior resulting from YHWH’s influence. Pharaoh’s refusal to let God’s people go (which the author claims is due to divine hardening; see Exod 4:21; 7:3–4; 9:34–10:1; and 11:10) provokes God’s judgments throughout the episode and is called sinful in Exodus 9:34–35.⁴ Finally, the text is also in keeping with the third criteria of DRA because it depicts Pharaoh’s ruin as among God’s aims to be achieved through the means of hardening.⁵ This is demonstrated by several specific statements which reveal that God intended to harden Pharaoh in order to demonstrate His destructive power.⁶ Likewise, the flow of the narrative seems to make a similar point. After all, Israel had already been delivered when

³ Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine and all versification of the OT comes from the MT.

⁴ In fact, Exod 9:34 says that Pharaoh continued to sin (ויסף לו חטא), which implies that his previous refusals were also sinful.

⁵ I do not mean to claim that the condemnation of Pharaoh was the *exclusive* purpose behind divine hardening; instead, I only intend to show that judgment was among God’s purposes. Thus, my claims are consistent with those who observe that the hardening is ultimately meant to lead to the display of God’s glory. See for instance Piper, *Justification of God*, 164.

⁶ See Exod 7:1–5; 9:15–16; 10:1–2; 11:9; 14:1–4, 17–18.

YHWH hardened Pharaoh's heart so that he and his army might pursue Israel and be destroyed.⁷ In light of these observations, it seems warranted to conclude that DRA is in fact present in Exodus 3–14.

While most scholars seem to agree that some form of DRA is presented through the hardening motif in the exodus story, much disagreement exists regarding its nature. Thus, most studies of the hardening motif in Exodus can be helpfully divided into two major streams.⁸ The first stream understands the story to indicate a retributive form of divine agency.⁹ Those who take this position believe that in one way or another, the

⁷ See Exod 14:1–9, 17–18.

⁸ A few positions do not fit neatly into the schema proposed in this paper. As previously noted, some see the hardening language to be merely rhetorical. See Jacob, *Exodus*, 246–47; Cassuto, *Exodus*, 56. Brevard S. Childs believes the discussion regarding divine agency in Exod 3–14 is altogether misguided. See Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975), 174. Lyle Eslinger makes the provocative claim that the narrator of Exodus intends to depict God negatively through the hardening motif. See Lyle Eslinger, “Freedom or Knowledge: Perspective and Purpose in the Exodus Narrative (Exodus 1-15),” *JSOT* 52 (1991): 56–58. Meanwhile, some exegetes remain ambiguous on whether hardening should be seen as retributive or non-retributive. See for instance Cox, “The Hardening of Pharaoh’s Heart,” 309–10; Claire Matthews McGinnis, “The Hardening of Pharaoh’s Heart in Christian and Jewish Interpretation,” *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 6, no. 1 (2012): 61; Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, NAC, vol. 2 (Nashville: B & H, 2006), 150; M. J. Oosthuizen, “Exodus 4:21-23: A Fusion of Two Narrative Voices,” *OTE* 1, no. 3 (1988): 57–67. For a different system of classification, see Ford, *God, Pharaoh and Moses*, 5–10.

⁹ See for instance Ford, *God, Pharaoh and Moses*, 120–24; Edward P. Meadors, *Idolatry and the Hardening of the Heart: A Study in Biblical Theology* (New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 35; Duane A. Garrett, *A Commentary on Exodus*, Kregel Exegetical Library (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2014), 370–75; Robert B. Chisholm Jr., “Divine Hardening in the Old Testament,” *BSac* 153, no. 612 (1996): 429–34; Jonathan Grossman, “The Structural Paradigm of the Ten Plagues Narrative and the Hardening of Pharaoh’s Heart,” *VT* 64, no. 4 (2014): 604; Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 15 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 99; Matthew McAfee, “The Heart of Pharaoh in Exodus 4-15,” *BBR* 20, no. 3 (2010): 349–51; Brian P. Irwin, “Yahweh’s Suspension of Free Will in the Old Testament: Divine Immorality or Sign-Act?,” *TynBul* 54, no. 2 (2003): 58–59; Roger T. Forster and V. Paul Marston, *God’s Strategy in Human History* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1973), 160; Thomas B. Dozeman, *Exodus*, ECC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 154; Nahum M. Sarna, *Exploring Exodus: The Heritage of Biblical Israel* (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), 64; Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, trans. Abraham J. Malherbe and Everett Ferguson, *Classics of Western Spirituality* (New York: Paulist, 1978), 70–74; H. Freeman and Maurice Simon, eds., *Midrash Rabbah: Exodus*, trans. S. M. Lehrman (London: Soncino, 1951), 152; Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans: Books 6–10*, trans. Thomas P. Scheck, FC, vol. 104 (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2002), 117–18; Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 380; Rylaarsdam and Park, “The Book of Exodus,” 881–82; J. Gerald Janzen, *Exodus*, Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 75–77.

author states that divine hardening occurs as God's response to human self-hardening or to sin.¹⁰ That is to say, Pharaoh initiated his moral degeneration, and YHWH merely responded to the former's autonomous choices by meting out a just recompense (i.e., hardening).¹¹ In contrast to this position, the second stream reads the text as indicating a non-retributive form of divine agency.¹² According to this reading, the author of Exodus does not portray hardening as an act of retribution. Instead, other motivations stand

¹⁰ Augustine's early writings on the hardening motif serve as an example of a responsive view of divine agency. Augustine discusses the issue of Pharaoh's heart while addressing a question on Rom 9:20. He states that "[Pharaoh's] prior mistreatment of the foreigners in his kingdom merited for him as a fitting consequence hardness of heart so that he could not believe even the most obvious signs decreed by God." Augustine, *Eighty-Three Different Questions*, trans. David L. Mosher, FC, vol. 70 (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1977), 162. He then states that through his knowledge of Joseph, Pharaoh received an invitation to express his gratitude to God by treating Israel mercifully. However, Pharaoh rejected this call and thus deserved both the punishment of hardening and the eventual punishment of death (158–66).

¹¹ Those within this stream describe the act of hardening differently. Ford believes that divine hardening merely reduces Pharaoh's ability to obey without actually ensuring rebellion on his part. Ford, *God, Pharaoh and Moses*, 154–55. Medieval rabbis (see Freeman and Simon, *Midrash Rabbah*, 152) suggest that after repeated warnings, YHWH finally closed off any chance of repentance on Pharaoh's part through divine hardening. Chisholm on the other hand views the hardening as truly overriding Pharaoh's will, though he insists that this was done without violating his moral freedom. Chisholm, "Divine Hardening," 434. Grossman seems to go even further than Chisholm, stating that as a result of hardening, "Pharaoh no longer has free will, and he is described as a puppet in the hands of God." Grossman, "Structural Paradigm," 604. Sarna seems to have distanced God from the act of hardening in his later writings. In his early work, he described divine hardening by saying that "[YHWH] accentuates the process in furtherance of His own historical purposes." Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, 65. In his more recent commentary however, he says that divine hardening is "the biblical way of asserting that the king's intransigence has by then become habitual and irreversible; his character has become his destiny." Nahum M. Sarna, *Exodus*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1991), 23. Janzen speculates that "all God has to do to strengthen Pharaoh's resolve is to accept Pharaoh's intentions at face value and mirror them back to Pharaoh—to see Pharaoh as he sees himself." Janzen, *Exodus*, 77.

¹² Examples of interpreters in this stream include Martin Noth, *Exodus*, trans. John Bowden, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 67–68; Cornelis Houtman, *Exodus*, trans. Johan Rebel and Sierd Woudstra, vol. 1, HCOT (Kampen, Netherlands: Kok, 1993), 21–23; John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses Arrange in the Form of a Harmony*, trans. Charles William Bingham, 500th anniversary ed., vol. 2, *Calvin's Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 101; Beale, "Exegetical and Theological Consideration," 149–50; Eslinger, "Freedom or Knowledge," 60; Currid, "Why Did God Harden Pharaoh's Heart?," 46–51; Piper, *Justification of God*, 168; David M. Gunn, "The 'Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart': Plot, Character and Theology in Exodus 1-14," in *Art and Meaning: Rhetoric in Biblical Literature*, ed. David J. A. Clines, David M. Gunn, and Alan J. Hauser (Sheffield, England: JSOT, 1982), 73–77; Edgar Kellenberger, *Die Verstockung Pharaos. Exegetische und auslegungsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu Exodus 1–15*, BWA(N)T 11 (Stuttgart, Germany: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 2006), 178–79.

behind God's decision to influence Pharaoh in this way. Furthermore, those within this stream emphasize that God's agency is the initiating factor behind Pharaoh's activity during the exodus. Thus, these scholars consider YHWH's sovereign agency to be the decisive factor behind these events, while nevertheless affirming Pharaoh's own responsibility and agency. Both streams of interpretation can boast of having an impressive set of proponents. The question that must be answered however is which reading is more consistent with the final form of Exodus 3–14?¹³

Strong cases have been put forward defending the view that God's influence on Pharaoh is a form of retributive divine agency. Among the different arguments cited in favor of this view, the following are perhaps the most important¹⁴: (1) the absence of any

¹³ This paper focuses on the final form of the text and does not attempt to reconstruct the text's prehistory. For scholars who analyze the plagues narrative in light of source criticism, see Noth, *Exodus*, 66–71; Heikki Räisänen, *The Idea of Divine Hardening: A Comparative Study of the Notion of Divine Hardening, Leading Astray and Inciting to Evil in the Bible and the Qur'ān*, Publications of the Finnish Exegetical Society 25 (Helsinki, Finland: Kirjapaino Oy Savo, 1972), 52–56; Dozeman, *Exodus*, 31–35; Robert R. Wilson, "Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart," *CBQ* 41, no. 1 (1979): 22–23; Ziony Zevit, "Priestly Redaction and Interpretation of the Plague Narrative in Exodus," *JQR* 66, no. 4 (1976): 193; Childs, *Exodus*, 133–42; Oosthuizen, "Exodus 4:21-23," 57. For a treatment of the final form of the text that is sympathetic with the concerns of redaction criticism, see Grossman, "Structural Paradigm," 590. For critiques of source-critical approaches to Exodus, see Garrett, *Exodus*, 17; Houtman, *Exodus*, 1:13–17; Cassuto, *Exodus*, 1; K. A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 252.

¹⁴ Philosophical/theological arguments regarding the relation of divine agency and human freedom play an influential role in this discussion. Many scholars claim that non-retributive divine agency would irreparably undermine Pharaoh's responsibility and God's character. The implication then is that only retributive readings are consistent with human freedom and divine grace/justice. Examples of these types of arguments can be seen in Brian J. Abasciano, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament in Romans 9.10-18*, LNTS 317 (London: T & T Clark, 2011), 76; Jacob, *Exodus*, 246; Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses*, 70–74; Augustine, *Eighty-Three Different Questions*, 163; Freeman and Simon, *Midrash Rabbah*, 152; Ford, *God, Pharaoh and Moses*, 112, 155, 214; Chisholm, "Divine Hardening," 420n31; Grossman, "Structural Paradigm," 604; McGinnis, "Hardening in Christian and Jewish Interpretation"; Forster and Marston, *God's Strategy*, 160–61; Donald E. Gowan, *Theology in Exodus: Biblical Theology in the Form of a Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 138–39; Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, 23; Cassuto, *Exodus*, 55. Because my focus is on matters of exegesis, I do not interact with these arguments in much detail. Nevertheless, it is difficult to grasp how retributive readings make the hardening theme any less theologically challenging. Unless one is willing to rob divine hardening of its significance entirely, any reading of Exodus must acknowledge that God intentionally and certainly prevented Pharaoh from repenting. Furthermore, much of the opposition to non-retributive readings are rooted in a particular view of human freedom that has been found wanting by a number of philosophers and theologians. For readings that affirm non-retributive divine agency, human responsibility, and God's grace/justice, see Calvin, *Four Last Books of Moses*, 2:102; Piper, *Justification of God*, 168; Houtman, *Exodus*, 1:22; Beale, "Exegetical

hardening language in Exodus 5:1–9 implies that Pharaoh’s obstinacy preceded YHWH’s hardening,¹⁵ (2) Pharaoh’s self-wrought obstinacy must be prioritized since YHWH is only said to have actually hardened Pharaoh’s heart in Exodus 9:12, while Pharaoh’s heart is repeatedly described as hardened between Exodus 7–9,¹⁶ and (3) the use of stative verbs in 7:13, 14, and 22 describe Pharaoh’s hardened state even before divine influence is a factor.¹⁷ In my estimation, none of these arguments are finally conclusive.¹⁸

and Theological Consideration,” 143.

¹⁵ Chisholm, “Divine Hardening,” 416–17; Ford, *God, Pharaoh and Moses*, 87–88; Garrett, *Exodus*, 373–74. These readings downplay the importance of the prediction passages in 3:19 and 4:21, and they overlook the significance of the summary statement in 11:10. They also fail to adequately reckon with the fact that the author never mentions retribution as the reason for divine hardening. Furthermore, they seem to take it for granted that demonstrating Pharaoh’s sinfulness apart from divine influence necessarily implies retributive hardening. This however does not logically follow, as the matter of Pharaoh’s moral status is one separate from the Lord’s motivations. For a more convincing discussion of 5:1–9, see Piper, *Justification of God*, 162–63; Beale, “Exegetical and Theological Consideration,” 135–36; Calvin, *Four Last Books of Moses*, 2:101–2, 140.

¹⁶ Freeman and Simon, *Midrash Rabbah*, 152; Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, 64; Dozeman, *Exodus*, 138–39; Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 99; Garrett, *Exodus*, 374. These interpretations, however, overlook the importance of the divine predictions in 4:21 and 7:3. Furthermore, they neglect the essential function of the summary statement in 11:10 and the phrase *כִּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה* scattered throughout the plagues narrative. Therefore, Durham is on point when he says of Exod 9:12: “at the ideal point, we are told plainly what has been implicit all along . . . Yahweh has made obstinate the mind of Pharaoh.” John I. Durham, *Exodus*, WBC (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 122.

¹⁷ McAfee claims that the stative hardening verbs found from Exod 7:13–9:35 cannot be understood in an ingressive or dynamic manner. Instead, they must be read descriptively. On the basis of this claim, McAfee then concludes that these verbs do not assign a change in Pharaoh’s attitude; instead, they provide insight into his consistent disposition. See McAfee, “Heart of Pharaoh,” 343–45. The problem with this argument is that it does not actually accomplish what is intended. That is to say, even if the stative verbs do not imply any change in Pharaoh’s attitude at the moment of their use, this would not preclude hardening activity at a prior point in time. So for example, McAfee is probably correct that 7:13a should be seen as descriptive (“And the heart of Pharaoh was hard”) instead of ingressive (“And the heart of Pharaoh began to be hard”) or dynamic (“And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened”). However, given the predictions in 4:21 and 7:3, it remains probable that the narrator intends for readers to infer that YHWH’s prior hardening has contributed to Pharaoh’s state in 7:13. See also Cox, “The Hardening of Pharaoh’s Heart,” 308; Beale, “Exegetical and Theological Consideration,” 139.

¹⁸ See the previous three footnotes. In addition, two other proposals merit attention. Grossman claims that the plagues narrative reveals a 7+3 pattern, wherein the first seven plagues are meant to inform Pharaoh while the last three plagues are intended to teach Israel. As part of his argument, he claims that first seven plagues emphasize self-hardening. Grossman, “Structural Paradigm,” 599–604. This reading is implausible for five reasons. First, it cannot account for the divine hardening in 9:12 (as Grossman himself all but admits). Second, it assumes that stative verbs must indicate self-hardening, which is an unwarranted assumption. Third, the reading cannot account for interchange of agencies expressed in 9:34–10:1. Fourth, Grossman’s reading ignores the summary statement in 11:10, which refers back to the entire plagues cycle.

Furthermore, a close examination of the text suggests that the author describes a non-retributive form of DRA.¹⁹ A few observations lend credence to this position.

First, it must be noted that retribution is never mentioned as a motivating factor for the divine hardening of Pharaoh.²⁰ Despite a persistent concern with the Lord's purposes, Exodus does not once claim that God hardened Pharaoh as an act of recompense. Instead, God is said to be motivated by a desire to multiply his signs in Egypt (Exod 7:1–5; 10:1–2; 11:9), display his power (Exod 9:16), increase the reputation of his name in the world (Exod 9:16; 14:4, 17–18), and ensure a memorial for future generations of Israelites (Exod 10:1–2). In short, the author depicts the hardening of Pharaoh to be a freely chosen means of divine self-glorification rather than an act grounded in retributive justice.²¹ The absence of such statements, given the author's clear interest in discussing the Lord's motivations, lays the burden of proof on the side of those who would maintain a retributive view.²²

Lastly, Grossman misreads the import of the phrase *כאשר דבר יהוה* (“just as YHWH had said”).

A second position which must be examined is that of Ford (*God, Pharaoh and Moses*, 85-91). Ford observes that hardening language occurs in one of two contexts: (1) as part of a conversation between YHWH and Moses, and (2) within a conclusion to an episode in which either a sign is performed or a plague is sent. He then asserts that YHWH's statements in the first setting (conversations) are merely summaries; they cannot therefore be read in a manner that influences one's view of other hardening passages. He also suggests that the hardening passages among the second group (conclusions) cannot be interpreted in a straightforward manner. Both of Ford's assertions however seem to be examples of special pleading, and thus his reading fails to convince.

¹⁹ Some scholars go even further and argue that the author *emphasized* the fact that YHWH's actions against Pharaoh were non-retributive. See Kellenberger, *Die Verstockung Pharaos*, 90, 178.

²⁰ As Beale correctly observes, “It is never stated in Exod 4-14 that Yahweh hardens Pharaoh in judgment because of any prior reason or condition residing in him. Rather, as stated in the exegetical conclusion, the only purpose or reason given for the hardening is that it would glorify Yahweh.” See Beale, “Exegetical and Theological Consideration,” 149–50.

²¹ Kellenberger goes so far as to say that there are no exegetical justifications for the retributive stream of interpretation. Instead, these interpretations arise from a desire to ameliorate the offensive nature of the text. See Kellenberger, *Die Verstockung Pharaos*, 179–83.

²² Some scholars have sought to prove that hardening is retributive by demonstrating that Pharaoh was a sinner prior to God's intervention (see for example Garrett, *Exodus*, 372–75; Chisholm, “Divine Hardening,” 416–17; Ford, *God, Pharaoh and Moses*, 87–88; McAfee, “The Heart of Pharaoh,”

The non-retributive view is also bolstered by the overall tenor of the narrative: the exodus story seems to characterize Pharaoh's actions as being contingent upon YHWH rather than vice versa.²³ If this is indeed the case, interpreting divine hardening as a response to Pharaoh's prior choices or prior state would seem at odds with the emphasis of the text.²⁴ At least four points of evidence suggest a prioritizing of YHWH's agency over against Pharaoh's in the exodus account: (1) the predictions of Pharaoh's disobedience, (2) the use of the phrase "just as YHWH had said" (כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה), (3) the summary statement in Exodus 11:10, and (4) the explanation given for Pharaoh's ascent in Exodus 9:16.

First, God's predictions regarding Pharaoh's disobedience seem to indicate that the latter's actions were an outworking of YHWH's self-determined purpose rather than the impetus for responsive hardening.²⁵ The first of these predictions takes place in Exodus 3:19, where YHWH tells Moses, "But I know that the king of Egypt will not permit you to go, except by a strong hand."²⁶ Admittedly, it would be premature to conclude on the basis of 3:19 that YHWH was planning to bring about this disobedience

343). While I agree on a theological level that Pharaoh was a sinner prior to his confrontation with Moses, Pharaoh's moral status is actually beside the point; what proponents of the retributive position must demonstrate is not when Pharaoh began to be sinful, but that Pharaoh's sinfulness is presented as *the motivating reason* for divine hardening. Exodus gives little reason to believe this to be the case.

²³ See Kellenberger, *Die Verstockung Pharaos*, 178–79.

²⁴ The reason for this is because an act of retribution is dependent on something prior by definition: rewards or punishments are necessarily meted out in response to something or someone that merits such treatment. This is not to deny the authenticity of God's interactions with Pharaoh. It is to say however that Exodus does not treat YHWH and Pharaoh as equal partners in their relations. While the two have genuine interactions, they always unfold exactly as YHWH intends.

²⁵ For the sake of space, only the first two predictions (Exod 3:19, 4:21) will be discussed.

²⁶ Terence E. Fretheim unconvincingly argues that 3:19 should be read as a statement of probability. That is, based on YHWH's awareness of Pharaoh's character, it was likely that the monarch would respond poorly to Moses. His reading seems rooted in the philosophical presupposition that absolute foreknowledge and non-retributive divine agency would render any interaction with Pharaoh a farce. See his discussion in Terence E. Fretheim, *Exodus*, IBC (Louisville: John Knox, 1991), 66, 77.

himself.²⁷ Nevertheless, the context may imply that the prediction reflects foreordination rather than simple foreknowledge.²⁸ The emphasis on divine control that permeates the section (3:1–4:17) hints at this interpretation.²⁹ YHWH has just revealed His name to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM” (אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה), which some scholars take to mean that God’s identity is not contingent on anything outside himself.³⁰ Additionally, God preemptively claims responsibility for the generous treatment that Israel will receive from the Egyptians when they leave Egypt (3:21); such a statement seems to suggest control over the attitudes of the Egyptians. Moreover, when Moses complains that he was “heavy of mouth” (כבד־פה) and “heavy of tongue” (כבד לשון), YHWH declares his complete sovereignty even over malfunctioning human organs (Exod 4:10–11).³¹ In any event, while 3:19 makes no explicit claim regarding the nature of God’s predictive word, its setting may suggest that these foreknown events proceed according to God’s sovereign intentions. Unlike Exodus 3:19 however, the prediction in 4:21 is much less ambiguous.

²⁷ However, it would also be unwarranted to assume that verse 19 refers solely to an awareness of Pharaoh’s character. In fact, readers are not explicitly told at this point whether the prediction is based on a knowledge of Pharaoh’s character or a knowledge of YHWH’s plans.

²⁸ Beale, “Exegetical and Theological Consideration,” 130–33.

²⁹ Contra Abasciano, *Old Testament in Romans 9.10-18*, 85–91.

³⁰ As Garrett rightly says, “The title I AM implies that he is not a contingent being. This is not an insertion of an alien philosophical theology into the text; it is germane to the point that the text makes. His identity is not tied to any shrine, cult, city, people, or title. His powers are not limited to specific activities such as the scribal art or the annual inundation of the Nile. He is not even contingent upon the primeval forces that, in pagan theogony, preceded the births of the gods. He exists independently of all things, and is the only being for whom existence is part of his essence. *Everything else is contingent on him* [emphasis added]. In simplest terms, he is the one, eternal, all-powerful, creator God.” Garrett, *Exodus*, 207. Likewise, Seifrid sees this name being an assertion of divine freedom. See Mark A. Seifrid, “Romans,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 641.

³¹ When paired with a human organ, the root כבד often indicates a malfunction of some kind. The root is used to describe Pharaoh’s heart on six occasions (Exod 7:14; 8:11, 28; 9:7, 34; and 10:1). Given what we are told about Pharaoh’s “heavy” heart, it may be reasonable to suggest that Exod 4:11 provides an early clue regarding God’s control over the monarch’s state of mind. For a scholar who notices this connection, see Piper, *The Justification of God*, 162.

Exodus 4:21 reads, “And YHWH said to Moses, ‘When you go to return to Egypt, see all the wonders which I have set into your hand and do them before Pharaoh; but I will harden (קָרַחְתִּי) his heart so that he will not send the people out.’” This declaration sheds some light on YHWH’s prediction found in 3:19. Whereas in the prior passage, YHWH had declared that he knew Pharaoh would refuse to let the people go, he now posits divine hardening as the underlying cause of the king’s future response: “But I will harden his heart *so that* he will not send out the people.”³² Whenever Pharaoh then responds to Moses in the manner predicted, it seems only natural to assume that the author intends for readers to infer the presence of divine hardening. Now, some scholars object to this reading for at least four reasons: (1) the author does not mention hardening in his account of the first contest between Moses and Pharaoh (Exod 5:1–9)³³; (2) Exodus 4:21 seems to connect divine hardening to the performance of miraculous signs—signs which are not performed in 5:1–9³⁴; (3) predictive texts like 4:21 provide only the divine perspective

³² Many English translations (ESV, HCSB, NASB, KJV, NIV, NKJV, NLT, and NRSV) and many commentators take the last clause as a purpose/result clause. See Garrett, *Exodus*, 221; Fretheim, *Exodus*, 76; Childs, *Exodus*, 91; Sarna, *Exodus*, 23; Houtman, *Exodus*, 428; Beale, “Exegetical and Theological Consideration,” 134; Piper, *Justification of God*, 162; Wilson, “Hardening of Pharaoh’s Heart,” 29. This seems correct since the relationship between hardening and disobedience is one of cause and effect. BDB notes that the simple *waw* is often used for an informal inference or consequence. HALOT states that the word can be translated by conjunctions other than “and,” including the conjunction “therefore.” J. Michael Thigpen’s observation that a simple *waw* copulative can be used to indicate a motivation lends credence to seeing Exod 4:21d as a purpose or result clause. See J. Michael Thigpen, *Divine Motive in the Hebrew Bible: A Comprehensive Survey and Analysis*, Gorgias Biblical Studies 64 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2015), 42–43.

³³ Chisholm, “Divine Hardening,” 416–17; Ford, *God, Pharaoh and Moses*, 87–88. On the contrary, I would argue that the author did not need to be so explicit, as the prediction of 4:21 as well as the overall tenor of the narrative would have made YHWH’s involvement clear.

³⁴ Chisholm, “Divine Hardening,” 416–17; Abasciano, *Old Testament in Romans 9.10–18*, 98–99. There are several reasons why this objection fails to convince. First, this reading does not give the disjunctive *waw* at the beginning of 4:21c the weight it deserves. Second, it cannot explain 14:4–8, where Pharaoh’s heart is hardened apart from any signs. Third, if Exod 4:21 was intended to refer to a strict and literal sequence, then hardening could only become possible after *all the wonders* (כָּל־הַמִּפְתִּים) had been performed by Moses. On the one hand, if these wonders refer to the three signs given to Moses in 4:1–9 (which seems unlikely), then proponents of this reading stumble over two inconvenient facts: (1) it is Aaron, not Moses, who performs the snake sign in 7:8–10, and (2) there is no mention of the performance of the second sign. On the other hand, if these wonders refer to the plagues, then one must explain how

and cannot be used to come to terms with the issue of human accountability³⁵; or (4) the prediction of 4:21 should be understood to have been fulfilled in 9:12 because of the similar verbal forms.³⁶ They thus argue that divine hardening must have followed Pharaoh's initial rebuttal (i.e., Exod 5:1–2) which was an act completely free from divine influence. However, proponents of this view seem to overlook the likelihood that the author intends for Exod 5:1–9 to be read in light of the previously cited predictions. The flow of the narrative tends towards this conclusion.³⁷ Additionally, the language and theme of “not sending the people out” strongly connects 4:21 and 5:1–2.³⁸ Therefore,

divine hardening is reported at least as early as in 9:12, before all the plagues are completed. Either way, it seems more compelling to argue that 4:21 does not refer to a chronological sequence. More convincing is Beale, “Exegetical and Theological Consideration,” 135–36.

³⁵ Garrett, *Exodus*, 373. His argument at this point however is difficult to prove. Why must it be the case that the divine perspective is inconsequential for understanding the interplay between divine hardening and Pharaoh's actions? While I agree that statements like those found in Exod 4:21, 7:3, and 10:1 “do not really imply that Pharaoh does not act of his own accord,” the assertion seems beside the point as most proponents of the non-retributive view do not believe divine hardening is incompatible with genuine human freedom.

³⁶ McAfee, “Heart of Pharaoh,” 351–52. While 4:21 and 9:12 do make use of the same root and verbal stem (*piel* stem of the verb חזק), he fails to notice the dissimilarities between the verses. On the one hand, Exod 4:21 states that the effect of divine hardening would be that “[Pharaoh] will not send out the people”; on the other hand, Exod 9:12 states that as a result of hardening “[Pharaoh] did not listen to them.” McAfee seems to be selectively highlighting similarities while overlooking the differences between the verses. In addition, I believe McAfee has overlooked the likely implication of his argument regarding the nature of the verb in Exod 4:21. Since the verb חזק should be understood as a causative in Exod 4:21, it seems reasonable to conclude that the author implies divine causation when he uses the same root to describe Pharaoh's heart (Exod 7:13, 22; 8:15; 9:35).

³⁷ Wilson makes a similar observation: “When the Elohist added Exod 4:21–23 at this point in the narrative . . . he forced the reader to see Yahweh as the agent of the hardening even in those Yahwistic stories that simply speak of Pharaoh making his own heart ‘heavy.’ J's stories must now be read in the light of E's summary of the plague cycle.” Wilson, “Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart,” 29.

³⁸ When the author informs his readers that God would harden the latter's heart “so that he will not send the people out,” he primes his audience to recognize divine influence when Pharaoh in fact does not send the people out. Furthermore, Exod 4:10–11 may also prepare readers to see Pharaoh's stubbornness in 5:1–2 as a function of divine agency. This is a connection that is rarely explored, and yet is rather intriguing. In 4:10–11, Moses complains about the deficient function (כבד) of his mouth and his tongue. YHWH responds by declaring his sovereignty even over defective organs. Pharaoh's unreasonable and uncharitable response to YHWH's reasonable command are revealed in 5:1–9. See Garrett, *Exodus*, 239–40. What would explain this deficient response? I suggest that what the author clearly discloses later (Exod 7:14; 8:11, 28; 9:7, 34; and 10:1) has already been hinted at: the deficient response is due to a

even Pharaoh's initial act of rebellion should probably be seen as a function of divine hardening. If this is so, it would seem likely that the author employed both prediction statements in 3:19 and 4:21 in order to frame every instance of Pharaoh's hubris within the borders of DRA.³⁹

A second feature of the narrative highlights the priority of divine agency in the hardening statements: the phrase "just as YHWH had said" (כִּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה). The phrase occurs six times throughout the plagues narrative and is always found immediately after a reference to hardening and to Pharaoh's refusal.⁴⁰ Now, some scholars argue that only Pharaoh's disobedience took place "just as YHWH had said."⁴¹ Accordingly, these exegetes claim that divine control is not included by the phrase since YHWH is not named as the cause of the hardening in most of these passages.⁴² However, this suggestion seems too wooden to be correct. While it is true that the phrase כִּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה

defective heart, which is also within YHWH's sovereign control. This thematic connection may also be bolstered by a faint allusion between 5:1–9 and 4:10–11, which both feature the words תָּמוּל ("yesterday"), שְׁלִשּׁוֹם ("day before yesterday"), כָּבֵד ("to be heavy"), and דְּבָרִים ("words").

³⁹ I am not suggesting that the author depicts Pharaoh as one lacking agency or responsibility. The text clearly charges Pharaoh for his moral failures (Exod 9:17, 27, 30, 34; 10:3, 16), and it describes his reasoning (Exod 5:1–9, 17–18; 7:22–23; 8:11; 10:10–11; 14:3, 5), his willful acts (Exod 7:23, 27; 9:17; 10:3), his attitude (Exod 9:30), and his emotional life (Exod 12:30). In addition, readers must not overlook the fact that Pharaoh is also credited with responsibility for the state of his heart (8:11, 28; 9:34). While Exodus does not unpack the theological interplay between divine and human agency, it seems to emphasize the former without denying the latter. As Calvin rightly comments regarding the hardening of Pharaoh, "As if these two statements did not perfectly agree, although in divers ways, that man, while he is acted upon by God, yet at the same time himself acts!" John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, LCC (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 1:231.

⁴⁰ Exod 7:13, 22; 8:11, 15; 9:12, 35.

⁴¹ See Ford, *God, Pharaoh and Moses*, 98; McAfee, "Heart of Pharaoh," 350; Grossman, "Structural Paradigm," 603; Dozeman, *Exodus*, 210; Cassuto, *Exodus*, 96; Sarna, *Exodus*, 38; Fretheim, *Exodus*, 100.

⁴² The exception being 9:12. In contrast, my own suggestion is that the narrator made use of the phrase so that he might be able to refer to initiating divine agency without denying Pharaoh's own responsibility for his heart. This would explain why the phrase is used predominantly when YHWH's agency is not made explicit.

is always preceded by mention of Pharaoh's disobedience, it is also true that these are always joined to a hardening statement. Furthermore, the broader narrative forges a strong link between hardening and refusal (4:21; 7:3-4, 14; 8:28; 9:7, 34-35; 10:20, 27; 11:10), making it unlikely that the two should be sharply divorced. Furthermore, not only did God predict that Pharaoh would refuse to let Israel go (Exod 3:19), but he also said that he would bring about Pharaoh's refusal through divine hardening (Exod 4:21; 7:3-4). Given what the Lord had already spoken, it seems more appropriate to interpret the phrase "just as YHWH had said" as a technique used by the narrator to inform his readers that both hardening and Pharaoh's resulting disobedience occurred in accordance with God's previous declarations. This would mean that the author's use of the phrase directs readers to see Pharaoh's stubborn responses as occurring in accordance with God's promise of divine hardening, even when the latter is not explicitly mentioned (Exod 7:13, 22; 8:11, 15). As such, the phrase *כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה* should be understood as a means of prioritizing divine agency even while also affirming human agency.⁴³

In addition to the two narrative features already mentioned, the function of the summary statement in Exodus 11:10 likewise stresses that Pharaoh's disobedience was contingent upon divine hardening. The verse says, "And Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh. But YHWH hardened the heart of Pharaoh so that he did not send the sons of Israel out of his land." Most scholars rightly notice the links between 11:10 and the beginning of the plague narrative in chapter 7; thus, many observe that Exodus 11:10 functions as a retrospective review of the events surrounding the first nine plagues.⁴⁴ By itself, this would suggest that the plagues narrative makes Pharaoh's actions

⁴³ For similar readings, see Beale, "Exegetical and Theological Consideration," 141; Gunn, "Hardening," 75; Wilson, "Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart," 32; Piper, *Justification of God*, 163-65; Charlie Trimm, "*YHWH Fights for Them!*": *The Divine Warrior in the Exodus Narrative*, Gorgias Biblical Studies 58 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2014), 211; Chisholm, "Divine Hardening," 418-19.

⁴⁴ See Durham, *Exodus*, 146-47; Beale, "Exegetical and Theological Consideration," 146; Garrett, *Exodus*, 360; Ford, *God, Pharaoh and Moses*, 85n6; Chisholm, "Divine Hardening," 425; Wilson,

depend upon divine agency. However, there is good reason to posit an even broader function for the verse. Exodus 11:10 seems to reach back to Exodus 4:21, and to thus envelope all that transpired between YHWH and Pharaoh within the parameters of DRA. The two passages are linked lexically, as there are at least six key roots or phrases that are repeated between these two passages.⁴⁵ Moreover, both passages are thematically related as both are connected to the final plague. After God tells Moses his intention to harden Pharaoh's heart in 4:21, he says, "Then you will say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says YHWH: Israel is my son, my firstborn son. And I told you, send out my son so that he might serve me. And you refused to send him out! Behold, I am going to slay your son, your firstborn son.'" Thus, according to Exodus 4:21–23, divine hardening ensures that God's son would be liberated only after Pharaoh's son is killed. Exodus 11:4–10 then repeats the point, as Moses announces the impending death of the firstborn sons of Egypt (11:4–9) and the narrator informs readers once again that, from the very first confrontation with Moses and all through the plagues, Pharaoh's stubbornness finds its ultimate explanation in this: "YHWH hardened the heart of Pharaoh so that he did not send the sons of Israel out of his land" (11:10).⁴⁶ Thus, Exodus 11:10 casts a long shadow back to 4:21, thereby bracketing all the preceding interactions between the Lord and Pharaoh so that the latter's actions are understood to be contingent on the former's purpose.

"Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart," 32; Piper, *Justification of God*, 169–70; Sarna, *Exodus*, 53; Cassuto, *Exodus*, 134; Oosthuizen, "Exodus 4:21-23," 58; Fretheim, *Exodus*, 132; Carol Meyers, *Exodus*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 93.

⁴⁵ These are עשה ("to do"), מופת ("wonder"), לפני פרעה ("before Pharaoh"), חזק ("to harden"), לב ("heart"), לא + שלח ("not to send"). Even Abasciano acknowledges the links between 11:10 and 4:21. As he states, "The vocabulary of this verse recalls the two predictions of Pharaoh's hardening given before its commencement (4:21; 7:3–4), forming an inclusio with the predictions and indicating their fulfilment." Abasciano, *Old Testament in Romans 9.10-18*, 134–35. In addition, he states that the connection between 11:10 and 4:21 "seems even stronger than the connection to 7:3–4." Despite making this correct observation, he fails to see its import for reading 5:1–9.

⁴⁶ Wilson rightly observes that Exod 11:10 "reminds the reader that the whole hardening process is to insure the coming of the tenth plague." Wilson, "Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart," 32.

Exodus 9:16 provides another feature of the narrative which depicts Pharaoh's actions as contingent upon the Lord. The verse comes in the middle of a speech Moses is to deliver before Pharaoh. Moses is to command Pharaoh once more to send out YHWH's people so that they might worship Him (9:13). He is then to inform him that God is about to send out "all [his] plagues into [Pharaoh's] heart" so that he might know that there is no one like YHWH in all the earth (9:14).⁴⁷ Furthermore, Pharaoh is to be told that if God were to now stretch out His hand against him, he and his people would be completely obliterated.⁴⁸ However, in Exodus 9:16, Moses informs Pharaoh that instant annihilation would not accord well with the reason for which God "raised [him] up/kept [him] standing" (העמדתו).⁴⁹ Most commentators agree that the verse refers to God's act of preserving Pharaoh's life.⁵⁰ While this is the consensus view, an examination of the evidence raises some doubts about the accuracy of this interpretation. The root עמד in the *hiphil* stem rarely refers to preservation, if it does so at all.⁵¹ Moreover, the few verses

⁴⁷ The exact import of Exod 9:14 is debated. Durham takes 9:14 to provide the reason Pharaoh is to send out the people. Durham, *Exodus*, 123–24, 127–28. The initial כִּי is taken as causal, and the participle is interpreted as a reference to the immediate future. Garrett understands the 9:14a to be concessive, as it "gives the background for the conditional sentence of 9:15." Garrett, *Exodus*, 328–29. He then takes the participle (שֶׁלַח) to be retrospective, so that the "sending" of the plagues refers to God's prior activity during the first seven plagues. Exod 9:4b is then taken as a parenthetical statement commenting on God's purpose for those plagues.

⁴⁸ Garrett is probably correct to view 9:15 as a present contrary-to-fact conditional. See Garrett, *Exodus*, 328–29.

⁴⁹ Rylaarsdam and Park miss the point when they claim that "the Hebrew text impl[ies] that God delays action in the hope of converting Pharaoh." Rylaarsdam and Park, "The Book of Exodus," 902.

⁵⁰ For a sampling of scholars who take this view, see Garrett, *Exodus*, 328–29; Grossman, "Structural Paradigm," 591; Chisholm, "Divine Hardening," 427n37; Sama, *Exodus*, 46; Childs, *Exodus*, 158; Cassuto, *Exodus*, 116; Victor P. Hamilton, *Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 149–50; Abasciano, *Old Testament in Romans 9.10–18*, 128; Fretheim, *Exodus*, 124. Forster and Marston (*God's Strategy*, 161) take the expression to mean that God made Pharaoh's resolve firm, while Durham (*Exodus*, 124–28) seems to combine Forster and Marston's view with the traditional interpretation.

⁵¹ The root may have the idea of preservation in 1 Kgs 15:4, Prov 29:4, and 2 Chr 9:8, though in each instance the meaning of the verb is debatable. So for instance, Piper argues that עמד in the *hiphil* never means "to preserve." Piper, *The Justification of God*, 167. Someone may argue that the LXX supports the traditional interpretation, as it translates the verb with διατηρήθης ("You were preserved").

where this meaning is possible differ from Exodus 19:6 in potentially significant ways. For instance, in the three texts where עמד may mean “to preserve,” it never takes a personal direct object; instead, it takes an object that refers to territory or to a nation.⁵² Interestingly, whenever the verb עמד is in the *hiphil* stem and is accompanied by a personal direct object, the meaning always involves causing a person to inhabit a certain space.⁵³ Oftentimes the space is understood physically; for example, Judges 16:25 says “they made [Samson] stand between the pillars.”⁵⁴ Other times, the space is non-physical or metaphorical.⁵⁵ In these passages, the *hiphil* of the verb עמד can refer to causing someone to inhabit a certain social space (as for example when someone is appointed to fulfill a particular role in society),⁵⁶ or it can refer to causing someone to inhabit a historical space (i.e., bringing something into existence).⁵⁷ Together, the lexical evidence and the literary context suggests that עמד in Exodus 9:16 refers to God causing Pharaoh

However, this is in keeping with the tendency to soften depictions of divine agency which is present in some streams of Second Temple literature. This will be addressed more fully in the chapter on the Pauline letters, but see for example *Ant.* 2.264–349; Wis 10:15–19:22; Jub 47:7–8. Interestingly, Louis Feldman makes a similar observation regarding Jewish portrayals of Sihon and Og. See Louis H. Feldman, “The Portrayal of Sihon and Og in Philo, Pseudo-Philo, and Josephus,” *JJS* 53, no. 2 (2002): 264–72.

⁵² The objects of the three verses are as follows: 1 Kgs 15:4 has “Jerusalem,” Prov 29:4 has “land,” and 2 Chr 9:8 has “Israel.”

⁵³ An Accordance search reveals 85 occurrences of the root עמד in the *hiphil* stem. I have counted 49 examples where these verbs take a personal direct object (whether singular or plural).

⁵⁴ Of the 49 occurrences of עמד in the *hiphil* with a personal object, the verb refers to a literal, physical space in 26 instances (Gen 47:7; Lev 14:11; 27:8; Num 3:6; 5:16, 18, 30; 8:13; 11:24; 27:18; 27:22; Judg 16:25; 2 Sam 22:34; Isa 21:6; Ezek 2:2; 3:24; Pss 18:34; 31:9; Dan 8:18; Neh 4:7; 13:11, 19; 2 Chr 23:10; 25:5; 29:25; 34:32).

⁵⁵ I count 23 instances where עמד in the *hiphil* with a personal object denotes a non-physical space (Exod 9:16; 1 Kgs 12:32; Job 34:24; Esth 4:5; Dan 11:11, 13; Ezra 3:8, 10; Neh 4:3; 6:7; 7:3; 1 Chr 6:16; 15:16–17; 17:14; 22:2; 2 Chr 11:15, 22; 19:5, 8; 20:21; 23:19; 35:2).

⁵⁶ For example, 1 Chr 6:16 says, “And these are those whom David appointed (העמיד) over the performance of song in the house of YHWH after the ark had reached its resting place.”

⁵⁷ The examples from Dan 11:11–13 should probably be read this way, as they refer to kings raising up armies.

to inhabit a metaphorical space, whether that be social (i.e., elevated him to his regal position) or historical (i.e., brought him into being).⁵⁸ If this is the case, then Exodus 9:16 would provide a radical depiction of Pharaoh's contingency and YHWH's supremacy as it would make the entirety of the former's personal history a function of the latter's intent. As such, Exodus 9:16's pronounced emphasis on God's sovereignty over Pharaoh would render unlikely the notion of retributive DRA.

Because the text never mentions retribution as a motivation for hardening and because the narrative seems to stress Pharaoh's contingency upon YHWH, it may be best on balance to conclude that the DRA in the exodus story is non-retributive. A few additional comments may be made about DRA in the exodus story. First, DRA in Exodus seems to be active rather than passive. Contrary to the claims of some, God is in fact presented as exercising a personal, deliberate influence upon Pharaoh.⁵⁹ Moreover, the author does not describe God's influence over Pharaoh in terms of the Lord withholding his grace or merely abandoning Pharaoh to his own wicked self-determination⁶⁰; instead, YHWH is said to have actively prevented Pharaoh from responding rightly.⁶¹ Second, Exodus does not seem to posit a mediating agent between God and Pharaoh.⁶² While it

⁵⁸ Furthermore, Paul also seems to have understood the text this way in Rom 9:17. See Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, 2nd ed., BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 498; Ford, *God, Pharaoh, and Moses*, 60; Piper, *Justification of God*, 166.

⁵⁹ Contra Rylaarsdam and Park, "The Book of Exodus," 882; Sarna, *Exodus*, 23; Cassuto, *Exodus*, 56–57; Jacob, *Exodus*, 245–47.

⁶⁰ Cf. Deut 29:3. For those who argue for a passive meaning, see Origen, *Romans 6–10*, 117–18; Janzen, *Exodus*, 77–78.

⁶¹ This is suggested by the causative verbs used with YHWH as the subject (Exod 4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8, 17), as well as by the interpretation of Exod 9:16 offered above. Furthermore, the fact that both Pharaoh and YHWH can be the subject of the *piel* form of כָּבַד with "heart" as the object (Exod 9:34; 10:1) suggests that DRA is active; it seems unlikely that Pharaoh's self-hardening should be understood in a passive sense. Lastly, Exod 14:1–9 indicates that God's hardening activity resulted in Pharaoh changing his mind, which may suggest that God did more than merely strengthen Pharaoh's self-determined inclinations.

⁶² While he rightly rejects a merely passive interpretation of divine hardening, Calvin goes

initially seems possible to see Moses's ministry as the means by which the Lord hardened Pharaoh,⁶³ Exodus 14:1–9 has God hardening Pharaoh apart from Moses' involvement.⁶⁴ In addition, Moses is never said to have effected or contributed to the hardening of Pharaoh's heart.⁶⁵ These factors make it likely that Exodus describes an immediate form of DRA. Third, the DRA described here seems to involve non-eternal condemnation.⁶⁶ The text provides little reason to believe that the author intended to comment on Pharaoh's eternal destiny. Lastly, it must be noted that DRA plays an integral role in God's saving purposes throughout the exodus story: God delivers his people, defeats his enemies, and displays his glory through the exercise of DRA.

DRA in Deuteronomy

A handful of passages within the book of Deuteronomy may describe cases of DRA. The first of these involves God's treatment of Sihon in Deuteronomy 2:24–35.⁶⁷ In

beyond the text when he posits the mediating agency of Satan. See Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:312–13.

⁶³ For those who see Moses as mediating God's influence on Pharaoh, see for instance Rylaarsdam and Park, "The Book of Exodus," 881.

⁶⁴ This likewise renders unlikely Waltke's suggestion that God hardened Pharaoh through escalating his signs and wonders. Furthermore, if I have understood Exod 5:1–2 rightly, YHWH should be understood to have begun hardening Pharaoh before any of the signs were performed. For Waltke's perspective, see *Old Testament Theology*, 380.

⁶⁵ Unlike texts such as 1 Kgs 22:19–23 or Isa 6:10.

⁶⁶ For an argument to the contrary, see Beale, "Exegetical and Theological Consideration," 152–53.

⁶⁷ See Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 30–31; Jack R. Lundbom, *Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 208; Walter Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy*, ANTC (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 39–40; Meredith G. Kline, *Treaty of the Great King: The Covenant Structure of Deuteronomy; Studies and Commentary* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012), 57; P. D. Miller, *Deuteronomy*, IBC (Louisville: John Knox, 1990), 38; Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, NAC (Nashville: B & H, 1994), 101; Meadors, *Idolatry and Hardening of Heart*, 3–4; Angela Roskop Erisman, "Transjordan in Deuteronomy: The Promised Land and the Formation of the Pentateuch," *JBL* 132, no. 4 (2013): 774; Nathan Macdonald, "The Literary Criticism and Rhetorical Logic of Deuteronomy I–IV," *VT* 56, no. 2 (2006): 222; Chisholm, "Divine Hardening," 429–30; Räisänen, *Idea of Divine Hardening*, 57; Kellenberger, *Die Verstockung Pharaos*, 21.

the passage, the author of Deuteronomy recounts how Israel had previously overthrown the Amorites and had taken possession of their land.⁶⁸ In contrast to the lands of the Edomites and the Ammonites, YHWH instructed Israel to attack Sihon and to take possession of his territory (Deut 2:24). Unexpectedly, Moses responds by sending messengers to Sihon in order to broker peace so that Israel might pass through his land.⁶⁹ However, the narrator reports that “Sihon, the king of Heshbon, was not willing to let us pass before him” (Deut 2:30a). He then informs his readers why this was so: “for YHWH, your God, hardened his spirit and stiffened his heart in order to deliver him into your hand as in this day” (Deut 2:30b).⁷⁰ Sihon’s divinely inspired refusal then led to the conflict with Israel, wherein “YHWH, our God, delivered him before us and we struck him down together with his sons and all his people” (Deut 2:33). The author thus seems to depict divine influence to be the catalyst behind Sihon’s aggressiveness towards Israel—an aggressiveness which God brought about to destroy the Amorites and to

⁶⁸ The issue of the relationship between the different accounts of Israel’s conquest of Heshbon (Num 21:21–32; Deut 2:24–35; and Judg 11:19–22) goes beyond the concerns of this study. For critical approaches to the problem, see W. A. Sumner, “Israel’s Encounters with Edom, Moab, Ammon, Sihon, and Og According to the Deuteronomist,” *VT* 18, no. 2 (1968): 223; John van Seters, “Conquest of Sihon’s Kingdom: A Literary Examination,” *JBL* 91, no. 2 (1972): 189; John R. Bartlett, “Conquest of Sihon’s Kingdom: A Literary Re-Examination,” *JBL* 97, no. 3 (1978): 351; Erisman, “Transjordan in Deuteronomy,” 777–78; Gerhard von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, trans. Dorothea Barton, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), 37–39.

⁶⁹ The offer of peace in Deut 2:26–29 seems to function analogously to Moses’s initial encounter with Pharaoh in Exod 5:1–5. In both cases, God had already described the outcome even before negotiations were attempted (Exod 3:19; 4:21; Deut 2:24–25). The parallel suggests that God intended for the offer of peace to provide the occasion for war with Sihon. See John D. Currid, *A Study Commentary on Deuteronomy* (Webster, NY: Evangelical Press, 2006), 72; Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 171, 176; Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 208; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 31; Kline, *Treaty of the Great King*, 57. For a different interpretation, see Baruch Alster, “Narrative Surprise in Biblical Parallels,” *BibInt* 14, no. 5 (2006): 469–72.

⁷⁰ Mark Biddle tries to raise some doubt as to the meaning of וַי in Deut 2:30b. See Mark E. Biddle, *Deuteronomy*, SHBC (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2003), 55. While he states that the conjunction could be causal, he believes that it could also be temporal or final. However, Biddle fails to provide any exegetical reasons to doubt that the clause should be understood to refer to the cause of Sihon’s lack of willingness.

deliver their land to his chosen people. Therefore, it seems warranted to describe God's activity in this passage as an instance of DRA.

While God's influence on Sihon in Deuteronomy 2:30 is acknowledged by most scholars, few comment on the nature of the agency in question.⁷¹ Given that God is described as directly acting upon Sihon's spirit and heart, it seems best to describe the influence depicted as a form of active, immediate DRA. Moreover, there is little reason to believe that Moses had in mind more than mortal condemnation. However, there is less clarity regarding whether or not God's reprobating actions against Sihon were retributive. Some have argued that the hardening envisioned must have been an act of retribution.⁷² Chisholm states that "the divine hardening described here was part of Yahweh's sovereign judgment on a morally corrupt culture."⁷³ He appeals to Genesis 15:16 to argue that God had endured the Amorites behavior until their sin reached its full measure. He also cites biblical evidence related to the wickedness of the Canaanites and notes that the book of Joshua treats the Amorites as part of the peoples of Canaan.⁷⁴ Though Chisholm's position is certainly possible, it is not airtight. Once again, it is important to

⁷¹ Peter Craigie attempts to soften the import of the text by claiming that the narrator's comments are retrospective and that they "do not reflect a view of determinism, but reflect rather a part of the Hebrew theology of history." Unfortunately, he fails to clarify matters at this point, since a retrospective assessment is no less theological, and since he does not specify what he means by "determinism." For his argument, see Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 116.

⁷² Both Tigay and Biddle seem to view hardening in general as being necessarily retributive. On the one hand, Tigay states that "God interferes with the free will of individuals only after they have sinned on their own initiative." Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 32. His pronouncement seems overstated however, since he provides no evidence that he has examined all the cases of DRA in the OT. Furthermore, if my arguments regarding the hardening of Pharaoh's heart are correct, Tigay's claims would be severely undercut. On the other hand, Biddle describes hardening as a result of Sihon's previous decision to refuse the grace of God. Biddle, *Deuteronomy*, 56. On the contrary, the text gives little indication that God extended grace to Sihon; in fact, before Israel's messengers came to the Amorites, God had already commanded Moses to take possession of their land and to provoke them to war (Deut 2:24).

⁷³ Chisholm, "Divine Hardening," 430.

⁷⁴ Chisholm, "Divine Hardening," 430.

note that the text itself makes no claim that God was motivated by a desire for retribution. While the overall passage is not as interested in God’s motivations as the exodus story, the few places that designate divine purpose do not mention the element of retribution.⁷⁵ Instead, God’s design is to harden Sihon “in order to deliver him into [Israel’s] hand, as in this day” (Deut 2:30b). Moreover, while Chisholm correctly summarizes the biblical portrait of Ammorite/Canaanite immorality, he fails to recognize that the moral status of Sihon and his people is somewhat beside the point.⁷⁶ Demonstrating the wickedness of the objects of hardening does not suffice to show retributive DRA; instead, positing retributive DRA requires one to show that the act of hardening was undertaken *as a response* to wickedness. Similarly, Chisholm’s appeal to Genesis 15:16 fails to convince since the passage cited does not clarify the nature of God’s influence in Deuteronomy 2:30. While the former verse does suggest that the ban on the Amorites would be executed when their iniquity becomes intolerable, Genesis 15:16 simply does not speak to the interplay between the Amorites’s sinfulness and divine hardening. Chisholm’s argument is further damaged by the observation that Deuteronomy 2:30 seems to allude to God’s treatment of Pharaoh.⁷⁷ If such an allusion exists (and I suspect that it does), then it would be reasonable to interpret God’s treatment of Sihon in light of the hardening

⁷⁵ Räisänen points out, “There is no mention of any sin of Sihon. In the light of the context it is difficult to understand the hardening of Sihon as a punishment for anything (unless it be for the fact that his country happened to be in the way of the Israelites!).” Räisänen, *Idea of Divine Hardening*, 57.

⁷⁶ On the close identity between the Canaanites and the Amorites, see Keith N. Schoville, “Canaanites and Amorites,” in *Peoples of the Old Testament World*, ed. Alfred J. Hoerth, Gerald L. Mattingly, and Edwin M. Yamauchi (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 164–67. For an assessment of the archaeological and extra-biblical evidence regarding child sacrifice and sexual immorality among the Canaanites, see Arie Versluis, *The Command to Exterminate the Canaanites: Deuteronomy 7, OtSt* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2017), 299–307.

⁷⁷ See Richard D. Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 47; Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 208; Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 172; Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy*, 40; J. G. McConville, *Deuteronomy*, ApOTC 5 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2002), 87; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 31; J. A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, TOTC (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1974), 95; Macdonald, “Literary Criticism,” 220.

of Pharaoh.⁷⁸ Given the interpretation of Pharaoh's hardening argued above, the inner-biblical connection would then provide some justification for a non-retributive interpretation of Deuteronomy 2:30. Furthermore, this point of contact with the exodus event also highlights the significance afforded to DRA: like Exodus, Deuteronomy also views DRA as God's chosen means by which he fulfills his salvation-historical promises to Israel.⁷⁹ In this case, God begins to deliver on his promise of land through the exercise of DRA.⁸⁰

Deuteronomy also provides reason to suspect that Og's downfall was similarly due to DRA. The language used of Israel's conquest of Og is reminiscent of the conquest

⁷⁸ Though the language employed is not exactly the same, Deuteronomy's use of the heart-hardening motif seems to clearly link it to the exodus story (see Macdonald, "Literary Criticism," 220). Like Exod 7:3, Deut 2:30 makes use of קשה in the *hiphil* with YHWH as the subject to speak of his influence over a hostile king. The verse also speaks of God's "strengthening" influence (אמץ) over the heart (לב) of a foreign ruler, which resembles an outstanding feature of Exod 3–14 (see Exod 4:21; 9:12; 10:20; 10:27; 11:10; 14:4; 14:8; 14:17). Additionally, given the context, the use of ולא אבה in Deut 2:30 seems to recall the use of the same construction in Exod 10:27 (see Currid, *Deuteronomy*, 72–73; Weinfeld, *Deuteornomy*, 172). Other clues surrounding Deut 2:30 lend support to the likelihood of an allusion to Exodus. Moses's offer of peace to Sihon may hint back towards his initial meeting with Pharaoh (so also Kline, *Treaty of the Great King*, 57; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 31). Moreover, scholars have detected resonances between other parts of Deut 2 and the song of Moses (Exod 15). So for instance, some have argued that Deut 2:25 recalls Exod 15:14–16, which speaks of the terror that would fall upon Israel's neighbors because of God's redemptive acts at the exodus (so Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 207). In addition, William L. Moran argues that Deut 2:14–16 provides the conclusion to the anti-holy war and anti-exodus in part by alluding back to Exod 15; see William L. Moran, "The End of the Unholy War and the Anti-Exodus," in *A Song of Power and the Power of Song: Essays on the Book of Deuteronomy*, ed. Duane L. Christensen, Sources for Biblical and Theological Study (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1993), 153–55. These observations make it more likely than not that the hardening of Sihon is meant to remind readers of God's treatment of Pharaoh.

⁷⁹ Currid makes a similar point when he states, "The two events [i.e., hardening of Pharaoh and hardening of Sihon] are tied together to demonstrate the continuation of God's redemptive plan for his people: he is the one who has brought them out of Egypt and he is now bringing them into the promised land." Currid, *Deuteronomy*, 73.

⁸⁰ Several scholars have observed that Deuteronomy includes the Transjordan within the boundaries of the land promised to Israel. See for instance Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 115; von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, 43; Currid, *Deuteronomy*, 70; McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 86; Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 170; Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 205; Paul A. Barker, *The Triumph of Grace in Deuteronomy: Faithless Israel, Faithful Yahweh in Deuteronomy*, Paternoster Biblical Monographs (Milton Keynes, England: Paternoster, 2004), 43–44; Erisman, "Transjordan in Deuteronomy," 778.

of Sihon⁸¹: the lead up to both battles is described similarly,⁸² as are the summaries of the outcomes of each conflict.⁸³ More importantly, God's pronouncements prior to Israel's military conflicts with the Amorite kings share much in common. After Og goes out to oppose Israel and before the battle begins, YHWH tells Moses, "Do not fear him, for I have delivered him into your hand, along with all his people and his land" (Deut 3:2a). When YHWH says that he "[has] delivered him into your hand," the language recalls God's declarations regarding Sihon in Deuteronomy 2:24. Given that Sihon's opposition was inspired by God "so that he might deliver [Sihon] into [Israel's] hand" (Deut 2:30), Deuteronomy 3:2 may imply that Og's resistance should also be interpreted *within* God's act of handing him and his kingdom over to Israel.⁸⁴ Furthermore, Moses suggests that God treated both kings analogously when he says to Joshua, "Your eyes are those that have seen all that YHWH your God did to these two kings [i.e., Sihon and Og]; YHWH will also do thus to all the kingdoms into which you are crossing" (Deut 3:21; cf. 31:4–

⁸¹ Others have noticed the resemblance as well. Tigay goes so far as to say, "the victory over Og is described in the same schematic form as the victory over Sihon," and that "God encourages Israel, using . . . the same promise of victory which preceded the battle with Sihon." Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 34. See also Breuggemann, *Deuteronomy*, 42; McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 88–89; Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 44–45; Currid, *Deuteronomy*, 78–79.

⁸² Deuteronomy 3:1b says, "And Og, the king of Bashan, went out to meet us for battle, he and all his people, at Edrei." The wording resembles Deut 2:32, which says, "Sihon went out to meet us for battle, he and all his people, at Jahaz."

⁸³ In both cases, Israel is described as (1) having taken "all his cities at that time" (cf. Deut 2:34a; 3:4a); (2) having placed the whole city under the ban, including men, women, and children (cf. Deut 2:34b; 3:6); and (3) having set aside only the cattle and the spoil of the city for themselves (cf. Deut 2:35; 3:7).

⁸⁴ Duane L. Christensen likewise perceives Og to have been hardened, as revealed by his question, "if God is responsible for 'hardening Sihon's [and Og's] spirit' and 'making obstinate his heart,' how can Sihon (or Og) be held accountable for his actions?" (brackets and parentheses original). Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, WBC (Dallas: Word Books, 1991), 56. See also Barker, *Triumph of Grace*, 41–42.

5).⁸⁵ While the text is not explicit at this point, these observations may imply that Og was likewise the object of DRA.

An intriguing case of DRA in Deuteronomy involves its pessimism regarding Israel's ability to obey God's laws. Despite repeatedly calling the nation to obedience, the text develops the unmistakable impression that Israel will not be faithful to their covenant obligations.⁸⁶ Deuteronomy begins to cast doubt upon Israel's future by emphasizing the nation's past failures.⁸⁷ The opening of the book immediately highlights Israel's dubious history, as it calls attention to the forty year journey the nation undertook as a result of their rebellion at Kadesh-barnea (Deut 1:2; cf. Num 14:34).⁸⁸ Moses then proceeds to

⁸⁵ Moreover, Deut 3:21 and 31:4–5 may also indicate that God's treatment of the seven nations should be understood through the lens of DRA. This conclusion is further supported by the interpretation of the conquest found in Josh 11:16–20. For a scholar who makes the same observation, see Currid, *Deuteronomy*, 73.

⁸⁶ Paul A. Barker has ably defended the claim that Deuteronomy expects Israel to fail in its obligation to keep the law (see his monograph *Triumph of Grace*). For others who make a similar case, see J. G. Millar, *Now Choose Life: Theology and Ethics in Deuteronomy*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Leicester, England: Apollos, 1998), 161–80; Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 95–99; Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 120–21; Colin James Smothers, "In Your Mouth and In Your Heart: A Study of Deuteronomy 30:12–14 in Paul's Letter to the Romans in Canonical Context" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018), 37, 87–89; Kyle B. Wells, *Grace and Agency in Paul and Second Temple Judaism: Interpreting the Transformation of the Heart*, VTSup (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2015), 33; James M. Hamilton Jr., *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 123–25, 129–32.

⁸⁷ Barker argues that Israel's past sins are presented as a paradigm for understanding the current and future generations of Israelites. The text does this through what Barker calls "generational conflation." As he states, "One indication that this failure [i.e., the rebellion at Kadesh-barnea] is paradigmatic is that in Deuteronomy there is an actualization of the past for the present. This feature identifies the current generation with its parents. . . . Generational conflation is a feature of Deuteronomy designed to existentialise the decision facing the hearer-reader, but also giving the suggestion that the new generation is no different from its predecessor." Barker, *Triumph of Grace*, 25–26. Von Rad makes a similar point, though he identifies the audience of Deuteronomy with post-monarchial Israel. See von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, 28–29.

⁸⁸ Tigay helpfully describes the import of this verse when he states, "Its point is that the journey took only eleven days and, had Israel trusted in God, it could have entered the land immediately and not wandered in the wilderness for thirty-eight years. . . . By placing the verse before the narrative with which it belongs, the text highlights and underscores the message that, had Israel trusted God, its long years of wandering would never have occurred." Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 4. See also McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 61;

overview Israel's trek through the wilderness (Deut 1–3), noting once more the incident at Kadesh-barnea (Deut 1:19–46).⁸⁹ The text contrasts the goodness of the land (Deut 1:25) and the loving-kindness of God (Deut 1:29–31) with Israel's unbelief and disobedience (Deut 1:26–27; 1:32–33). The juxtaposition heightens the gravity, absurdity, and culpability of Israel's previous rebellion. And though the conquests of Sihon (2:31–37) and Og (3:1–7) imply a measure of obedience, the prologue ends on the note of moral failure once more, as even Moses is banned from entering the land because "YHWH was angry with me [i.e., Moses] on your account" (Deut 3:26a).⁹⁰ Deuteronomy also recounts the episode of the golden calf in great detail (Deut 9:7–21) in order to emphatically reject the idea that the land was being given to Israel as a reward for their righteousness (Deut 9:4–6).⁹¹ Furthermore, it notes that their entire history from the exodus onwards has been one of stiff-necked opposition to the Lord (Deut 9:7; 9:22–24). But not only does Deuteronomy recount Israel's past as a catalogue of unbelief; the book also makes the important suggestion that Israel's failings are due to a faulty heart that continues into the present.⁹² In Deuteronomy 5, which retells Israel's encounter with the Lord at Mt. Sinai, YHWH responds to Israel's plea for a mediator with a telling question: "Who will make it so that this might belong to them as their heart, so that they might fear me and keep all

Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 64.

⁸⁹ For the significance of this section for understanding Deuteronomistic theology, see J. G. McConville, *Grace in the End: A Study in Deuteronomistic Theology*, Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 133.

⁹⁰ So also Barker, *Triumph of Grace*, 50–51.

⁹¹ McConville observes the significance of this section when he states, "By placing this elaboration of Israel's failure at this point, before the long series of laws that they are required to keep, Deuteronomy seems deliberately to sharpen the dilemma that it sees, namely, how it can be that a people who cannot keep covenant should be given a land on the express condition that they do so." McConville, *Grace in the End*, 134.

⁹² See Hamilton, *God's Glory*, 123–25.

my commandments for all time?” (Deut 5:29a).⁹³ The verse implies that a certain kind of heart is necessary for Israel to fear the Lord and to obey his commands; moreover, the question suggests that the Horeb generation did not possess such a heart. Significantly, key passages in the preceding chapters indicate that the problem of Israel’s faulty heart had not been remedied by the time of Deuteronomy’s composition.⁹⁴ Moses first hints at this state of affairs when he commands Israel, “So circumcise the foreskin of your heart and do not stiffen your neck any longer” (Deut 10:16).⁹⁵ Hints give way to an open declaration when Moses says, “But YHWH has not given you a heart to know, or eyes to see, or ears to hear, even until this day” (Deut 29:3).⁹⁶ Clearly, Moses was convinced that the Moab generation still did not possess the kind of heart necessary to respond rightly to God’s self-revelation. In keeping with this pessimistic perspective on Israel’s sinful bent in the past and in the present, Deuteronomy also paints a bleak picture of the nation’s moral prospects in the future.⁹⁷ The first exhortatory address to Israel (Deut 4:1–40)

⁹³ A more dynamic translation might be, “Who will act so that their heart might remain this way, so that they fear me and obey my commands forever?” For similar interpretations of Deut 5:29, see Barker, *Triumph of Grace*, 71–72; Smothers, “In Your Mouth,” 42–44.

⁹⁴ So also Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 819.

⁹⁵ Wells rightly observes that the command suggests that Israel is “in vital need of heart-surgery.” Wells, *Grace and Agency*, 33.

⁹⁶ Both Tigay (*Deuteronomy*, 275) and Lundbom (*Deuteronomy*, 803) argue that the comment “until this day” (עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה) suggests that a previous state of affairs has now been altered; while God formerly did not grant Israel the ability to obey, he now has. Their argument fails to convince however, since Deut 30:6 indicates that this moral inability would be remedied at a future point in time. Furthermore, the portrait of the future provided by YHWH in Deut 31 and 32 makes plain that Israel did not have the capacity for allegiance to the Lord. See also Smothers, “In Your Mouth,” 39–40.

⁹⁷ The picture of Israel’s future is not altogether dark; the author also expresses the conviction that after Israel has experienced the curses on account of their unfaithfulness, the covenant relationship would be restored because God would change Israel’s disposition so that they might walk in loving obedience to him. This prophetic optimism is on clearest display in Deut 30:1–10. For readings of Deut 30:1–10 that rightly prioritize divine over human initiative, see McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 432; Barker, *Triumph of Grace*, 144–57; Smothers, “In Your Mouth,” 58–62; Millar, *Now Choose Life*, 174–75; Wells, *Grace and Agency*, 25–40; Kline, *Treaty of the Great King*, 132–33; Mark J. Boda, *A Severe Mercy: Sin and Its Remedy in the Old Testament*, Siphrut (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 105–8.

already anticipates future apostasy: Moses declares that “when you bear sons and grandsons and grow old in the land, and you act corruptly and make an idol in the form of anything, and you do that which is evil in the eyes of YHWH your God, so as to provoke him to anger . . . you will surely perish quickly from upon the land” (Deut 4:25–26a).⁹⁸ Importantly, the close of the book expresses with certitude that Israel will break the covenant and experience the Lord’s curses.⁹⁹ Deuteronomy 30:1 anticipates that Israel will in fact experience all the covenant curses, which implies future unfaithfulness.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, YHWH expressly predicts future apostasy when he tells Moses, “Behold, you are going to lie down with your fathers, and this people will rise up and fornicate after the strange gods of the land into which they are entering; and they will forsake me and break my covenant which I established with them” (Deut 31:16; cf. 31:21).¹⁰¹ Moses makes the same prognostication in Deuteronomy 31:29 and, in obedience to YHWH, he teaches Israel a song which would bear witness against them after they commit apostasy (Deut

⁹⁸ Some commentators (see for example Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 126) and English translations (see for instance ESV, HCSB, NRSV, NIV) introduce the idea of contingency into Deut 4:25 without clear warrant from the text. The initial כִּי should probably be treated as a temporal conjunction. Since this is followed by a *yiqtol* verb (תוליד) carrying a future orientation, the following *weqatal* forms (וּנְשַׁנְתֶּם, וְהִשְׁחַתֶּם, וְעִשִׂיתֶם, וְעִשִׂיתֶם) should likewise be understood as referring to the future. There does not seem to be any reason to switch from a future sense (“when you bear sons and grandsons and grow old in the land”) to a conditional sense (“should you act corruptly”), despite the popularity of this reading. For others who see Deut 4:25ff as a reference to the future, see von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, 50; Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 68; Barker, *Triumph of Grace*, 1; McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 102, 109; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 52; Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 95; Knut Holter, *Deuteronomy 4 and the Second Commandment*, StBibLit (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 99; Boda, *A Severe Mercy*, 104; A. D. H. Mayes, “Deuteronomy 4 and the Literary Criticism of Deuteronomy,” *JBL* 100, no. 1 (1981): 27; Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 120–21.

⁹⁹ As Smothers notes, “The overarching narrative of Deuteronomy, *with particular acceleration in chapters 29 and on* [emphasis added], reveals that Israel lacks the capacity to do the commandments of the law; they lack righteousness”. Smothers, “In Your Mouth,” 89. See also McConville, *Grace in the End*, 135.

¹⁰⁰ Of this verse, McConville rightly states, “Israel will first know the blessing of God in their possession of the land, then the curse of God in its loss.” McConville, *Grace in the End*, 135.

¹⁰¹ See McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 440; Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy*, 273; Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 372; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 293; Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 402.

32:1–43; cf. 31:19–22). Thus, the book of Deuteronomy testifies as a whole that Israel cannot and will not be obedient to the Lord. The reason that Israel’s moral inability relates to DRA is because Deuteronomy seems to indicate that this state of affairs is somehow the Lord’s intention.¹⁰² As noted early, Deuteronomy 29:3 says, “But YHWH has not given you a heart to know, or eyes to see, or ears to hear, even until this day.”¹⁰³ Moreover, the author clearly believes that YHWH is able to provide Israel with these faculties, as he foresees a day when God will act upon Israel’s hearts to bring about the obedient love that he demands (Deut 30:6).¹⁰⁴ The inevitable conclusion seems to be that, for reasons untold, God has chosen not to perform Israel’s heart transformation at the present. At the same time, Deuteronomy stresses that Israel’s unfaithfulness is genuinely despicable (Deut 31:18; 32:1–22), and that God will hold the nation accountable for their

¹⁰² Nathan Macdonald denies that the book of Deuteronomy reflects on the interaction between divine causality and human responsibility. Instead, he argues that Deut 8:2–5 shows that Israel’s moral formation takes place through God’s disciplinary action, and that Deut 29 attests to the same reality. As he states, “The ability to see, therefore, is ascribed to YHWH because it only comes through his program of disciplining Israel, in which she learns her dependence on YHWH and the necessity of obedience to him. Sight can only occur on the far side of the desert.” Nathan Macdonald, *Deuteronomy and the Meaning of “Monotheism,”* FAT (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 138. Macdonald’s suggestion however is hardly compelling. He overlooks the fact that Israel’s trek through the wilderness did nothing to reform their unfaithful hearts (Deut 9:22–24; 10:16; 31:16). Neither does he provide an adequate explanation for why God is assigned responsibility for Israel’s lack of moral faculties (Deut 29:3). Furthermore, he does not properly account for Moses’s statement in Deut 30:6, which strongly suggests that immediate divine intervention will be required for Israel’s heart transformation.

¹⁰³ For others who interpret Deut 29:3 as grounding Israel’s moral status on divine agency, see McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 414–15; Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy*, 260; Currid, *Deuteronomy*, 454–55; Wells, *Grace and Agency*, 33; Barker, *Triumph of Grace*, 119–31; Smothers, “In Your Mouth,” 38–41; Peter Gentry argues in fact that Deut 29:3 resembles God’s treatment of Israel in Isa 29:14. See Peter J. Gentry, “The Relationship of Deuteronomy to the Covenant at Sinai,” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 18, no. 3 (2014): 50.

¹⁰⁴ As Wells rightly states, “Deuteronomy 30:6 makes Israel’s *Shema*-fulfilment directly dependent on a divine act.” Wells, *Grace and Agency*, 35. For the significance of the reference to heart circumcision in Deut 30:6, see Smothers, “In Your Mouth,” 46–48, 60–62; John D. Meade, “Circumcision of the Heart in Leviticus and Deuteronomy: Divine Means for Resolving Curse and Bringing Blessing,” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 18, no. 3 (2014): 75–78; McConville, *Grace in the End*, 136–37; Georg Braulik, “The Development of the Doctrine of Justification in the Redactional Strata of the Book of Deuteronomy,” in *The Theology of Deuteronomy: Collected Essays of Georg Braulik*, trans. Ulrika Lindbald (North Richland Hills, TX: BIBAL, 1994), 163.

future rebellion (Deut 31:16–22; 32:1–25).¹⁰⁵ Thus, given that (1) YHWH can circumcise Israel’s heart but refrains from doing so in the present, (2) Israel will continue to act wickedly as a result of their current moral impairment, and (3) God will enact judgment against his people for their sins, readers seem justified to conclude that even Israel’s future will play out as an expression of DRA. Like previous instances of God’s reprobating influence in the Torah, DRA here should probably be understood as immediate and non-eternal.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, even though the text does not explicitly reveal the Lord’s motivations, the nature of the case makes a non-retributive reading more likely than a retributive one.¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, unlike God’s hardening of Pharaoh, Sihon, and Og, the Lord is not described here as engaging in an active form of DRA; instead of positively exerting his influence, God seems to set Israel’s course by withholding from them the faculties they need for obedience. Since the book seems to posit an active form of DRA elsewhere (i.e., Sihon and Og), Deuteronomy itself attests to various expressions of DRA.

¹⁰⁵ The tension between God’s sovereignty and human responsibility in Deuteronomy (and in the Scriptures as a whole) has been well documented. At this point, what must be noted is that the book of Deuteronomy simultaneously summons Israel to make a genuine choice between life (loyalty to YHWH) and death (disloyalty to YHWH) while also affirming that God’s sovereignty extends even over Israel’s moral center. For others who note this tension, see Braulik, “Development of Justification,” 163; McConville, *Grace in the End*, 135–39; Gentry, “Relationship of Deuteronomy,” 51; Millar, *Now Choose Life*, 164; Barker, *Triumph of Grace*, 202; Hamilton, *God’s Glory*, 129–32.

¹⁰⁶ Given that DRA in this instance involves passively withholding moral ability from Israel rather than actively exerting influence upon them, an immediate form of DRA seems to be logically required. Moreover, since the covenant curses listed in Deut 28 all involve earthly condemnation, eternal DRA is probably not in view.

¹⁰⁷ Deuteronomy does not address the question of why YHWH did not provide Israel with a heart to obey. However, it is noteworthy that God is not said to have deprived Israel of a faculty that they formerly possessed; instead, God chooses not to provide them with the abilities to respond appropriately to his self-revelation (Deut 29:3). This seems to suggest that Israel has already been living with this moral handicap and that YHWH’s involvement in Israel’s condition merely consists in the conscious decision not to change this state of affairs. If this is the case, a retributive interpretation of Deut 29:3 would be awkward since any trespass on Israel’s part would seem to result from an already-existing moral deficiency permitted by YHWH.

One last example of DRA in Deuteronomy may come from passages that speak of God's instrumental use of a foreign nation in Israel's judgment.¹⁰⁸ As part of the exposition of the curses which would befall Israel should they prove unfaithful, Moses declares that "YHWH will carry against you a nation from a distance, from the end of the earth, like the eagle swooping down, a nation whose tongue you will not understand" (Deut 28:49).¹⁰⁹ A similar thought is found in the Song of Moses,¹¹⁰ where YHWH declares,

They [i.e., Israel] provoked me with what is not a god, they vexed me with their useless idols. So I will provoke them with what is not a people, with a foolish nation I will vex them. For a fire has been kindled in my anger and it has burned even the lowest parts of Sheol, and it has consumed the land and its produce, and has scorched the foundations of the mountains (Deut 32:21–22).¹¹¹

This nation would completely savage Israel, destroying their grain and livestock, plundering their cities, and leaving God's people so destitute that they would resort to cannibalism in order to survive (Deut 28:49–57; 32:23–25).¹¹² But despite being brought

¹⁰⁸ Von Rad notes that the prophets also portray the attacks of Israel's enemies as acts of divine judgment against God's own people. von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, 175–76.

¹⁰⁹ I agree with A. D. H. Mayes when he states, "The expressions used to describe the enemy in these verses are in many cases stereotyped; they could be used of any conqueror" A. D. H. Mays, *Deuteronomy*, NCB (London: Oliphants, 1979), 356.

¹¹⁰ Higher critical scholars have devoted an impressive amount of literature to investigating the Song of Moses. For an analysis of the structure and integrity of Deut 32, see Patrick W. Skehan, "The Structure of the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy (32:1–43)," in Christensen, *Song of Power and Power of Song*, 156–68. For a sampling of discussions related to the alleged pre-history of Deut 32, see Paul Sanders, *The Provenance of Deuteronomy 32, OtSt* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1996), 433–36; Mark Leuchter, "Why Is the Song of Moses in the Book of Deuteronomy?," *VT* 57 (2007): 297–317; G. E. Mendenhall, "Samuel's Broken Rib: Deuteronomy 32," in Christensen, *Song of Power and Power of Song*, 173–79. For general critiques of higher critical approaches to the book of Deuteronomy, see Kline, *Treaty of the Great King*, 27–44; McConville, *Grace in the End*, 45–64.

¹¹¹ Tigay is probably correct when he states, "The use of the past tense implies that once God has resolved upon the punishment it is as good as done." Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 308. He also rightly observes that verse 21 refers to God's act of sending invaders against Israel. In addition, Calvin rightly observes that "the fulfilment of this sentence was manifested from time to time, when [Israel was] tyrannically oppressed by the neighbouring nations." Calvin, *Four Last Books of Moses*, 3:354.

¹¹² These texts do not specify which nation is in mind, but focus instead on the ferocious character of this foreign army and the terrible calamities that come on the heels of war. See Tigay,

by YHWH for the express purpose of meting out his judgments upon Israel, the Lord still promises that, in the future, he will hold them accountable for the violence they have committed against his people.¹¹³ Thus, even after characterizing the actions of Israel's future enemy as an expression of divine wrath (Deut 32:21–22), the Song says of this foreign nation,¹¹⁴

For their vine is from the vine of Sodom and from the vineyards of Gomorrah; their grapes are poisonous grapes; bitter clusters belong to them. Their wine is the venom of serpents, and the poison of vipers is cruel. Is it not stored up with me? Is it not sealed in my storehouses? Vengeance and retribution belongs to me, for the time their foot will slip. For the day of their distress is near, and the future hastens towards them (Deut 32:32–35).

While some of the details in Deuteronomy 32:32–35 are open to different interpretations,¹¹⁵ most scholars rightly understand the section to refer to a day of divine wrath which awaits Israel's enemies.¹¹⁶ This is supported by fact that the same sentiment

Deuteronomy, 308; Currid, *Deuteronomy*, 445–46.

¹¹³ So Tigay rightly comments, “The enemy, although used by God as an agent for punishing Israel, is His foe. The Bible implicitly assumes that God uses evil nations to punish Israel and that they, too, will ultimately be punished.” Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 313. Craigie seconds this interpretation: “Although they had been instrumental in the execution of God's judgment on Israel, they themselves would eventually experience the wrath of God for their evil acts.” Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 389. At this point, Deuteronomy's theology strongly resembles what can be found in the prophets as well (see Isa 10; Hab 1–3).

¹¹⁴ Sanders rightly states, “The question to whom the suffixes 3 pers. plur. in v. 32–33 relate is answered in various different ways. Some argue these verses are about Israel, but most modern scholars think they relate to the enemies (antecedent: אִיבֵינוּ 31aB). The latter view is the most convincing one.” Sanders, *The Provenance of Deuteronomy 32*, 224. For others who believe the third person pronominal suffixes through vv. 32–33 refer to Israel's enemies, see Currid, *Deuteronomy*, 508; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 311; Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 895; von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, 198–99; Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 390.

¹¹⁵ So for instance, scholars do not all agree on the meaning of the imagery in vv. 32–33. Some argue that the verses refer to the corrupt character of the enemy nations (see Currid, *Deuteronomy*, 508; Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 895; von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, 199), though others believe that divine wrath is in view (Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 311; Sanders, *The Provenance of Deuteronomy 32*, 277–78). The antecedent of הוּא in v. 34 is also disputed. While some argue that it refers to the fate of Israel's enemies (Currid, *Deuteronomy*, 508–9; Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 390), others believe the pronoun points back to הַמַּת (Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 896) or יָנַם (Sanders, *The Provenance of Deuteronomy 32*, 226; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 311) in v. 33.

¹¹⁶ Sanders adopts a different interpretation: he argues that 32:32–34 refers to the violence of the enemy nation against Israel. Sanders, *The Provenance of Deuteronomy 32*, 225–28. Thus, this section demonstrates that the abuse experienced by Israel should ultimately be understood as an expression of

repeats itself in Deuteronomy 32:40–43. Moreover, the song clearly specifies that God will punish this enemy nation for their acts of violence against Israel: “O nations, cause his people to shout for joy! For he will avenge the blood of his servants!” (Deut 32:43a).¹¹⁷ As such, Deuteronomy seems to teach that God will punish Israel’s tormentors for doing what they were summoned by God to do.¹¹⁸ This in turn leads to the conclusion that God will subject a foreign nation to DRA when he uses it to punish his unfaithful people. Nevertheless, the picture provided is far from detailed; therefore, restraint must be exercised when attempting to describe DRA as it relates to Israel’s enemy in Deuteronomy.¹¹⁹ On the one hand, since no mediating agent is mentioned and since God

divine wrath. While I agree with his point that Israel’s mistreatment must be understood as divinely intended, I do not believe he has interpreted the verses in question correctly. As he himself notes, “their foot” in v. 35 must be understood to refer to the fate of the enemies themselves (see 229n732). Since there is no explicit indication of a change in focus, 32:34–35 should probably be understood as having the same objects in mind. In any event, Sanders does argue that the Song elsewhere anticipates divine vengeance on Israel’s enemies (241–48).

¹¹⁷ The Deuteronomy 32:43a faces translation and text-critical problems. On the one hand, the translation of Deut 32:43 (MT) is a disputed matter. The verb רגן in the *hiphil* stem only occurs with a direct object three times in the OT (Deut 32:43; Ps 65:9; Job 29:13); outside of Deuteronomy, the verb always takes on a causative meaning (i.e., “make glad,” “cause to rejoice”). However, commentators struggle to understand how v.43a would fit in its context if the verb is interpreted similarly here (see for instance Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 393). Thus, scholars have adopted a variety of strategies to treat the issue: some interpret the verb הרגנו intransitively and render עמו in as an adverbial accusative (Versluis, *Command to Exterminate*, 160; Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 425; Currid, *Deuteronomy*, 512), others translate the verb uniquely to mean “praise” (McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 459; Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 389) or “congratulate” (Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 315), while still others abandon the MT in favor of other witnesses (Sanders, *The Provenance of Deuteronomy* 32, 251; Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 43; Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 903). In my judgment, the transitive, causative translation of the MT (i.e., “O nations, cause his people to shout for joy!”) is not as indefensible as some suggest, so long as it is taken in an ironic, or even sardonic, manner. On the other hand, the text-critical problems involve the diverging witness of the MT (and Samaritan Pentateuch), LXX, and 4QDeut. For an overview of matter, see Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 516–18; Sanders, *The Provenance of Deuteronomy* 32, 248–55; Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 247–50. Regardless of the solution adopted, the problem does not impact the matter at hand since the witnesses all agree that God will repay his enemies for their aggression towards Israel.

¹¹⁸ Commenting on the Song of Moses, McConville helpfully makes the point that this theme is not unique to Deuteronomy. As he states, “The motifs of powerful foreign nations brought against Israel by Yahweh himself in order to punish it, and turning the tables in a final equalizing of judgment, are familiar enough from prophetic analogies.” McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 461.

¹¹⁹ In my judgment, Deuteronomy does not provide enough clues for determining whether God

is said to “carry” (אָנען) the nation himself (Deut 28:49), the door is left open for positing an immediate, active form of DRA. On the other hand, because the text provides no evidence that the condemnation in mind is one that extends beyond death, God’s influence should probably be viewed as a non-eternal form of DRA.

Observations on DRA in the Torah

With my survey of DRA in the Torah completed, I am now in a position to make a few observations on the subject. First, each case of DRA in the Pentateuch involves a significant moment in salvation history. God undertakes reprobating action when he liberates Israel from Egypt (Exod 3–14), when he begins to deliver the promised land (Deut 2:24–3:7), and when he punishes his people for covenant infidelity (Deut 28:49; 32:21–22). Moreover, God’s passive DRA (Deut 29:3) sets the tone for Israel’s entire history; it necessitates a future act of God to transform Israel’s hearts and open a new chapter in the life of God’s people (Deut 30:1–10). Second, the first five books of the OT reveal God’s character by appealing to DRA. In Exodus, God is repeatedly said to have engaged in DRA to display his power (Exod 7:1–5; 9:16; 10:1–2; 11:9) and to make known his name (Exod 9:16; 14:4, 17–18). Moreover, in Deuteronomy, God’s use of and eventual vengeance upon Israel’s enemy demonstrates his claim to be superior to all foreign gods (Deut 32:34–39). Deuteronomy also employs DRA to demonstrate that Israel’s only hope for salvation lies with God himself (Deut 29:3; cf. 30:6). Thus, at least in the Torah, DRA cannot be dismissed as an unimportant theme. Third, the Pentateuch bears witness to at least two different expressions of DRA. While most of the examples of DRA surveyed could arguably be described as active, God’s influence over Israel’s

exercises retributive or non-retributive DRA towards the nation he uses as an instrument of the covenant curses. While the description of the nation in 32:32 may refer to its corrupt character, it has already been demonstrated that an affirmation of the wickedness of the objects of DRA does not by itself warrant the conclusion that DRA is retributive.

heart can only be viewed as passive (Deut 29:3). Given that both active and passive kinds of DRA are depicted within the same book (i.e., Deuteronomy), it seems reasonable to conclude that at least one biblical author understood DRA to be somewhat variegated. Lastly, the Torah provides no clear evidence of retributive DRA or eternal DRA.¹²⁰

¹²⁰ With respect to the former, the Pentateuch does not claim that God's reprobating activities are motivated by a desire for retribution. In fact, the section that deals most extensively with God's purposes in hardening (Exod 3–14) strongly supports a non-retributive reading. While there is an instance of DRA that is underdetermined, i.e., God's influence over the instruments of his wrath (Deut 28:49), even this is open to a non-retributive reading. And regarding the latter, there are no indications within the Torah that the objects of DRA face anything more than mortal death.

CHAPTER 4

DIVINE REPROBATING ACTIVITY IN THE FORMER PROPHETS

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated that the first five books of the OT testify to both the variety and the significance of DRA. The books of Moses do not describe God's reprobating activity in a monolithic fashion, nor do they relegate the concept to a place of little importance. Instead, Moses ties different forms of DRA to God's redemptive acts and to the unfolding of Israel's salvation history. In this chapter, I show that the witness of the Former Prophets paints a similar picture. As such, I explore this section of the canon to examine how it contributes to a biblical theology of DRA. I argue that, much like the Torah, the Former Prophets bear witness to the flexibility of the concept. In fact, the prophetic writings introduce new characterizations of DRA that are not found in the Pentateuch. Moreover, I demonstrate that these writings showcase the significance of DRA by connecting reprobating activity to the outworking of salvation history and to the demonstration of God's character.

The division of the OT known as the Former Prophets begins on the heels of the Torah. As the Pentateuch closes, Israel remains stationed at Moab, poised to enter and to take the promised land. The book of Joshua opens this next major section of the OT with the story of Israel's conquest and distribution of the land of Canaan. The first example of DRA in the Former Prophets is found within this account of the conquest.

DRA in the Book of Joshua

In Joshua 11, readers are provided a general summary of Israel's victories over the peoples across the Jordan (Josh 11:16–23).¹ The author explains that none of the nations in the land of Canaan pursued peace with Israel with the sole exception of the Gibeonites. The narrator then provides a behind-the-scenes look at the reason for this near-universal hostility towards Israel: “For it came from YHWH to harden their heart to meet Israel in battle, so that they might exterminate them,² so that mercy might not be theirs, but that they might destroy them just as YHWH commanded Moses” (Josh 11:20). The statement reveals that the combative stance adopted by these Canaanite nations resulted from God's own influence upon their hearts.³ Nevertheless, the author seems to imply that the Canaanites were culpable for the actions they undertook when he says,

¹ J. G. McConville and Stephen N. Williams, *Joshua*, Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 58.

² Scholars disagree regarding the meaning of the verb חרם. Some argue that, like its nominal counterpart, the term includes religious connotations and should therefore be translated “devote to destruction” or “place under the ban.” So for instance, while he acknowledges that the verb is sometimes used without its sacral overtones, Lilley argues that verb חרם means “uncompromising consecration without possibility of recall or redemption.” J. P. U. Lilley, “Understanding the Herem,” *TynBul* 44, no. 1 (1993): 177; see also Leon J. Wood, “חַרְם,” in *TWOT*, 324. More recently however, Arie Versluis has sought to challenge this popular viewpoint. On the one hand, Versluis agrees with most interpreters that as a noun, חרם refers to objects that occupy a sacred space similar to (though distinct from) objects that are “holy” (קדש) or “clean” (טהר). On the other hand, Versluis posits that the verb form occupies a different semantic space, as it “almost always belongs to the semantic domain of destruction and devastation.” Arie Versluis, “Devotion And/or Destruction? The Meaning and Function of חרם in the Old Testament,” *ZAW* 128, no. 2 (2016): 236. While Versluis does note two exceptional uses of the verb חרם (namely, Lev 27:28 and Josh 6:18), he points out that these share a common feature: both texts use the verb in a subordinate clause with the noun חרם. The implication seems to be that these two texts need not undermine the general finding that as a verb, חרם belongs to the domain of destruction rather than to the domain of the sacred. Arie Versluis, *The Command to Exterminate the Canaanites: Deuteronomy 7*, *OtSt* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2017), 47n98.

³ As Dozeman states, “The reason for the universal opposition is the divine influence on the enemy kings: Yahweh hardened their hearts.” Thomas B. Dozeman, *Joshua 1–12*, AB (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015), 479. Yet, the acknowledgement of YHWH's supremacy over the Canaanites should not be read as a denial of their responsibility. See Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 111; Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. J. A. Baker, vol. 2, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), 2:178–79.

“There was no city that sought to make peace with the sons of Israel” (Josh 11:19a).⁴ Furthermore, the text openly declares the reason God hardened the hearts of the Canaanites: the Lord intended to destroy these nations and to prevent them from receiving mercy, which they may have received had they approached Israel in different manner (as Rahab and the Gibeonites could attest).⁵ Given these observations, it seems warranted to conclude that Joshua 11:20 presents readers with a case of DRA.

Though sparse in detail, Joshua 11:20 allows one to make a few conclusions regarding its characterization of DRA. First of all, the use of hardening language attributed to YHWH and the lack of any mediating agents suggests that the author intends to describe immediate and active DRA. Furthermore, since eternal destinies are nowhere discussed in the text, the hardening should be understood as a form of non-eternal DRA. While these aspects of the description of DRA seem relatively clear, the matter of God’s motivations behind the hardening of the Canaanites remains contested.

Several commentators suggest that God’s hardening activity was an act of retribution against the Canaanites.⁶ Some ground their reading in the distinction made

⁴ The statement should probably be read as an indictment against the Canaanites for their stance against Israel. Otherwise, it is difficult to account for why the author includes the comment. Furthermore, the author has already highlighted the combative disposition of the Canaanite nations in earlier chapters. This is seen, for instance, in his description of the response of the southern nations to news of the treaty between Gibeon and Israel. The fact that this episode follows the account of the Gibeonites seems to set the southern nations’ actions in contrast to those of the Hivites of Gibeon; so also William A. Ford, “What about the Gibeonites?,” *TynBul* 66, no. 2 (2015): 202. In addition, it is striking that the southern nations do not view the treaty of Gibeon as an encouragement to explore peace with Israel; instead, these nations respond immediately by banding together to attack Gibeon (see Josh 10:1–5). Moreover, as Lawson G. Stone has insightfully shown, the transitional statements in the book of Joshua (2:10–11; 5:1; 9:1; 10:1; and 11:1–5) function structurally to contrast the response of the kings of Canaan with that of Rahab and the Gibeonites. See Lawson G. Stone, “Ethical and Apologetic Tendencies in the Redaction of the Book of Joshua,” *CBQ* 53, no. 1 (1991): 32. Thus, the text in its final form highlights the culpability of the Canaanites for their aggressions towards Israel. See also John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of Joshua*, trans. Henry Beveridge, vol. 4, *Calvin’s Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 174.

⁵ For a similar reading, see John Bright and Joseph R. Sizoo, “The Book of Joshua,” in vol. 2 of *The Interpreter’s Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1953), 613–14.

⁶ Other scholars have discussed God’s motivations for hardening in Josh 11:20 without

between the kings of the land and the Gibeonites: if the Canaanites had responded by seeking peace with Israel instead of acting aggressively, the Lord would not have hardened them.⁷ However, this explanation seems to put the cart before the horse since the aggressiveness of the Canaanites is said to have been the result of divine influence; as such, the kings' antagonism towards Israel (which came about due to DRA) cannot have also been the reason for DRA. Some defend a retributive reading of hardening in Joshua 11:20 on the basis of Genesis 15:16, which testifies that God's judgment on the Canaanites will be retributive.⁸ But these commentators overlook the fact that Genesis 15:16 does not speak to the matter of hardening; as such, it does not clarify God's motivations in moving the Canaanites towards war against Israel.⁹ Still others maintain the retributive view on a more theological or philosophical basis.¹⁰ So for instance, Adolph Harstad posits that since God's antecedent will is always directed towards

addressing whether or not his actions were retributive. So for instance, Butler hypothesizes that God moved the Canaanites to war against Israel in order to facilitate Israel's obedience to his command to wipe out the nations in the promised land. In other words, had God not acted in such a manner, Israel may have pursued peace with the Canaanites as they did with the Gibeonites. See Trent C. Butler, *Joshua 1–12*, WBC (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 130. Hawk reads matters similarly, as he believes that Josh 11:20 may suggest that Israel lost its resolve to execute God's command to destroy the inhabitants of the land. As such, divine hardening would have been God's means to ensure the fulfillment of His directive. L. Daniel Hawk, *Every Promise Fulfilled: Contesting Plots in Joshua* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 49–50; see also L. Daniel Hawk, *Joshua*, Berit Olam (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 174n21. For others who take a similar approach, see Versluis, *Command to Exterminate*, 254; Dozeman, *Joshua 1–12*, 479.

⁷ So David M. Howard Jr., *Joshua*, NAC (Nashville: B & H, 1998), 274; Marten H. Woudstra, *The Book of Joshua*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 196–97. In light of his work on the hardening in Exodus, Ford should probably be understood as adopting this view as well (see Ford, "Gibeonites," 214).

⁸ Howard, *Joshua*, 273–74; Woudstra, *Joshua*, 196.

⁹ Moreover, Gen 15:16 can itself be read in a manner consistent with non-retributive DRA. See John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, trans. John King, vol. 4, *Calvin's Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 419–20.

¹⁰ Some scholars also adopt a retributive view of hardening without arguing for the point. See Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 523.

salvation, the hardening of the Canaanites must have been an act of his consequent will in response to their own wickedness.¹¹ But Harstad does little to show how the text of Joshua supports this reading. Furthermore, Harstad simply states his presuppositions without adequately defending them, nor does he address the fact that a significant stream of Christian thinkers throughout church history have affirmed the reality of non-retributive forms of DRA.¹²

A more plausible defense for the retributive position may be built upon God's command to exterminate the Canaanites in the book of Deuteronomy. As others have rightly observed, the theology of Joshua is closely connected with that of Deuteronomy.¹³ Moreover, the theme of God's animus towards the Canaanites uniquely links both books.¹⁴ Given this thematic connection, one might argue that Joshua 11:20 assumes the teaching of texts like Deuteronomy 9:4–5, 18:12, and 20:17–18, which designate the wickedness of the Canaanites as a reason for their expulsion from the land.¹⁵ Thus, one may plausibly argue that Joshua 11:20 portrays hardening as the means by which God brings about His just verdict against the Canaanites. Though I believe the appeal to Deuteronomy provides a strong argument for a retributive view of DRA in Joshua 11, reasons still exist to doubt whether this explanation can account for all the facts. First of all, the text of Joshua makes no mention of retribution as being the reason for divine

¹¹ He does acknowledge a second divine motive for the hardening, which was to prevent Israel from making peace with the Canaanites, thereby protecting them from corrupting influences. See Adolph L. Harstad, *Joshua*, ConcC (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 2004), 467–69.

¹² See chap. 2, s.v. "Predestination."

¹³ See especially Gordon Wenham, "The Deuteronomic Theology of the Book of Joshua," *JBL* 90, no. 2 (1971): 140–48.

¹⁴ Andrew C. Tunyogi argues that the extermination of the Canaanites is a theme that unites Deuteronomy to Josh 1–11. See Andrew C. Tunyogi, "The Book of Conquest," *JBL* 84, no. 4 (1965): 376–78.

¹⁵ See Versluis, *Command to Exterminate*, 187–89.

hardening. In view of the emphasis placed on God's desire to completely destroy the Canaanites, one may perhaps be excused for expecting such a statement had the author intended to argue that hardening was an act of retribution.¹⁶ Second, the use of hardening language may have been meant to link God's influence on the Canaanites with his treatment of Pharaoh and the Egyptians.¹⁷ If this were so, it would suggest that retribution was not among God's motivations.¹⁸ Third, the connection between Deuteronomy and Joshua may actually weaken the case for retributive DRA. Given the strong similarities between the theology of Deuteronomy and of Joshua,¹⁹ one could argue that the latter's perspective on hardening should be viewed similarly to the former's. I have already argued that divine hardening in Deuteronomy 2:30 is non-retributive and that there are no clear instances of retributive DRA in Deuteronomy. If this is the case and if Joshua's theology is in fact consistent with Deuteronomy, then one would expect Joshua 11:20 to posit a non-retributive form of DRA. Lastly (and perhaps most importantly), a retributive perspective does not explain the case of the Gibeonites. Being Hivites (Josh 9:7; 11:19), the inhabitants of Gibeon fell within YHWH's decree of extermination (Deut 7:1; cf. Josh 9:24) and were guilty of the same wickedness that warranted expulsion from the land (Deut 20:17–18). Furthermore, the book of Joshua (and the OT as a whole) provides no

¹⁶ The use of the compound preposition *מֵאֵת* with YHWH as its object indicates that the hardening of the hearts of the Canaanites originated from the Lord. The rest of the statement emphasizes God's destructive desire through repeated purpose clauses. The text states that God hardened the Canaanites to meet Israel in battle "so that (*לְמַעַן*) they might exterminate them, so that no (*לְבִלְתִּי*) mercy might be theirs, but (*כִּי*) so that (*לְמַעַן*) they might destroy them just as YHWH commanded Moses." Moreover, the addition of *כִּי*, whether understood adversatively or asseveratively, adds further force to an already emphatic statement.

¹⁷ So also McConville and Williams, *Joshua*, 59; J. Alberto Soggin, *Joshua*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 140. Ford makes the same point, though his reading of Exodus leads him to the opposite conclusion. See Ford, "Gibeonites," 214.

¹⁸ See my discussion on the hardening of Pharaoh's heart in chap. 3, s.v. "DRA in Exodus."

¹⁹ See Wenham, "Deuteronomistic Theology of Joshua," 140–48; Tunyogi, "The Book of Conquest," 376–78.

reason to believe that the Gibeonites differed significantly from the other Canaanite nations in terms of their religious or ethical practices.²⁰ In fact, even when seeking peace with Israel, the Gibeonites resort to abject deception in order to secure self-preservation.²¹ And yet, Joshua 11:19 suggests that they were not the objects of DRA.²² If hardening in

²⁰ One scholar who disagrees with this reading is William Ford. According to Ford, God's displeasure at Saul's slaughter of the Gibeonites in 2 Sam 21 suggests that, unlike the other Canaanites, they were not a threat to Israel's devotion to YHWH. In his words, "If the Gibeonites had become a snare for Israel it seems inconceivable that YHWH would act in such a way." Ford, "Gibeonites," 212. Ford's argument is tenuous however, as the text explicitly says that God was displeased because Saul violated the oath Israel made to the Gibeonites; see Robert Polzin, "HWQY' and Covenantal Institutions in Early Israel," *HTR* 62, no. 2 (1969): 227–29. As such, 2 Sam 21 provides no indication that YHWH approved of the Gibeonites' character or their worship. Moreover, Ford assumes that God would undoubtedly have annihilated the Gibeonites had he considered them a corrupting influence on Israel. However, the book of Judges demonstrates that this is not necessarily so. In fact, Judges tells readers that YHWH allowed the Canaanites to remain among the Israelites despite His negative assessment of these nations and their practices (see Judg 2:1–5; 2:20–23; 3:1–6). Thus, Ford's argument at this point simply fails to persuade.

²¹ Ford protests that since deception was the only avenue available for the Gibeonites, their response to Israel and to YHWH should be understood positively (see Ford, "Gibeonites," 202–6). To bolster his argument, he notes that there is no clear censure of the Gibeonites' behavior and that their confession in Josh 9:9–10 and in 9:24 expresses a conviction similar to Rahab's. However, there are several reasons to challenge this reading. First of all, Rahab and the Gibeonites are not the only ones who are said to fear the Lord. In fact, the Canaanite kings themselves are also said to be terrified of him (Josh 2:9–11; 5:1; see also Walter R. Roehrs, "The Conquest of Canaan according to Joshua and Judges," *CTM* 31, no. 12 (1960): 746). Thus, the Gibeonite response in 9:24 is not by itself evidence of true worship of YHWH. Second, the statement in 9:24 suggests that the Gibeonites were motivated by self-preservation rather than by genuine allegiance to Israel's God. Ford himself acknowledges that "the Gibeonites seem to be motivated by a desire to save their own skins rather than anything nobler" Ford, "Gibeonites," 204. Given this observation, it seems suspect to claim with confidence that readers should view the Gibeonites as sincere worshippers. Third, while the narrator does not explicitly censure the Gibeonites actions, he also refrains from making any positive statements about them. Moreover, a positive reading becomes more unlikely given the fact that the Israelites cursed the Gibeonites. Thus, at best, Ford argues from silence when he says that "arguably the Gibeonites are portrayed more positively than the Israelites." Ford, "Gibeonites," 206. Lastly, the case of Rahab sits in tension with Ford's statement that deception was the Gibeonites only resort. Josh 2 seems to suggest that she was rightly spared by Israel for her confession of allegiance to the Lord and for her willingness to serve Israel's cause at Canaan's expense. If this is so, perhaps readers are supposed to assume that the same exception from the command to exterminate the Canaanites would apply to others who adopted the same posture as Rahab. In any event, since Rahab was spared without deceiving Israel, Ford cannot say that deception was Gibeon's only resort. For these reasons, Waltke is probably closer to the mark when he says, "The Gibeonites, unlike Rahab, seek to effect a treaty with Israel by subterfuge, and because of their unethical means, are put under a curse to become Israel's slaves in *I AM* liturgy." Waltke, *Old Testament Theology*, 521.

²² Given that divine hardening in this instance led specifically to an inability to seek peace with Israel (Josh 11:19–20), Gibeon's actions in Josh 9:3ff are explicable only on the assumption that they were not hardened. Eslinger rightly makes the same observation, but he draws the unwarranted conclusion that this was an oversight on YHWH's part. Overall, I find little merit in Eslinger's argument that the narrator

Joshua 11:20 should be read strictly in light of the deuteronomic condemnation of the seven nations (Deut 9:4–5; 18:12; 20:17–18), then why were the Gibeonites spared from God’s act of judgment? This observation combined with the previous three provides some reason to doubt that God’s hardening of the Canaanites was strictly retributive; as such, the possibility remains open that Joshua 11:20 ought to be viewed as an example of non-retributive DRA.²³

DRA in the Book of Judges

As its first verse indicates, Judges was intended to narrate the continuation of Israel’s history following the events described in the book of Joshua. While Joshua recounts Israel’s initial conquest and the distribution of the land, the book of Judges tells the story of the Canaanization of Israel after Joshua’s death.²⁴ As part of its plot, the book of Judges presents readers with two cases of DRA, the first of which involves the entire nation of Israel.

In Judges 2:1–5, the angel of the Lord indicts God’s people for their failure to remain faithful to the covenant. He introduces his accusation by recounting YHWH’s covenant faithfulness displayed in liberating Israel from Egypt and in giving them the land (2:1b). He then reminds them of the Lord’s command: “You will not cut a covenant

of Joshua blames YHWH for the failed conquest. See Lyle Eslinger, *Into the Hands of the Living God*, JSOTSup 84 (Sheffield, England: Almond, 1989), 44–54; for another scholar who argues that the Gibeonites were not subject to hardening, see Waltke, *Old Testament Theology*, 521.

²³ It may be helpful to clarify that in arguing for non-retributive DRA in Josh 11:20, I do not mean to suggest that the Canaanites did not deserve to be treated this way. It must be remembered that the distinction between retributive and non-retributive DRA has to do with God’s motivations rather than with human merits. That is to say, the distinction has everything to do with whether or not God engaged in reprobating activity as a conscious response to wicked actions; however, it is *not meant* to distinguish cases wherein persons deserved reprobating treatment from cases wherein they did not. In fact, from a theological perspective, I would argue that the overarching biblical picture demonstrates that all are deserving of reprobating treatment and only God’s mercy explains why some are exempted from DRA.

²⁴ See Daniel I. Block, *Judges, Ruth*, NAC (Nashville: B & H, 1999), 58.

with those who inhabit this land; their altars you will tear down” (2:2a). However, the narrator has already implied in chapter 1 (and will expound upon in 2:6–3:6) that Israel had not kept God’s charge.²⁵ Rather than keeping themselves separate from pagan influence, Israel quickly began adopting the ethics of the land.²⁶ Moreover, Israel failed to heed God’s command to exterminate the Canaanites (Deut 7); instead, they compromised by allowing the Canaanites to dwell in their midst.²⁷ In fact, the author provides readers with reason to believe that Israel established covenant relations with the peoples of Canaan.²⁸ Thus, it should come as no surprise that the angel of the Lord says, “But you did not listen to my voice! What is this you have done?” (2:2b). The Lord then makes an intriguing statement: “So I also have said (וּגַם אָמַרְתִּי), I will not drive them out from before you, and they will become thorns in your sides and their gods will become a

²⁵ Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 12; Cheryl A. Brown, “Judges,” in *Joshua, Judges, Ruth*, NIBC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000), 149; Robert B. Chisholm Jr., *A Commentary on Judges and Ruth*, Kregel Exegetical Library (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2013), 132–37; Tammi J. Schneider, *Judges*, Berit Olam (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 25–26; K. Lawson Younger Jr., “The Configuring of Judicial Preliminaries: Judges 1.1–2.5 and Its Dependence on the Book of Joshua,” *JSOT* 68 (1995): 80; Lillian R. Klein, *The Triumph of Irony in the Book of Judges*, JSOTSup 14 (Sheffield, England: Almond, 1988), 28–30; Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 118–19; Waltke, *Old Testament Theology*, 594–95; Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1998), 216; William J. Dumbrell, *The Faith of Israel: A Theological Survey of the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 76–77.

²⁶ The author of Judges seems to make this point by noting Judah’s treatment of Adoni-bezek (Judg 1:4–7). As Block states, “The author hereby declares obliquely that the newly arrived Israelites (including the tribe of Judah) have quickly adopted a Canaanite ethic.” Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 18.

²⁷ K. Lawson Younger Jr. makes the same observation regarding the function of the phrase “did not drive out” (לֹא הוֹרִישׁ) in Judg 1: “the impact of the formula is to state that this was an intentional failure to wipe out the population.” Younger, “Configuring of Judicial Preliminaries,” 82.

²⁸ For instance, the text informs readers that the tribe of Joseph had agreed to show a Canaanite man loyal love (חֶסֶד) in exchange for information regarding the city of Bethel. As noted by others, the word חֶסֶד often connotes faithfulness to a covenant. This point is made poignantly by Younger, when he states, “Ironically, the Israelites show covenant loyalty (*hesed*) to the man of Bethel instead of loyalty (*hesed*) to Yahweh’s will according to the covenant” Younger, “Configuring of Judicial Preliminaries,” 79. Block makes a similar point, while also observing that the language mirrors Israel’s prior agreements with Rahab and with the Gibeonites in the book of Joshua. The agreement with the informant would therefore violate God’s command in Deut 7:2 (see Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 27–28, 34). Moreover, given the manner in which the Gibeonites came to serve Israel (Josh 9:16–21), it seems likely that those groups of Canaanites that were put to forced labor had also made covenants with Israel (Judg 1:28–36).

snare to you” (2:3).²⁹ This divine declaration merits close attention, as I believe it points to YHWH’s decision to punish Israel by employing DRA.

Most translations and many scholars agree that Judges 2:3 refers to an announcement of punishment.³⁰ Nonetheless, a significant challenge has been mounted against this reading, pioneered by A. Van Der Kooj.³¹ Kooj has argued that Judges 2:3 should be understood to refer to a divine warning given to Israel in the distant past.³² He

²⁹ As it stands, the MT of Judg 2:3 presents a notorious text-critical problem involving the expression *והיו לכם לצדים* (lit. “and they will be to you to sides”). The four most common approaches to the problem are as follows: (1) to treat the form *צדים* as a derivative of *צוד* (Qal: “to hunt”) and to approach it as loose synonym to *מוקש* (“snare”); (2) to assume on the basis of the versions that a scribal error accounts for the MT and to read *לצרים* (“to the enemies”) in the place of *לצדים*; (3) to argue that the original Hebrew contained the phrase *לצנינם בצדיכם* (“as thorns in your sides”), which was then reduced to the extant text through haplography; and (4) to see the text of Judg 2:3 as an abbreviated reference to Num 33:55, which says “if you do not dispossess the inhabitants of the land from before you, then those you allow to remain from among them will become barbs in your eyes and thorns in your sides (*בצדיכם*), and they will harass you upon the land in which you are dwelling.” While a definitive solution is unlikely to be reached, the fourth reading should probably be adopted since it makes good sense of the text as it stands. Nonetheless, each of the four proposals would fit with the broader reading of Judg 2:3 suggested in my exposition of the passage. For scholars who adopt this fourth position, see G. F. Moore, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Judges*, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1895), 59; K. Lawson Younger Jr., *Judges and Ruth*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 75n39; Graham S. Ogden, “A Translational Note on Judges 2.3,” *BT* 54, no. 4 (2003): 445–46.

³⁰ Translations that interpret the passage as an announcement of punishment include the HCSB, NIV, ESV, NASB, NKJV, NLT, and NRSV. Scholars and commentators who take a similar position include A. R. Fausset, *A Critical and Expository Commentary on the Book of Judges* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1999), 38; James D. Martin, *The Book of Judges* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 30; James B. Jordan, *Judges: God’s War against Humanism* (Tyler, TX: Geneva Ministries, 1985), 23; Schneider, *Judges*, 26–27; Brown, “Judges,” 152; Susan Niditch, *Judges*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 49; Trent C. Butler, *Judges*, WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2009), 41; Eslinger, *Into the Hands*, 62–63; J. Cheryl Exum, “The Centre Cannot Hold: Thematic and Textual Instabilities in Judges,” *CBQ* 52, no. 3 (1990): 413; Wolfgang Bluedorn, *Yahweh Versus Baalism: A Theological Reading of the Gideon-Abimelech Narrative*, JSOTSup 329 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 68; Elie Assis, *Self-Interest or Communal Interest: An Ideology of Leadership in the Gideon, Abimelech and Jephthah Narratives (Judg 6–12)*, VTSup 106 (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2005), 183; House, *Old Testament Theology*, 216; James M. Hamilton Jr., *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 154.

³¹ A. Van Der Kooj, “‘And I Also Said’: A New Interpretation of Judges II 3,” *VT* 45, no. 3 (1995): 303–4. Kooj’s interpretation seems to have influenced commentators like Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 35; Barry G. Webb, *The Book of Judges*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 132.

³² Kooj, “Judges II 3,” 303–4.

begins by challenging the notion that **וּגַם אִמְרָתִי** can refer to a present announcement.³³ He posits that the phrase **וּגַם אִמְרָתִי** (“and I also said”) links the reported speech which immediately follows (“I will not drive them out from before you”) to the statements which follow the phrase **וְאָמַר** (“And I said”) in 2:1d.³⁴ In other words, in both 2:1d and in 2:3, YHWH is rehearsing past speeches previously delivered to Israel. Furthermore, Kooj points out the similarities between Judges 2:3 (“I will not drive them out from before you”) and Exodus 23:29 (“I will not drive them out from before you in one year”) and concludes that the latter is the source of the reported speech in the former.³⁵ As a result, Kooj believes that YHWH’s intent in Judges 2:3 was not to render a guilty sentence upon Israel; instead, God was reminding his people that he had given them ample warning that he intended to allow the Canaanites to dwell in their midst for a period of time. Thus, they should have been prepared to live among pagans for a season while resisting the allure of the false religions of Canaan.³⁶

Though Kooj presents a plausible case, important exegetical details render the punitive view more credible. First of all, the discourse features of Judges 2:1–3 call into question Kooj’s suggested reading. In Judges 2:1, the messenger of YHWH reports his speech by using a *wayyiqtol* form (**וְאָמַר**). If Judges 2:3 is intended to resume the report by referring to a different speech, one would expect another *wayyiqtol* form; instead, one finds the pattern broken by **וּגַם אִמְרָתִי**. As Hess states,

[Kooj’s interpretation] is not likely because this proposal would result in the continuation of a sequence begun with the *waw* consecutive, **וְאָמַר** ‘I said’, in v. 1. In other words, one expects a *waw* consecutive for the proposal. The formation that

³³ Kooj, “Judges II 3,” 297.

³⁴ Kooj, “Judges II 3,” 297–98.

³⁵ Kooj, “Judges II 3,” 299–301.

³⁶ Kooj, “Judges II 3,” 303–4.

exists, a particle introducing a perfect form, suggests a change of aspect, here from what was recounted to what now will be the situation.³⁷

Second, if Judges 2:3 is in fact quoting an old speech, Exodus 23:29 does not seem to be a good candidate for providing the rehearsed material.³⁸ As Kooj himself admits, Judges 2:3 and Exodus 23:29 differ in that the former does not limit the duration of God's stay on the execution of the Canaanites.³⁹ Kooj attempts to solve this problem by appealing to the unique contexts behind the writing of Exodus as opposed to Judges. However, his hypothesis does little to explain why Judges 2:3 states in absolute terms ("I will not drive them out from before you") what Exodus 23:29 has in relative terms ("I will not drive them out from before you *in one year*") if the former passage refers to the latter.⁴⁰ Moreover, Kooj's reading of Judges 2:3 suffers because the statement in Exodus 23:29

³⁷ Richard S. Hess, "Judges 1–5 and Its Translation," in *Translating the Bible: Problems and Prospects*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Richard S. Hess, JSNTSup 173 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 146.

³⁸ I do not deny that Judg 2:3 may allude to Exod 23:29, but I do mean to say that the former passage should not be interpreted as a quotation or summary of the latter. Moreover, I think the author of Judges probably intended for 2:3 to be read in light of themes developed in several OT texts rather than a specific passage. In other words, it appears to me as though Judg 2:3 references the promise of divine help in the conquest, God's command to exterminate the Canaanites, and the dangers these peoples and their gods posed to Israel. Since these themes are developed in multiple OT texts (cf. Exod 23:20–33; 34:11–16; Num 33:50–56; Deut 7:1–12; Josh 23:9–16), it is unnecessary to single out a specific passage as the alleged source of the saying in Judg 2:3.

³⁹ Kooj, "Judges II 3," 299–300.

⁴⁰ According to Kooj, the author of Judges states absolutely what Exodus states relatively because the Israelites addressed in Judg 2:3 needed to be reminded of previous warnings regarding the Canaanites who still live in the land (at least as far as the narrative is concerned; see Kooj, "Judges II 3," 301). However, if Kooj is correct regarding the intent behind Judg 2:3, it seems like the author would have had even more reason to include the temporal notice as it would heighten Israel's guilt. After all, Israel's susceptibility to pagan influence would appear even more inexplicable if the author pointed out that they had needed to resist such temptation only temporarily.

This is not to deny that the author of Judges alludes to Exod 23:29 in Judg 2:3; in fact, I would argue that the latter passage does allude to Exod 23:20–33, along with other passages (Exod 34:11–16; Num 33:50–56; Deut 7:1–12; Josh 23:9–16). But contrary to Kooj's suggestion, I do not believe that Judg 2:3 specifically rehearses the speech found in Exod 23:29. Moreover, I deny that the connection between Judg 2:3 and Exod 23 implies that no notion of punishment was intended in the former verse. Instead, it seems more likely that Judg 2:3 alludes to Exod 23:20–33 precisely to make the point that Israel's disobedience has brought the promised conquest to a halt (cf. Exod 23:21–22).

was not intended as a warning for Israel. On the contrary, it was a promise that God *would* drive out the Canaanites (albeit slowly rather than quickly). Thus, if God intended to remind Israel that he had already warned them that he *would not* drive out the Canaanites, it would be rather curious for him to have then referenced a promise that he *would* drive out the Canaanites. As such, it seems unlikely that Judges 2:3 is a rehearsal of God's speech in Exodus 23:29. Third, even if Judges 2:3 was an invocation of a warning previously issued, the text could still function as an announcement of punishment. The verse could be alluding to passages wherein YHWH warned Israel of the punishments he would inflict upon them if they failed to obey his commands concerning the Canaanites. So for instance, Robert Chisholm Jr. posits that Judges 2:3 recalls Joshua 23:13, wherein "Joshua warned that if Israel formed alliances with the people of the land, the Lord would abort the conquest and allow the nations to entrap his people and bring about their destruction."⁴¹ Since Judges 2:2 clearly states that Israel *did* form alliances with the people of the land, it seems warranted to assume that any reference to Joshua 23:13 would imply that the consequences formerly threatened were now to become a reality.⁴² Moreover, even if one believed that Judges 2:3 referred primarily (or exclusively) to Exodus 23:20–33,⁴³ one would still have good reason to infer that the author of Judges intended to depict a punitive decision. After all, Exodus 23 states unambiguously that the promise of God's aid in conquest depended on Israel's

⁴¹ Chisholm, *Judges and Ruth*, 139–40.

⁴² Barnabas Lindars comes to a similar conclusion regarding Judg 2:3 when he says, "The verdict, which completes the divine indictment, takes the form of reminding the people of another promise of Yahweh, which will now come into operation" Barnabas Lindars, *Judges 1–5* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 78; see also Moore, *Judges*, 59; Butler, *Judges*, 41; Younger, *Judges and Ruth*, 75; Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 117. Chisholm however misses this point when he treats the reference simply as a warning to Israel that if they associate with the peoples in the land, they would jeopardize God's promises (see Chisholm, *Judges and Ruth*, 139–41).

⁴³ As is argued by Kooj, "Judges II 3," 299–301.

obedience (cf. Exod 23:21–22). Since the actions cited in Judges 2:2 violate the commands in Exodus 23:32–33, one would expect the judgments implied in Exodus 23 to apply to the nation of Israel as they are confronted by the angel of YHWH in Judges 2:1–5. So even if Kooj is correct when he asserts that the phrase **וּגַם אִמְרָתִי** in Judges 2:3 indicates that the words to follow are a warning from the distant past,⁴⁴ such a reference could indicate the enactment of penalties regarding which Israel was previously forewarned. Lastly, Kooj unduly limits the possible meanings of the phrase **וּגַם אִמְרָתִי**. Kooj does not believe **וּגַם אִמְרָתִי** can mean “therefore I am now saying,” and he concludes that “the most natural interpretation” of the phrase is “and I also said.”⁴⁵ However, the author of Judges has already shown his willingness to use unexpected tense forms in verse 1, where readers find a *yiqtol* form (**וְאָעֵלָה**) instead of the anticipated *qatal* form.⁴⁶ Moreover, grammarians agree that the Hebrew *qatal* form can do more than function as a simple past tense. So for instance, the *qatal* tense form can refer to the immediate rather than distant past.⁴⁷ Unfortunately, Kooj does not consider this possibility in his interpretation of **וּגַם אִמְרָתִי**. Likewise, he overlooks the fact that the semantic range of the verb **אָמַר** is broader than audible speech as it also could refer to a person’s internal dialogue, including his thoughts or his purposes.⁴⁸ Thus, **וּגַם אִמְרָתִי** could

⁴⁴ Kooj, “Judges II 3,” 303–4.

⁴⁵ Kooj, “Judges II 3,” 297.

⁴⁶ To account for the use of the *yiqtol* form, most scholars seem to argue that the MT is corrupt. BHS suggests that the original form could have been **וְאָעֵלָה**, while Lindars suggests that the original text was **אֲנִי יְהוָה וְאָעֵלָה**. Ultimately, Lindars claims that the problem “defies solution” and that the *yiqtol* form should simply be translated as a past tense. Lindars, *Judges 1–5*, 77–78.

⁴⁷ As grammarians have noted, *qatal* forms do not necessarily refer to events in the distant past, but can refer to events that have just occurred. See Christo H. J. van der Merwe, Jackie A. Naudé, and Jan H. Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Richard S. Hess, Biblical Languages: Hebrew 3 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 145; Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 487.

⁴⁸ BDB notes that this use of **אָמַר** does not require the speaker to make explicit that the speech is internal. It cites the following examples of the verb occurring by itself and referring to a speaker’s mental

be reporting something the Lord had said to himself in the immediate past. Similarly, the phrase וגם does not necessarily support Kooj’s argument that 2:3 reports another past speech in addition to the one cited in 2:1d. The phrase וגם could be intended to supplement the speech from 2:1 with a relatively *new* declaration or it could introduce God’s response to Israel’s infidelity as described in 2:2.⁴⁹ The grammatical possibilities for the phrase וגם אמארתִי are broader than Kooj’s argument would lead one to believe. In fact, given the immediate context and the lack of exact matches to the statement following וגם אמארתִי, it seems unlikely that the phrase in Judges 2:3 should be translated “and I also said”⁵⁰; instead, the author probably means to report a punitive decision recently reached by YHWH. Thus, one could loosely paraphrase Judges 2:2–3 by saying, “But you did not listen to my voice—what a terrible thing you’ve done! Since you have acted this way, I also have decided to act: I will no longer drive out the Canaanites!”⁵¹

life: Gen 20:11; 26:9; Exod 2:14; Num 24:11; Josh 22:33; Judg 15:2; Ruth 4:4; 1 Sam 20:4; 20:26; 30:6; 2 Sam 5:6; 12:22; 21:16; 1 Kgs 5:19; 2 Kgs 5:11; Esth 2:13; Mal 1:7; 2 Chr 13:8; 28:10; 28:13; 32:1.

⁴⁹ HALOT takes the first option, viewing the וגם in Judg 2:3 as indicating supplementation (“and further I say”). BDB takes the second option, as it understands the phrase to indicate that God’s declaration in 2:3 corresponds to Israel’s infidelity to the covenant. On account of the immediate context, I believe the latter option to be more likely. Interestingly, גם is clearly used in the latter way in Judg 2:21, where God’s judgment on Israel is revisited.

⁵⁰ The immediate context seems to favor an announcement of punishment rather than a simple report of past speech. Since YHWH has just reproached Israel for the violation of his commands (2:2), readers would naturally anticipate that he then discuss the consequences for their disobedience. Moreover, the response of the Israelites in 2:4 makes sense if in fact 2:3 refers to God’s punitive decision. In addition, the argument that 2:3 quotes a previous warning falters because there are no other absolute promises of non-conquest to which the author of Judges could have referred. Instead, the alleged sources for 2:3 all include the caveat that YHWH would not drive out the Canaanites if Israel disobeyed him (cf. Exod 23:20–33; 34:11–16; Num 33:50–56; Deut 7:1–12; Josh 23:9–16). While one could argue that the condition of disobedience is assumed, it seems simpler to understand 2:3 as a description of God’s response to Israel’s actions in 2:2 rather than as a report of previous speech delivered.

⁵¹ This paraphrase adopts BDB’s interpretation of וגם (i.e., indicating a correspondence between God’s action in 2:3 and Israel’s action in 2:2) and translates it explicitly through the addition of the phrase “since you have done this.” Essentially, I read Judg 2:3 similarly to Schneider, when she offers the translation, “Therefore, I have resolved not to drive them out before you.” Schneider, *Judges*, 26. See also Hess, “Judges 1–5 and Its Translation,” 146.

Contrary to Kooj's suggestion, it seems warranted to conclude that Judges 2:3 intimates God's decision to punish Israel.⁵² The contents of the punishment are worth noting: "I will not drive them out from before you, and they will become thorns in your sides and their gods will become a snare to you" (Judg 2:3). As an act of retribution (cf. Judg 2:2), God now refuses to expel the Canaanites from the land which inevitably brings about two results. First, the remaining Canaanites will become a source of pain to the Israelites ("they will become thorns in your sides"; cf. Num 33:55), possibly by leading them into sin (cf. Exod 23:33; 34:12). Second, the pagan gods that litter the land will entice Israel into idolatry (cf. Exod 23:33; 34:11–16; Deut 7:16; Josh 23:13). Both scenarios described suggest that, as a penalty for their disobedience, God would now allow the Canaanites to remain in order to lead Israel towards apostasy.⁵³ Furthermore, given the consequences of forsaking YHWH delineated elsewhere (Judg 2:11–15; cf. Deut 6:14–15; 7:3–4; 8:19–20; 11:16–17; 29:21–27), God's verdict in 2:3 seems to push Israel closer towards experiencing the covenant curses.⁵⁴ Thus, God's dealings with Israel in Judges 2:3 fit the definition of DRA offered in this study.⁵⁵ Moreover, the author of

⁵² As I have already argued, one could hold this position even while viewing 2:3 as referring to a warning given formerly. For those who hold to a punitive reading of 2:3, see Moore, *Judges*, 59; Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 117; Lindars, *Judges 1–5*, 78; Martin, *Judges*, 30; Fausset, *Judges*, 38; Schneider, *Judges*, 27; Younger, *Judges and Ruth*, 75; Jordan, *Judges*, 23; Eslinger, *Into the Hands*, 62–63; Bluedorn, *Yahweh Versus Baalism*, 68; Assis, *Self-Interest*, 183; Hamilton, *God's Glory*, 154; House, *Old Testament Theology*, 216.

⁵³ As Martin rightly comments, "The Israelite tribes have disobeyed God's commands, and verse 2 implies that they had entered into relationships with the local population and had adopted some of their religious practices. As a punishment for this, God refuses to drive out the local population and promises that both they and their gods will lead the Israelites far from him." Martin, *Judges*, 30. Schreiner puts the matter poetically when he states, "If Israel lives *among* the Canaanites, it likely will not be long before Israel begins to live *like* the Canaanites." Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 119.

⁵⁴ I agree with Bluedorn when he argues that the punishments inflicted on Israel in the book of Judges correspond to the covenant curses. See Bluedorn, *Yahweh Versus Baalism*, 67.

⁵⁵ One might quibble with this interpretation on the basis of later statements in Judges to the effect that God left the Canaanites in the land in order to test his people's faithfulness (cf. Judg 2:20–23; 3:4), and to teach them how to wage war (3:2). At face value, these descriptions of God's motives seem to conflict with the reading of Judg 2:3 that I have presented. However, two factors mitigate the apparent

Judges provides details that allow readers to infer the kind of DRA involved. First, since Judges 2:3 speaks of God's response to Israel's sin, his influence on Israel ought to be characterized as retributive. Second, since the passage describes God's decision *not* to drive out the remaining Canaanites, the text in question seems to intimate a passive rather than active form of DRA.⁵⁶ Third, Judges 2:3 does not present God as directly involved in luring Israel towards their demise. Instead, he employs the Canaanites and their gods to function as a trap for his people. Because another agent is depicted as the means through which God would influence Israel, YHWH's agency here is best described as mediated. Lastly, since there are no suggestions in the context that the author had Israel's eternal state in mind, the verse should be read as depicting a non-eternal form of DRA.

In addition to the opening chapters, the author of Judges also invokes the concept of DRA in the story of Abimelech. In the ninth chapter of the book, readers are told that Abimelech and the people of Shechem conspired against Gideon's sons so that Abimelech might be made king (Judg 9:1–3). With the help of the Shechemites, Abimelech murdered most of the sons of Gideon and then returned to Shechem for his coronation (Judg 9:4–6). When Jotham, Gideon's lone surviving son, hears about the crowning of Abimelech, he responds by delivering a speech denouncing the actions of the

contradiction. First, it is probable that Judg 2:20–23 and 3:1–4 refer to the immediate period after Joshua's death, while the situation in Judg 2:3 refers to a time after Israel failed their period of testing. So, on the one hand, Judg 2:20ff provides an explanation for why God did not wipe out the Canaanites during Joshua's time (i.e., YHWH left the nations to test Israel's fidelity); so also Barry G. Webb, *The Book of Judges: An Integrated Reading*, JSOTSup 46 (Sheffield, England: JSOT, 1987), 113–15. On the other hand, Judg 2:1–3 asserts that God's people had failed the test and would thereafter be led into greater measures of apostasy. Second, a canonical reading of the passage would suggest that YHWH foreknew how Israel would respond to his testing (cf. Deut 4:25–26; 30:1; 31:16–22; 32:1–43). In other words, God allowed Joshua's conquest to remain partially unfulfilled because he desired to test and train Israel, though he already understood that they would be enticed by the remaining locals as a result (see Eslinger, *Into the Hands*, 78–80, though I disagree with his understanding of Judg 2 as a whole). Thus, the reading of Judg 2:3 proposed above is consistent with other passages that deal with the reasons why God left the Canaanites in the land.

⁵⁶ While YHWH's verdict does move Israel towards apostasy, this effect is had through decided inaction rather than a positive exercise of divine agency.

Shechemites and their newly appointed king. While Jotham's words hint at YHWH's attitudes towards the two guilty parties (Judg 9:7–21),⁵⁷ the narrator goes on to openly describe the Lord's response to the atrocities committed by the co-conspirators (Judg 9:23–24). In 9:23, God is said to have sent an evil spirit “between Abimelech and the lords of Shechem,” with the result that leaders of Shechem “dealt treacherously” (ויבגדו) with Abimelech. Verse 24 reveals that God acted this way “so that the violence against the seventy sons of Jerubaal might come upon, and their blood might be set upon, Abimelech, their brother who slayed them, and upon the lords of Shechem, who strengthened his hands to slay his brothers.” In other words, as a repayment for the murder of Gideon's sons, YHWH sent an evil spirit to influence the Shechemites to deal treacherously with Abimelech⁵⁸; this betrayal would then lead the co-conspirators to turn against one another, thus ensuring that both the Shechemites and Abimelech would receive the penalty for the evil they perpetrated against Gideon's sons.⁵⁹ Such a

⁵⁷ Block correctly suggests that Jotham functioned as “a true spokesman for God” and as “the *alter ego* of the narrator.” Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 316, 320–22.

⁵⁸ Hamori rightly describes the relationship between the sending of the evil spirit and the treachery of the Shechemites as a clear case of cause and effect. See Esther J. Hamori, “The Spirit of Falsehood,” *CBQ* 72, no. 1 (2010): 21. See also Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 324; Bluedorn, *Yahweh Versus Baalism*, 233; Christopher T. Begg, “Abimelech, King of Shechem, According to Josephus,” *ETL* 72, no. 1 (1996): 152.

⁵⁹ See Chisholm, *Judges and Ruth*, 316; Fausset, *Judges*, 175; Schneider, *Judges*, 143; Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 322–25; Butler, *Judges*, 244–45; Assis, *Self-Interest*, 155; Begg, “Abimelech according to Josephus,” 152; Klein, *Triumph of Irony*, 73; Hamori, “Spirit of Falsehood,” 21; T. A. Boogaart, “Stone for Stone: Retribution in the Story of Abimelech and Shechem,” *JSOT* 10, no. 32 (1985): 49; Linda A. Dietch, *Authority and Violence in the Gideon and Abimelech Narratives: A Sociological and Literary Exploration of Judges 6–9*, Hebrew Bible Monographs 75 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2015), 127–28. Contrary to most interpretations of the passage, Bluedorn proposes that YHWH was punishing Abimelech and the Shechemites for the crime of replacing Yahwism with Baalism, and that their fate “shows that idolatry leads to mutual destruction and needs to be condemned, while YHWH worship leads to peace, as demonstrated in the Gideon narrative.” Bluedorn, *Yahwism Versus Baalism*, 229–30. Bluedorn's reading of the text seems unwarranted however, as the narrator gives every indication that YHWH judged Abimelech and the Shechemites for their conspiracy against the sons of Gideon (cf. Judg 9:24, 56–57). Moreover, Bluedorn fails to demonstrate his claim that the theological theme of the Abimelech episode is “YHWH's superiority over Baal” (33–34).

description of God's response indicates the use of retributive, mediated, active DRA.⁶⁰ This conclusion is supported by the remainder of the account, which details how God's plan of action came to pass.⁶¹ The people of Shechem turned on Abimelech (presumably on account of the activity of the evil spirit),⁶² which resulted in a conflict that led to the loss of many Shechemite lives (Judg 9:26–49). Finally, Abimelech himself meets a violent and shameful end, as he is mortally wounded by a woman before having to beg his own servant to kill him (Judg 9:50–55). In order to stress the theme of divine retribution, the narrator ends this sad chapter in Israel's history by saying, "And God repaid the evil of Abimelech, which he committed against his father by slaying seventy of his brothers, and God repaid all the evil of the men of Shechem unto their own heads. And the curse of Jotham, the son of Jerubaal, came upon them" (Judg 9:56–57). The conclusion harkens back to 9:23–24 in order to emphasize God's orchestration of all the events that transpired between Abimelech and the Shechemites.⁶³ Moreover, the narrator posits that God brought to pass Jotham's curse against Abimelech and Shechem out of a desire repay them for their sins—a desire which YHWH satisfied by turning the two

⁶⁰ Bluedorn suggests that Gaal was also raised up by YHWH in order to bring about the mutual destruction of Abimelech and the Shechemites. See Bluedorn, *Yahweh Versus Baalism*, 235, 248; see also Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 325–27. If he is correct, the narrative would include another instance of retributive, mediated, active DRA. However, the text does not itself provide enough evidence to confirm Bluedorn's proposal.

⁶¹ Chisholm rightly describes this section as "tell[ing] how the Lord providentially brought about Abimelech's demise and Shechem's destruction." Chisholm, *Judges and Ruth*, 309.

⁶² Dietch sees evidence of the evil spirit's work in "the civic assembly's attempt to enrich themselves at Abimelech's expense" and in their favorable response to Gaal. Dietch, *Authority and Violence*, 174. She also believes the spirit's influence is behind Abimelech's "sudden outbursts of violence" (177).

⁶³ So also Assis, *Self-Interest*, 170; Bluedorn, *Yahweh Versus Baalism*, 263. Begg makes the interesting observation that Josephus departs from his source material when he eliminates all references to God's personal involvement in events that led to the downfall of Abimelech and the Shechemites. Instead, Josephus replaces any notion of DRA with "the impersonal forces of 'misfortune' and 'righteous doom.'" Begg believes that this is part of Josephus's strategy to make the biblical story more palatable to a Gentile audience. Begg, "Abimelech according to Josephus," 163–64.

guilty parties against one another through the influence of an evil spirit, so that the co-conspirators might bring about their mutual destruction.⁶⁴ Thus, the Abimelech account provides a second clear case of retributive, mediated DRA in the book of Judges.⁶⁵

DRA in the Book of Samuel

The book of Samuel⁶⁶ recounts Israel's transition from a tribal confederacy to an established monarchy.⁶⁷ By praising YHWH as the sovereign one who both brings low the proud and raises up the humble, Hannah's poem sets the theological stage for the rest of the narrative which follows.⁶⁸ The overarching theme of YHWH's sovereignty expresses itself repeatedly throughout the book's retelling of the careers of Eli, Samuel,

⁶⁴ Assis argues that the Abimelech account is intentionally clouded with a certain ambiguity: readers are left confused about who is acting and why they are acting. Ultimately he believes that the author intended this in order to show that God was leading the characters to make irrational choices so that they might meet their demise. As he states, "Now, on conclusion of the account, the reader can explain the confusion over the nature of the aims and actions of the characters by God's direct intervention to punish Abimelech and the citizens of Shechem for the murder of Abimelech's brothers. This prevented any possibility of human reasoning." Assis, *Self-Interest*, 170–71. For a similar suggestion, see Dietch, *Authority and Violence*, 177.

⁶⁵ Moreover, since there are no indications that the author is concerned with post-mortem fate, the text is best understood to refer to non-eternal DRA.

⁶⁶ As is commonly acknowledged, 1 and 2 Samuel were traditionally treated as a single book. See F. F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1988), 29–30; Paul D. Wegner, *The Journey from Texts to Translation: The Origin and Development of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 43–46. Beckwith theorizes that the reason Samuel was divided into two books by the Septuagint translators was because its length required that it be copied onto two leather scrolls. See Roger T. Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church and Its Background in Early Judaism* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 257. For biblical theological treatments of 1 and 2 Samuel as a single book, see Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 136–63; House, *Old Testament Theology*, 227–48; Hamilton, *God's Glory*, 158–76.

⁶⁷ The language of a "tribal confederacy" is taken from Bernhard W. Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966), 118–21. Waltke describes Samuel as narrating "three tectonic shifts": (1) a change in worship centers from Shiloh to Jerusalem; (2) a change in leadership structure from "episodic warlords" to Davidic rule; and (3) "Israel is transformed from a tribal league to a unified kingdom." Waltke, *Old Testament Theology*, 624.

⁶⁸ Brevard Childs observes that Hannah's song provides "an interpretative key" for the history recounted in the book of Samuel. See Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 272–73.

Saul, and David.⁶⁹ Such sovereignty is perhaps most strikingly seen in three episodes within Samuel that reflect DRA, the first of which takes place within the account of the decline of the Elide priesthood.

First Samuel 2:22–25 reports how Eli confronted his sons after the news of their sinfulness reached him.⁷⁰ Eli reproves them for their deeds and warns them that their sins against YHWH will leave them without anyone to intercede for them.⁷¹ The narrator

⁶⁹ House correctly observes that the book of Samuel continues the OT's emphasis on divine sovereignty among other key themes (House, *Old Testament Theology*, 227). Gilmour identifies two dominant themes in Samuel: the rise and fall of leaders, and the election of David. See Rachele Gilmour, "(Hi)story Telling in the Books of Samuel," in *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Narrative*, ed. Danna Nolan Fewell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 192. Special attention is paid to the case of David, who is elevated from his humble station to the throne of Israel, is promised a lasting kingdom, and is preserved as king even after his own fall from grace. Schreiner rightly describes the central message of Samuel when he states that "the books of 1–2 Samuel recount the story of how David became king, featuring the covenant promise that the kingdom would never be withdrawn from David's heirs." Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 136.

⁷⁰ Some see a contradiction between 1 Sam 2:22–25 and 3:13, as the former passage seems to show Eli rebuking his sons while the latter is sometimes read to mean that Eli would face God's curse because he refused to confront them. Marti J. Steussy interprets the apparent disagreement as evidence that the God of the book of Samuel is problematic. According to her reading of 3:13, YHWH misrepresents the facts of the case in order to carry out his unjust punishment on Eli. See Marti J. Steussy, "The Problematic God of Samuel," in *Shall Not the Judge of All the Earth Do What Is Right? Studies on the Nature of God in Tribute to James L. Crenshaw*, ed. David Penchansky and Paul L. Redditt (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 143, 146. However, her interpretation of Samuel requires one to believe that a book severely critical of YHWH was somehow included within the biblical canon. Such a state of affairs seems highly unlikely. Meanwhile, Brettler argues that these alleged discrepancies are evidence of a variety of traditions that stand behind the final form of the text; see Marc Brettler, "The Composition of 1 Samuel 1–2," *JBL* 116, no. 4 (1997): 603. However, such an explanation does not help readers understand what the author/redactor intended to accomplish by allowing these so-called contradictions to remain in the text. In my judgment, Waltke resolves the problem more convincingly when he says, "Eli, however, doesn't back up his reprimand by action or example—he himself is overweight and eats the choicest parts [of the sacrifices]." Waltke, *Old Testament Theology*, 628. Thus, according to Waltke, Eli did rebuke his sons in 2:22–25, but he is liable to God because he failed to put his words into action. Perhaps Smith is also right when he argues that the verb כהה in 1 Sam 3:13 indicates that Eli should have put his sons to death in accordance with the regulations of the Torah. See Brett W. Smith, "The Sin of Eli and Its Consequences," *BSac* 170 (2013): 18–20.

⁷¹ The first half of 1 Sam 2:25 presents interpreters with challenges. I would argue that the verse provides evidence of the corruption of the Elide priesthood in that Eli no longer recognizes one central function of the priesthood: to intercede on behalf of those who have sinned against YHWH. Nevertheless, the difficulties involved in the interpretation of 2:25a do not directly impact the issue of DRA in the second half of the verse. For a discussion of the various interpretative problems attending 1 Sam 2:25a, see Eileen F. de Ward, "Eli's Rhetorical Question: 1 Sam. 2:25," *JJS* 27 (1976): 117–37.

then makes the intriguing statement that “they did not listen to the voice of their father, for YHWH desired (יָפַח) to put them to death.”⁷² Without elaborating on precisely how the Lord influenced their response, the text clearly expresses that Hophni and Phinehas remained unmoved by their father’s words because God desired that such be the case.⁷³ As such, readers have good reason to perceive DRA operating behind-the-scenes.⁷⁴ Because of the stress laid upon their wickedness, YHWH’s action against Eli’s sons ought to be understood as being motivated by vengeance.⁷⁵ In addition, there is no textual

⁷² Grys helpfully points out that modern interpreters often stumble over this passage (and others like it) because of their own theological and philosophical pre-commitments. As he states, “The ‘problem’ with texts like 1 Samuel 2.25 lies not so much in the narrative but in the interpretative assumptions brought by the reader; dissonance is created between the narrative model of a vindictive God and the therapeutic God of more recent Christian discourse.” Alan Le Grys, “Difficult Texts: 1 Samuel 2.25,” *Theology* 117, no. 2 (2014): 117–18.

⁷³ Several scholars have reached a similar conclusion. Brettler notes that v. 25 reveals a kind of “divine coercion” (see Brettler, “Composition of 1 Samuel 1–2,” 608). Hertzberg says of this phenomenon, “Even the guilt of the sons of Eli is taken up into the omnipotence of God.” Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg, *1 and 2 Samuel*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964), 36. McCarter puts matters bluntly when he says, “Yahweh, as controller of destinies, would not permit Eli’s sons to heed their father’s good advice because it was his (Yahweh’s) intention that they sin and die.” P. Kyle McCarter Jr., *1 Samuel*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1980), 84. See also Matitiahu Tsevat, “The Death of the Sons of Eli,” in *The Meaning of the Book of Job and Other Biblical Studies: Essays on the Literature and Religion of the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Ktav, 1980), 149–50.

⁷⁴ Tsevat wrongly argues that passages like 1 Sam 2:25 reflect a rationalistic approach to sin that does away with human responsibility and responsiveness (see Tsevat, “Death of the Sons,” 149–53; see also Steussy, “Problematic God,” 144). On the contrary, the evaluation of the sons in 2:12–13 and the specific indictments against them in 2:17, 2:22, and 2:29 show that v.25 should not be understood as a denial of human responsibility. So also Hamilton, *God’s Glory*, 162–63; Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2:426n5; David Toshio Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 161–62. Nevertheless, some commentators wrongly overemphasize human responsibility in 2:25 so as to mute the text’s teaching regarding the decisiveness of God’s influence on the sons of Eli; see for example Bill T. Arnold, *1 and 2 Samuel*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 75–76; Ralph W. Klein, *1 Samuel*, 2nd ed., WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 26.

⁷⁵ So also Hamilton, *God’s Glory*, 162; Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2:426; Heikki Räisänen, *The Idea of Divine Hardening: A Comparative Study of the Notion of Divine Hardening, Leading Astray and Inciting to Evil in the Bible and the Qur’ān*, Publications of the Finnish Exegetical Society 25 (Helsinki, Finland: Kirjapaino Oy Savo, 1972), 58; Robert D. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, NAC (Nashville: B & H, 1996), 78–79; Francesca Aran Murphy, *1 Samuel*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2010), 71; David G. Firth, *1 and 2 Samuel*, ApOTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 72.

warrant for assuming that the author of Samuel had eternal destinies in mind. Thus, Hophni and Phinehas are depicted as rebuffing their father's pleas on account of retributive, non-eternal DRA.⁷⁶

The book of Samuel provides a second example of DRA in its narration of the beginning stages of Absalom's downfall.⁷⁷ In 2 Samuel 17, Absalom received conflicting advice from two of his advisors. Ahithophel suggested that he be allowed to attack David immediately so as to take advantage of the king's present weakness (2 Sam 17:1–2).⁷⁸ At first, Absalom and all Israel's elders received Ahithophel's counsel with enthusiasm (2 Sam 17:4). Such esteem for Ahithophel's suggestion is precisely what readers would expect given the narrator's previous comment that "the counsel of Ahithophel which he gave in those days was regarded as highly as if one was inquiring of the word of God" (2 Sam 16:23).⁷⁹ But instead of following Ahithophel, Absalom requested that Hushai (who unbeknownst to him was David's ally) provide a second opinion (2 Sam 17:5–6; cf. 2 Sam 15:32–37). Hushai then rebuts Ahithophel's proposal (2 Sam 17:7) and intentionally provides Absalom with directions that would be beneficial for David (cf. 2 Sam 17:15–16). Employing a variety of rhetorical techniques to render his speech persuasive,⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Not enough information is provided to more precisely determine the nature of God's influence upon Eli's sons. Thus, though he rightly discerns its retributive sense, Eichrodt overinterprets the text when he claims that an evil spirit moved upon the two sons' hearts. See Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. J. A. Baker, vol. 1, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 262n3.

⁷⁷ Schreiner rightly notes that 2 Sam 17 functions as a turning point in the story of Absalom's rebellion. See Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 160.

⁷⁸ Bodner makes the intriguing suggestion that Ahithophel's advice reflects a personal vendetta held against David for his treatment of Bathsheba and Uriah. See Keith Bodner, "Motives for Defection: Ahithophel's Agenda in 2 Samuel 15–17," *SR* 31, no. 1 (2002): 69–71. For a similar interpretation, see David Daube, "Absalom and the Ideal King," *VT* 48, no. 3 (1998): 320–22.

⁷⁹ Bodner correctly notes that the placement of this comment in 16:23 sets "the subsequent expectation" that "in the future his sage advice will certainly be observed." Bodner, "Motives for Defection," 69.

⁸⁰ For examinations of the rhetorical qualities of Hushai's speech, see Song-Mi Suzie Park, "The Frustration of Wisdom: Wisdom, Counsel, and Divine Will in 2 Samuel 17:1–23," *JBL* 128, no. 3

Hushai argues that David and his men are strong, fierce, battle-hardened men who would be ready to repulse an assault hastily sent (2 Sam 17:8–9). Such a defeat would only serve to discourage those loyal to Absalom, as it would remind them of David’s great might (2 Sam 17:9–10). Instead of prioritizing speed, Hushai recommends that Absalom respond with force: he tells the would-be king to gather together all his troops and to personally lead his vast army to battle against David (2 Sam 17:11). According to Hushai, such a powerful army would certainly overwhelm David and his men, thus securing the kingdom for Absalom (2 Sam 17:12–13). Surprisingly (cf. 2 Sam 16:23), Absalom and the elders are won over by Hushai’s plan despite the fact that Ahithophel provided a more strategic recommendation (2 Sam 17:14).⁸¹ But rather than this being a simple case of poor judgment on Absalom’s part, the narrator explains that his decision to follow Hushai was ultimately due to YHWH’s agency: “For YHWH decreed to frustrate the good counsel of Ahithophel” (2 Sam 17:14c).⁸² Moreover, the reason God exercised such

(2009): 455–60; Ronald T. Hyman, “Power of Persuasion: Judah, Abigail, and Hushai,” *JBQ* 23, no. 1 (1995): 12–16; Bodner, “Motives for Defection,” 71–72.

⁸¹ Steinmann rightly notes that there is an implied comparison with Hushai’s advice when the narrator states that Ahithophel’s counsel was good in 17:14. See Andrew E. Steinmann, *2 Samuel*, ConcC (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 2017), 320.

⁸² Contrary to most commentators, Brueggemann suggests that YHWH does not personally act in thwarting Ahithophel’s counsel; in fact, Brueggemann claims that the Lord does not act at all throughout the (so-called) succession narrative. Instead, he contends that the God of the succession narrative creates the context for human freedom without disrupting events through intrusive actions. See Walter Brueggemann, “On Trust and Freedom: A Study of Faith in the Succession Narrative,” *Int* 26, no. 1 (1972): 3–19). While provocative, Brueggemann’s argument fails to persuade. First of all, his claims are based on Whybray’s hypothesis that the succession narrative reflects wisdom traditions. However, Whybray’s thesis has been rightly criticized by James Crenshaw, “Method in Determining Wisdom Influence upon ‘Historical’ Literature,” *JBL* 88, no. 2 (1969): 137–40. Moreover, the independent existence of a “succession narrative” has been forcefully challenged as well; to provide a single example, see Serge Frolov, “Succession Narrative: A ‘Document’ or a Phantom?” *JBL* 121, no. 1 (2002): 83. Second, Brueggemann’s deistic reading flies in the face of the many references to God’s *personal* actions throughout 2 Sam 9–20. These references are made both by characters within the story (cf. 2 Sam 12:7–12; 12:13; 14:14; 15:25–26; 15:31; 16:8; 16:10–12; 16:18, etc.) and by the narrator himself (cf. 2 Sam 12:1; 12:15; 12:24–25; 17:14). Third, his claim that the verb צוה was carefully chosen to eliminate any expectation of action on God’s part is not substantiated with argumentation; thus, Brueggemann simply asserts that the verb “to decree” should not be understood as a personal action on God’s part. More problematic still, Brueggemann simply ignores the other actions assigned to God in the same verse: God

influence over Absalom was clearly destructive, as he undermined Ahithophel's counsel "so that [he] might bring calamity upon Absalom" (2 Sam 17:14d). Since Hushai's advice leads Absalom to continue his sinful quest to kill his father and usurp the throne,⁸³ it seems warranted to view God's involvement in this episode to be a case of DRA.⁸⁴

Though the narrator does not expand on the nature of God's influence in 2 Samuel 17, his description allows for at least two inferences to be made.⁸⁵ First, the DRA in this instance is most likely retributive. Readers are primed to interpret the Lord's actions in 2 Samuel 17:14 as punitive because of the way Absalom has been characterized in the narrative.⁸⁶ Many of Absalom's actions throughout the story are depicted as being wicked. For instance, as Absalom worked to turn the nation's political support away from

decreed *to thwart* (לִהפֹּר) Ahithophel's counsel and *to bring* (הִבִּיא) calamity upon Absalom. Lastly, even granting the prior existence of an independent succession narrative, the task of interpreting these chapters within their canonical context remains. Thus, those who take seriously the final form of the text cannot isolate the theology of 2 Sam 9–20 from the theology of the rest of the book. For all these reasons, Brueggemann's reading of God's alleged inactivity in 2 Sam 17:14 should be rejected.

⁸³ Schreiner correctly notes that Absalom's actions show him to be among the proud and the wicked denounced in Hannah's song (1 Sam 2:1–10). See Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 160–61. Hamilton also describes the situation rightly when he says, "Absalom is an agent of God's justice against David, but at the same time Absalom is a rebel against Yahweh's anointed king." Hamilton, *God's Glory*, 174.

⁸⁴ On the basis of 2 Sam 12:11, some might interpret Absalom's rebellion itself as an example of DRA. While it is true that Absalom's career fulfills God's announced intention to raise up calamity/evil (רָעָה) from David's own house to punish the latter for his transgressions (2 Sam 12:11), the author of Samuel *does not* indicate that God incited Absalom towards sin for the purpose of also condemning him. In my judgment, this omission distinguishes 2 Sam 12:11 from instances of DRA wherein the Lord uses adversaries to punish his people (cf. Deut 32; Isa 10). Of course, on the basis of theological reasoning, one may (and probably should) come to the conclusion that God predetermined both to use and to punish Absalom. Nevertheless, if one's aim is to explore *the biblical author's intention*, it would be unwarranted to describe the entirety of Absalom's rebellion as being due to DRA.

⁸⁵ Perhaps readers should also view 2 Sam 17:14 as an example of active, non-eternal DRA. Since the verbs used to describe God's influence seem to indicate positive activity on his part (צוּה in the *piel* and פָּרַר in the *hiphil*), one should probably describe DRA in 2 Sam 17:14 as active. In addition, given that Absalom meets mortal death as his end (2 Sam 18:14–15), it seems unlikely that the author intends to describe eternal DRA.

⁸⁶ For an exploration of the sins of Absalom, see Michael Avioz, "Divine Intervention and Human Error in the Absalom Narrative," *JSOT* 37, no. 3 (2013): 343–46.

David and onto himself, the narrator describes his actions by saying that he “stole (ויגנב) the heart of the men of Israel” (2 Sam 15:6). By using the language of thievery, the narrator paints Absalom’s political maneuvering in a negative light.⁸⁷ Moreover, though Amnon deserved to be put to death for his rape of Tamar, the author of Samuel seems to characterize Absalom’s actions against his brother to be evil.⁸⁸ So for instance, rather than immediately demanding justice for Tamar, Absalom harbors hatred (שנא) for Amnon and waits for an opportune time to put him to death (2 Sam 13:20–23).⁸⁹ Absalom refrains from taking action openly; instead, he carefully plots against Amnon and has his men kill his brother while drunk during a sheep-shearing celebration (2 Sam 13:23–29). Moreover, instead of defending his decision as a just penalty for Amnon’s sexual sin, Absalom flees the scene once the deed is done (2 Sam 13:34, 37–38). Narrative details such as these suggest that the author intended to depict the killing of Amnon as an act of murder rather than an act of justice.⁹⁰ In addition, Absalom’s hostility towards David contrasts poorly

⁸⁷ Similarly, Keith Bodner, *The Rebellion of Absalom* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 59–60; Steven T. Mann, *Run, David, Run! An Investigation of the Theological Speech Acts of David’s Departure and Return (2 Samuel 14–20)*, Siphrut (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 79; Steinmann, *2 Samuel*, 281. Alter insightfully comments regarding 2 Sam 15:2–5: “This whole tableau of Absalom standing at the gate to the city . . . is a stylized representation of the operation of a demagogue.” Robert Alter, *Ancient Israel: The Former Prophets; Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2013), 513.

⁸⁸ As McCarter comments, “The incestuous rape reported in the first part of the chapter precipitates, and is compounded by, fratricide.” P. Kyle McCarter Jr., *2 Samuel*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1984), 333–34. Also see Avioz, “Divine Intervention,” 343; Arnold, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 565; Bodner, *The Rebellion of Absalom*, 102.

⁸⁹ Hertzberg rightly remarks, “Absalom’s revenge is no impulsive act, but the result of a long period of waiting and cool consideration.” Hertzberg, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 326. See also Robert Barron, *2 Samuel*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2015), 128–29; Bodner, *The Rebellion of Absalom*, 45; Daube, “Absalom,” 317.

⁹⁰ Some commentators also suggest that Absalom may have harbored ulterior motives in killing Amnon; rather than desiring to avenge his sister’s honor, some believe that the would-be king made use of the rape as the occasion to murder the man who stood ahead of him in the line of royal succession. See Bodner, *The Rebellion of Absalom*, 36–38; Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, IBC (Louisville: John Knox, 1990), 290; Barron, *2 Samuel*, 128–30; Arnold, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 565.

with his father's refusal to do any harm to YHWH's anointed one (cf. 1 Sam 24:6; 26:9–11). Other features of Absalom's portrayal give the same impression⁹¹: he is a scheming, bloodthirsty, power-hungry tyrant-in-the-making who deserves the fate that he meets.⁹² Given the absence of authorial comments to suggest otherwise, the characterization of Absalom as an evil man seems to provide the backdrop for understanding God's desire to bring calamity upon Absalom in 2 Samuel 17:14.⁹³

Second, in addition to being retributive, the DRA in 2 Samuel 17 should be understood as having been mediated. In this case, it seems as though Hushai plays a crucial role as God's instrument for influencing Absalom towards his doom.⁹⁴ This

⁹¹ Schücking-Jungblut argues that the narrator presents Absalom as a pagan king when he takes a chariot for himself in 2 Sam 15; see Friederike Schücking-Jungblut, "Political Reasons for the Success and Failure of Absalom's Rebellion (2 Sam 15–19)," *VT* 68 (2018): 470. Brueggemann seems to compare Absalom to Samson when he says that the would-be king resorts to a "Samson-like trick" by burning down Joab's field (see Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 297). Waltke notes that Absalom uses YHWH's name in vain repeatedly in the narrative (Waltke, *Old Testament Theology*, 669). Avioz argues that Absalom's treatment of David's harem makes him guilty of both adultery and of breaking the command not to violate one's father's wife (cf. Deut 23:1; see Avioz, "Divine Intervention," 343–44).

⁹² Several commentators agree that Absalom is depicted in a strongly negative manner. McCarter characterizes Absalom as "a rancorous and scheming young man, brooding and sullen . . . yet capable of displays of extraordinary personal charm and persuasiveness in the pursuit of his own ends." McCarter, *2 Samuel*, 352. Barron describes him as "vain, ambitious, and hotheaded." Barron, *2 Samuel*, 128. Bodner notes that the Absalom's fondness for his own hair suggests that "the prince may suffer from a lethal case of excessive self-interest." Bodner, *The Rebellion of Absalom*, 57.

⁹³ Avioz has rightly argued that the author of Samuel depicts Absalom as fully responsible for his sins even as he also portrays Absalom's rebellion as God's punishment upon David (cf. 2 Sam 12:11). As he states, "Absalom's misdeeds help to show that the punishment eventually imposed upon Absalom was not only due to Nathan's oracle in 2 Samuel 12, but was also the outcome of Absalom's own deeds. . . . Nathan's oracle will be fulfilled according to the divine plan, but this does not contradict divine retribution punishing Absalom as responsible for his own errors." Avioz, "Divine Intervention," 347. Grossman makes a complementary argument when he posits that the narrator deliberately made use of ambiguous syntax in order to emphasize the principle of dual causality; see Jonathan Grossman, "The Design of the 'Dual Causality' Principle in the Narrative of Absalom's Rebellion," *Bib* 88, no. 4 (2007): 565–66. For other affirmations of both human responsibility and divine sovereignty in the Absalom story, see Park, "Frustration of Wisdom," 465–66; Schücking-Jungblut, "Political Reasons," 472–73; Bodner, *The Rebellion of Absalom*, 32.

⁹⁴ Schücking-Jungblut seems to take a similar position when he says, "Hushai's rhetorical skill was only a means to an end. The defeat of Ahithophel's counsel and, thus, of Absalom's rebellion had already been determined at the divine level (17:14b)." Schücking-Jungblut, "Political Reasons," 468. See

conclusion is suggested by the fact that the verb used to describe God's act of frustrating Ahithophel's counsel (פָּרַר in the *hiphil* stem) is also used of Hushai in 2 Samuel 15:34 (פָּרַר in the *hiphil* stem).⁹⁵ This textual feature implies that both YHWH and Hushai participated in overturning Ahithophel's advice, though the author credits the former as being the ultimate reason for Ahithophel's defeat (2 Sam 7:14). Furthermore, many have noted that Hushai's speech is distinguished from Ahithophel's by its effective rhetoric and rich figurative language.⁹⁶ It seems likely that the narrator means to suggest that the manner of Hushai's delivery played some role in convincing Absalom to abandon Ahithophel's counsel.⁹⁷ Moreover, the sequence of events in the Absalom narrative seems to indicate that Hushai is the answer to David's prayer in 2 Samuel 15:31⁹⁸; as such, Hushai should be understood to be God's instrument for defeating Ahithophel's counsel.⁹⁹

also Steinmann, *2 Samuel*, 330; Barron, *2 Samuel*, 145–46; Bodner, *The Rebellion of Absalom*, 83.

⁹⁵ So also Mann, *Run, David, Run!*, 130.

⁹⁶ See n80.

⁹⁷ I agree with Park's assertion regarding Hushai's speech that "it is not far-fetched to believe that the language of the advice played a role in its acceptance." Park, "Frustration of Wisdom," 459.

⁹⁸ Grossman notes that observing the arrangement of facts in a given narrative is crucial to understanding the meaning of each fact. He then applies this principle to David's prayer in 2 Sam 15:31 and the arrival of Hushai in the following verse. According to Grossman, such a sequence "implies to the reader to decode the meaning of Hushai in the story as God granting David his request." Grossman, "Dual Causality," 560. For others who argue similarly, see Bodner, *The Rebellion of Absalom*, 68–69; Barron, *2 Samuel*, 145; Robert P. Gordon, "A Battle of Wits and Words: Hushai, Ahithophel and the Absalom Rebellion (2 Samuel 16–17)," in *Approaches to Literary Readings of Ancient Jewish Writings*, ed. Klaas Smelik and Karolien Vermeulen, SSN (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2014), 108–9. In addition, Mann makes the helpful observation that David's speech to Hushai in 2 Sam 15:33ff indicates that David himself viewed Hushai as the answer to his prayer. Mann, *Run, David, Run!*, 97–98.

⁹⁹ As others have observed, God's work to thwart Ahithophel's counsel in 2 Sam 17:14 was an answer to David's prayer in 2 Sam 15:31. See Firth, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 469; Steinmann, *2 Samuel*, 330; Gordon, "Wits and Words," 109; Mann, *Run, David, Run!*, 130; David M. Gunn, "From Jerusalem to the Jordan and Back: Symmetry in 2 Samuel 15–20," *VT* 30, no. 1 (1980): 111; A. A. Anderson, *2 Samuel*, WBC (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 216. Some might argue that this suggestion runs counter to the claim that the DRA in 2 Sam 17 was retributive. Yet, the observation that God was answering David's prayer in 2 Sam 17:14 does not exclude the possibility that his negative influence was also a punitive measure. This claim can be borne out by comparing David's prayer with the Lord's stated intention in 2 Sam 17:14. On the one hand, David only prays for Ahithophel's counsel to be overturned; the king does not pray for the

All of this suggests that the DRA exercised towards Absalom was mediated through Hushai.¹⁰⁰

The third and last example of DRA within the book of Samuel is found in its closing chapter (2 Sam 24), which opens with the provocative statement, “And the anger of YHWH burned once again against Israel, and he enticed David against them by saying, ‘Go, count Israel and Judah’” (2 Sam 24:1). Without further explanation, the narrator informs readers that the LORD’s wrath flared up against his people once again. However, instead of bringing immediate judgment against Israel, YHWH entices David to take a census which then provides him with an occasion for meting out vengeance upon his people (cf. 2 Sam 24:15).¹⁰¹ As a result of God’s influence, David does in fact take a

death of Absalom. In fact, given his instruction to his troops in 2 Sam 18:5, and his response to news of Absalom’s death in 2 Sam 18:33, it seems highly unlikely that David desired for God to kill Absalom. On the other hand, the narrator clearly states that the Lord engaged in DRA in order to destroy the would-be king. Thus, while God was answering David’s prayer when he overturned Ahithophel’s counsel, the fact that he did so “to bring calamity upon Absalom” (2 Sam 17:14d) shows that God was doing more than simply responding to David’s petition. And given Absalom’s characterization, it seems warranted to understand God’s actions in 2 Sam 17:14 to have been retributive, even as those same actions also served to answer David’s prayer.

¹⁰⁰ Barron rightly describes some of the theological import of 2 Sam 17:14 when he says, “The author suggests an ultimate cause, an agency that works precisely through the actions of secondary agents. . . Suffice it to say that God’s ‘ordaining’ here has nothing to do with God actively sinning but rather with God’s capacity to work with and through even moral weakness and intellectual stupidity in order to realize his providential designs” Barron, *2 Samuel*, 156–57. See also Bodner, *The Rebellion of Absalom*, 83.

¹⁰¹ Scholars have puzzled over how to explain the nature of divine punishment in 2 Sam 24. One possibility would be to find recourse in the notion of “corporate personality” developed by H. Wheeler Robinson, who suggested that passages like 2 Sam 24 reflect the inability of ancient Israelites to psychologically distinguish between the individual and the group. See H. Wheeler Robinson, *Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 37–44. However, Robinson’s theory of “corporate personality” has been strongly criticized for being built upon outmoded anthropological theories and for being rather ambiguous; see J. W. Rogerson, “The Hebrew Conception of Corporate Personality: A Re-Examination,” *JTS* 21, no. 1 (1970): 1–16; Stanley E. Porter, “Two Myths: Corporate Personality and Language/Mentality Determinism,” *SJT* 43 (1990): 298–99. Rather than being evidence of “corporate personality,” J. R. Porter argues that the deaths of the 70,000 Israelites could have in fact been intended as punishment against David “as an individual for his own crime.” J. R. Porter, “The Legal Aspects of ‘Corporate Personality’ in the Old Testament,” *VT* 15, no. 3 (1965): 373–74. On the basis of the work of David Daube, Porter contends that the people of Israel could have been conceptualized as the king’s property. Thus, the plague against Israel may have been God’s means of reducing David’s honor and power as a penalty for his sin. Porter, “Legal Aspects,” 373–74. However, Porter’s reading accounts poorly for the fact that the entire chain of events leading to the plague was precipitated by God’s anger *towards*

census and succeeds in numbering the capable men (אִישׁ־חַיִל) in Israel and in Judah (2 Sam 24:2–9).¹⁰² However, David realizes soon after that he had sinned grievously in commanding the census (2 Sam 24:10).¹⁰³ David’s intuition is confirmed by Gad’s

Israel (2 Sam 24:1); thus, it seems more accurate to say that YHWH influenced King David because he had intended all along to punish Israel on account of David’s sin; so also Michael Widmer, *Standing in the Breach: An Old Testament Theology and Spirituality of Intercessory Prayer*, Siphrut (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 230. On a whole, it seems best to understand the events of 2 Sam 24 in light of the concept of corporate responsibility or corporate solidarity. That is to say, the author seems to presuppose that King David represents his people so that the nation as a whole can be held accountable for David’s sins (rightly Waltke, *Old Testament Theology*, 677; Bruce Edward Baloian, *Anger in the Old Testament*, AUS [New York: Peter Lang, 1992], 87; Joel S. Kaminsky, *Corporate Responsibility in the Hebrew Bible*, JSOTSup 196 [Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995], 30, 37, 49n45). For a study of the importance of the concept of corporate responsibility in the OT, see Kaminsky, *Corporate Responsibility*, 30–54.

¹⁰² Von Rad avers that “it is certain that the census which David organized served a military purpose.” Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 1, *The Theology of Israel’s Historical Traditions*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 317. Von Rad’s statement notwithstanding, others have in fact contested the view of a military census. On the one hand, Greenwood believes that the census was part of David’s attempt to muster a labor force in order to build the temple. See Kyle R. Greenwood, “Labor Pains: The Relationship between David’s Census and Corvée Labor,” *BBR* 20, no. 4 (2010): 472–76; for a similar position, see Matty Cohen, “II Sam 24 ou l’histoire d’un décret royal avorté,” *ZAW* 113 (2001): 30–31, 38–40. On the other hand, Gelandner argues that the census was undertaken for the purpose of taxation and for the extension of David’s political control. Shamai Gelandner, *David and His God: Religious Ideas as Reflected in Biblical Historiography and Literature*, JBS (Jerusalem: Simor, 1991), 57–58. However, the author’s reference to those who “draw the sword” (שָׁלַף וְחָרַב; cf. 2 Sam 24:9) lends credibility to von Rad’s position. For others who take the military position, see Robert Alter, *The David Story: A Translation With Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), 354; Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 284; Arnold, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 643–44; Steinmann, *2 Samuel*, 485–86; Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 161.

¹⁰³ David in fact confesses his wrongdoing thrice in his prayer to YHWH (2 Sam 24:10). First, he admits that he sinned greatly (הִטָּאתִי מְאֹד). Second, he asks the Lord to remove his transgression (הַעֲבֵר־נָא אֶת־עֵינֶי עַבְדְּךָ). Lastly, he notes that his action was exceedingly foolish (נִסְכַּלְתִּי מְאֹד). But while the text stresses that David sinned in numbering Israel, it does not explain why the census was sinful. The author’s restraint at this point has not prevented scholars from positing a host of explanations. Josephus claims that David sinned by failing to collect the half-shekel ransom commanded in Exod 30 (*Ant.*, 7.318; so also Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 475; Baloian, *Anger in the Old Testament*, 87). Many argue that the census expressed a lack of trust in YHWH and a reliance upon human strength. Steinmann, *2 Samuel*, 484; Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 161; Waltke, *Old Testament Theology*, 677; Arnold, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 644; Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., “Does God Deceive?,” *BSac* 155 (1998): 21n28; Mary J. Evans, *The Message of Samuel: Personalities, Potential, Politics and Power*, Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 278. Meanwhile, Greenwood relies on the account in 1 Chronicles to argue that David’s census was for the purpose of enlisting forced laborers for the construction of the temple; therefore, his wrongdoing consisted of disobeying the Lord’s command that he refrain from building God’s house. Greenwood, “Labor Pains,” 471–76. Park offers the novel explanation that, since the act of counting was considered to be a sacred and divine activity, David sinned by infringing upon God’s sovereign prerogatives through the census. Song-Mi Suzie Park, “Census and Censure: Sacred Threshing Floors and Counting Taboos in 2

prophetic word, which informs the king that he must choose the form of punishment Israel is to experience for his transgression (2 Sam 24:11–13). While scholars debate whether David specifically decides on the plague or whether he entrusts the decision to the Lord,¹⁰⁴ what is clear is that God does punish the nation for a sinful action he inspired David to undertake by sending a plague upon Israel, thereby killing 70,000 people from Dan in the north to Beersheba in the south (2 Sam 24:15).¹⁰⁵ Such a description of God’s involvement in these events suggests a rather dramatic example of DRA.¹⁰⁶

Second Samuel 24 deserves attention for its intriguing and unique presentation of DRA.¹⁰⁷ On the one hand, the chapter plainly presents certain aspects of the nature of

Samuel 24,” *HBT* 35 (2013): 30–32. Von Rad views the sin to consist of the secularization of the army, as the census implied a move away from the concept of the holy war towards the concept of a tactical war. von Rad, *Historical Traditions*, 317. To Barron, the census was “a supreme act of domination on the part of a tyrannical king.” Barron, *2 Samuel*, 200. Klement seems to suggest that David’s sin involved several of these elements: the census reflected a failure to observe cultic practices, a lack of respect for YHWH’s kingship, and a trust in numbers rather than faith in YHWH. Herbert H. Klement, *2 Samuel 21–24: Context, Structure and Meaning in the Samuel Conclusion*, Europäische Hochschulschriften (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2000), 177–79).

¹⁰⁴ Some argue that David refuses only the second suggestion (i.e., military punishment) and leaves the decision between famine and plague up to YHWH (see Barron, *2 Samuel*, 203; Steinmann, *2 Samuel*, 486; Hertzberg, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 413; Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 353; Widmer, *Standing*, 238). Wyatt seems to agree, although he stresses that ultimately all three should be understood to have been divine punishments. Nicolas Wyatt, “David’s Census and the Tripartite Theory,” *VT* 40, no. 3 (1990): 359. Others believe that David specifically opted for the plague (Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 478; von Rad, *Historical Traditions*, 318; Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 161).

¹⁰⁵ Cohen argues that there was no divine plague involved in the events of 2 Sam 24. Instead, the word דבר in v. 13 should be understood to refer to a violent insurrection that took place as a result of a political (rather than moral) failure on David’s part. Cohen’s proposal fails to persuade however, as his naturalistic attempt to get “behind the text” leads him to dismiss its clear testimony. See Cohen, “II Sam 24,” 33–34.

¹⁰⁶ Smith accurately assesses the import of the passage when he says, “the language leaves no doubt of the author’s theory that God incites men to do that for which he afterwards punishes them.” Henry Preserved Smith, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Samuel*, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1977), 388.

¹⁰⁷ For a discussion of 2 Sam 24 in relation to the problem of divine sovereignty and human responsibility, see D. A. Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility: Biblical Perspectives in Tension* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002), 11–12.

God's influence upon David. So for example, by stating that God enticed David through direct speech (2 Sam 24:1),¹⁰⁸ the author of Samuel intimates that God's influence on the king was immediate and was active.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, the passage depicts a non-eternal form of DRA by presenting the penalty exacted of Israel to be the deaths of 70,000 men by plague without any suggestion that eternal condemnation is in view (2 Sam 24:15). On the other hand, the motivations behind God's actions in this passage are difficult to discern. In particular, the author provides little insight into whether God's enticement was retributive or non-retributive. While the text implies that God incited David because he was angry with Israel (2 Sam 24:1), it does not tell readers *why* the Lord was angry with Israel. Because an explanation of YHWH's anger is not provided, some scholars conclude that the God described in 2 Samuel 24 must be arbitrary, capricious, and morally repugnant.¹¹⁰ These determinations are unwarranted however, as they ultimately involve an argument from silence.¹¹¹ And while modern readers may struggle with its

¹⁰⁸ The portrayal of DRA in 1 Sam 24:1 is particularly troubling because God's influence is exercised through his words: YHWH *tells* David to do that which readers later discover is sinful. Perhaps 1 Sam 24 ought to be read as being conceptually similar to Num 22:20–22, where God tells Balaam to do that which provokes him to anger only after the narrative has already intimated that the prophet's heart was set upon this course all along. If so, then perhaps David had his heart set on the sinful census, and the Lord simply goaded him on. At the end of the day however, one must acknowledge that 1 Sam 24 does not provide a thorough explanation of God's actions.

¹⁰⁹ At this point, many scholars interpret 2 Sam 24:1 by harmonizing the perspective of Samuel with that of the Chronicler, who states that "Satan stood against Israel and incited David to count Israel" (1 Chr 21:1). As such, many assert that Satan must have functioned as a mediating influence upon David (see Chisholm, "Does God Deceive?," 23; Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 474–75; Steinmann, *2 Samuel*, 484; Waltke, *Old Testament Theology*, 677; Evans, *Samuel*, 279). Though such a harmonization may be theologically sound, my purpose at this point is to explore Samuel's independent perspective. Since Samuel's author provides no indication that he meant for God's influence to be understood as having been mediated by a third party, I conclude that the DRA in 2 Sam 24 ought to be described as immediate.

¹¹⁰ So for instance, Alter argues that the theology of 2 Sam 24 distinguishes this narrative from the rest of the David story, as it presents an "arbitrarily punitive God" who "has the look of acting arbitrarily, exacting terrible human costs in order to be placated." Alter, *The David Story*, 353–55. See also Steussy, "Problematic God," 135; Park, "Census and Censure," 41n89; D. Paul Volz, *Das dämonische in Jahwe* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1924), 9.

¹¹¹ Those who read 2 Sam 24 as indicting God's character assume that the absence of an explicit explanation means that Samuel's God must have been enraged arbitrarily. However, such a

characterization of God, the narrative itself provides little reason to conclude that it was intended to call YHWH's character into question.¹¹² In contrast to those who see a critique of YHWH's character in 2 Sam 24, many assume that God's anger must have been justified by some unmentioned sin on Israel's part.¹¹³ While some scholars are content to posit the existence of some unspecified wrongdoing,¹¹⁴ others have attempted to identify the particular transgression which motivated God to bring about the census.¹¹⁵

conclusion is premature since the author may have refrained from explaining God's actions for a number of reasons. To provide just one example, the author may have taken for granted that his readers would have assumed that God's anger must have been a just response to some sin on Israel's part. As such, it is not altogether clear that the author's silence was intended as a criticism of YHWH; so also Terrence E. Fretheim, "Theological Reflections on the Wrath of God in the Old Testament," in *What Kind of God? Collected Essays of Terrence E. Fretheim*, ed. Michael J. Chan and Brent A. Strawn, Siphut 14 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 149. Moreover, subversive readings of 2 Sam 24 rest upon moral presuppositions brought to the text rather than upon a close reading of the text. That is to say, those who criticize the God portrayed in 2 Sam 24 tend to do so on the basis of their own worldview rather than on the basis of the worldview that emerges from a careful reading of the text. Finally, such a reading of 2 Sam 24 is strongly challenged by the canonical status afforded to the text in question, as it is hard to imagine that God-fearing Jews (and Christians) would have received a text critical of YHWH as part of their holy Scriptures. As such, Eichrodt may come closer to the target when he says, "The evil human action brought about by Yahweh comes under the heading of misfortune sent by God, something which cannot be explained on a rational basis, but must simply be reserved to God's majesty [emphasis added]." Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 179.

¹¹² On the contrary, there are good reasons to believe that the text was meant to magnify YHWH's greatness. So for instance, the author repeatedly depicts David as assigning the guilt of the census to himself rather than to God (2 Sam 24:10, 24:17). Moreover, despite his confusion as to the Lord's actions (2 Sam 24:17), David is shown honoring YHWH with prayer (2 Sam 24:10), with words of praise (2 Sam 24:14), and with an act of sacrifice (2 Sam 24:24–25). In addition, God's act of staying the angel of destruction is portrayed as an act of mercy rather than as being due to instability or capriciousness (rightly Hertzberg, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 413).

¹¹³ In addition, some also assume that David was influenced negatively because he had also sinned against God. For instance, Calvin says of this passage, "We know that by God's just vengeance David was for a time given over to Satan, that at his prompting he should take a census of the people." John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, vol. 1, LCC (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 177.

¹¹⁴ See Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 284; Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 474; Chisholm, "Does God Deceive?," 21; Fretheim, "Wrath of God," 149–50.

¹¹⁵ A number of suggestions have been made regarding the reasons for God's anger in 2 Sam 24:1. Klement posits that God was responding to Israel's refusal to support the reign of king David. Klement, *2 Samuel 21–24*, 197, 238. Adler argues that the flow of the narrative reveals that both David and Israel stood guilty for failing to appropriate Mt. Moriah from the Jebusites and for violating God's command to exterminate the Canaanites; see Joshua J. Adler, "David's Last Sin: Was It the Census?," *JBQ*

Unfortunately, none of the attempts made at specifying the offense in question have garnered much traction among scholars. In my judgment, the variety of suggestions itself demonstrates the elusive nature of the episode. While the retributive view should perhaps be favored on the basis of the characterization of YHWH's anger found throughout the OT as a whole,¹¹⁶ it must be acknowledged that the author of Samuel does not do much to illumine God's motives behind DRA in 2 Samuel 24:1. Perhaps Walter Brueggemann comes close to capturing the intended rhetorical effect of the narrative when he says,

In utter freedom Yahweh can be angry, as later on in this narrative Yahweh can be merciful. It is the unexplained, inexplicable anger of Yahweh that initiates the story. . . . Clearly the God of this narrative will not be understood in terms of our conventional notions of God and God's morality. The God of this narrative is unfettered and dangerous, and beyond our discernment.¹¹⁷

23, no. 2 (1995): 94; Joshua J. Adler, "David's Census: Additional Reflection," *JBQ* 24, no. 4 (1996): 257. Park believes that the transgression consisted of Israel's earlier request for a king (Park, "Census and Censure," 37–38). Steinmann suggests that God was provoked by Israel's attempt to enthrone Absalom since the Lord had not chosen him to rule (Steinmann, *2 Samuel*, 483). Evans hypothesizes that David's act of taking the census may have reflected a broader nationalistic pride that displeased YHWH (Evans, *Samuel*, 279). Baloian maintains that the murder of Uriah precipitated YHWH's anger at the beginning of the census episode (Baloian, *Anger in the Old Testament*, 88–89; see also Dumbrell, *The Faith of Israel*, 88).

¹¹⁶ Baloian argues that the very presence of 2 Sam 24 within the deuteronomic complex serves as evidence that God's anger at Israel in verse 1 must have been retributive. Since the historical books depict divine anger as a reasonable response to wrongdoing, the redactor's inclusion of 2 Sam 24 within the canonical corpus implies that the same view of anger underlies the passage in question (see Baloian, *Anger in the Old Testament*, 88–89). For defenses of the responsive nature of God's wrath in the OT, see Fretheim, "Wrath of God," 149–52; S. Erlandsson, "The Wrath of YHWH," *TynBul* 23 (1972): 111–16; Deena E. Grant, *Divine Anger in the Hebrew Bible*, CBQMS 52 (Washington DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2014), 167–69. For those who argue that Bible as a whole presents a retributive understanding of divine wrath, see R. V. G. Tasker, "The Biblical Doctrine of the Wrath of God," *Themelios* 26, no. 2 (2001): 10; Reinhard Feldmeier and Hermann Spieckermann, *God of the Living: A Biblical Theology*, trans. Mark E. Biddle (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011), 339–41. For a less sanguine view of the consistency and rationality of God's anger in the OT, see Kaminsky, *Corporate Responsibility*, 55–66.

¹¹⁷ Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 351. For similar perspectives, see Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2:179; Widmer, *Standing*, 229.

DRA in the Book of Kings

Together,¹¹⁸ 1 and 2 Kings narrates the history of Israel's monarchy from a theological perspective and for theological purposes.¹¹⁹ The narrative provides an account of the rise of Solomon, the division of the kingdom, the reigns of the various kings of Judah and of Israel, the prophetic ministries of Elijah and Elisha, and finally, the respective exiles of both the Northern and Southern kingdoms. Along the way, the author repeatedly stresses that Israel's history did not unfold independent of divine superintendence; instead, the narrator sees YHWH's invisible hand at work in directing and shaping Israel's national experience.¹²⁰ On at least two occasions, the text suggests that the Lord intervened in the nation's affairs through the exercise of DRA.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ As others note, 1 and 2 Kings should be treated as a single book. See Iain W. Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, NIBC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 1; J. G. McConville, "Kings, Books Of," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2005), 624–25.

¹¹⁹ I agree with Provan's threefold description of the book as a piece narrative literature, historiographical literature, and didactic literature. See Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, 1–15.

¹²⁰ See Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, 11–12.

¹²¹ Second Kings 24:19–20a could be interpreted as a third example of DRA in Kings. The text may be translated as follows: "And [Zedekiah] did what was evil in the eyes of YHWH, according to all that Jehoiakim had done. For because of the anger of YHWH (כי על-אף יהוה), it came about (היתה) in Jerusalem and in Judah until he sent them from before him." One could take the passage to suggest that Zedekiah's evildoing (or perhaps the iniquity in the land) was itself due to the anger of YHWH. See for instance John Gray, *1 and 2 Kings*, 2nd ed., OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), 762. However, the passage presents a variety of interpretative difficulties that make other readings equally likely. For example, the initial כי may be taken in an intensive sense ("indeed"), and as such, v.20 may not be meant as a ground or an explanation for v.19. Additionally, על may be indicating the norm or standard that characterized the events occurring in Judah; if taken this way, the prepositional phrase could mean that the events in Judah were of such a kind as to provoke God's anger (so Brueggemann, *1 and 2 Kings*, 580). Moreover, given the lack of a feminine noun in the immediate context, the subject of היתה is open to discussion. Does the verb refer to the evildoing taking place in Judah (Gray, *1 and 2 Kings*, 762) or to God's judgments leading up to exile (see T. R. Hobbs, *2 Kings*, WBC (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985), 354) or to something else? Though deciding between all these options is difficult, I think the overall context suggests that 1 Kgs 24:20a characterizes the elevation of Zedekiah to the throne as itself being a function of God's anger. That is to say, v.20a may describe Zedekiah's reign (2 Kgs 24:18–19) as having resulted from divine wrath, since in his anger YHWH had brought Babylon against Judah which ultimately led to Jehoiachin's deportation and Zedekiah's coronation (cf. 2 Kgs 24:1–17). If this is right, the author would not necessarily be portraying Zedekiah's evil as an outcome of the Lord's influence. In any event, given the unique challenges posed, I think 1 Kgs 24:19–20a cannot be put forward as a clear example of DRA.

The author of Kings seems to hint at the presence of DRA when he describes the career of Baasha, king of Israel. First Kings 15:27–28 informs readers that Baasha usurped the throne of Israel by assassinating Nadab, the son of Jeroboam, while the latter was warring against the Philistines. In order to secure his rule, Baasha proceeded to massacre the remaining descendants of Jeroboam, thereby fulfilling God’s word of judgment against the household of Jeroboam (1 Kgs 15:29; cf. 1 Kgs 14:6–14).¹²² Importantly, Kings notes that Baasha’s rise to prominence was due to God’s own agency. Even before Baasha’s uprising, Ahijah intimated in his prophecy against Jeroboam that the Lord would “raise up for himself a king over Israel who will strike down the house of Jeroboam” (1 Kgs 14:14). Then in 1 Kings 16:2, YHWH specifies through the prophet Jehu that Baasha fulfilled his previous promise, stating that “I raised you up from the dust and set you as ruler over my people Israel.”¹²³ Together, these two prophetic declarations indicate that the Lord himself moved behind the scenes to bring about Baasha’s rise to power—a rise which involved the extermination of the previous dynasty.¹²⁴ And yet, 1

¹²² Leithart argues that even Baasha’s ancestry indicates that he is the one to fulfill the prophecy against Jeroboam. As Leithart states, “Baasha is ‘son of Ahijah’ (15:27). Though his father is not the prophet Ahijah (11:29; 14:1–16), the repetition of the name points back to Ahijah’s prophecies against Jeroboam, suggesting that Baasha is the ‘spiritual son’ of the prophet, carrying out the prophet’s doom against Jeroboam.” Peter J. Leithart, *1 and 2 Kings*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2006), 114.

¹²³ Cogan posits that 1 Kgs 16:2 indicates prophetic support for Baasha’s seizure of the throne. See Mordechai Cogan, *1 Kings*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 409.

¹²⁴ While he rightly notes that Baasha’s actions against Nadab fulfilled Ahijah’s prediction, House makes the confused claim that “God did not force this murder [i.e., the murder of Jeroboam’s family] to occur. Rather, the prediction simply declared to Jeroboam the results of the decisions he had made.” Paul R. House, *1, 2 Kings*, NAC (Nashville: B & H, 1995), 198. If House only means to affirm that God did not *coerce* Baasha into assassinating Nadab, he would be surely correct; the text provides no indication that Baasha was forced against his will to kill his predecessor (cf. 1 Kgs 15:27–28). However, House seems to wrongly downplay God’s involvement in the destruction of Jeroboam’s dynasty. First Kings 14:10 states that the Lord himself was bringing calamity against Jeroboam and that he would cut down Jeroboam’s male descendants. Moreover, 1 Kgs 14:14 and 16:2 explicitly assign YHWH with responsibility for Baasha’s rise to the throne, which could not have taken place apart from the destruction of Jeroboam’s household. For these reasons, it will not suffice to claim that Ahijah’s prophecy simply relayed the outworking of Jeroboam’s own decisions apart from God’s intervention. Instead, as Brueggemann correctly observes, “It is Yahweh’s own work to instigate a coup and summon one who will

Kings 16:7 also insinuates that Baasha's divinely orchestrated downfall was due in part to his involvement in the murder of Jeroboam's kin:

And the word of YHWH also came by the hand of Jehu, the son of Hanani, the prophet, against Baasha and against his house because of all the evil which he did in the sight of YHWH so that he provoked him by the works of his hands and became like the house of Jeroboam, and because he struck it down.¹²⁵

In his closing comment, the narrator provides two reasons for Jehu's hostile prophecy against Baasha: (1) he did much evil in the sight of YHWH (likely a reference to following Jeroboam's idolatrous practices),¹²⁶ and (2) he struck down the house of Jeroboam.¹²⁷ Since the destruction of Jeroboam's dynasty was held against Baasha, one

displace the regime." Walter Brueggemann, *1 and 2 Kings*, SHBC (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2000), 179. See also Donald J. Wiseman, *1 and 2 Kings*, TOTC (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1993), 169.

¹²⁵ The syntax of the last clause in 1 Kgs 16:7 is the subject of disagreement. Some take the phrase ועל אשר as introducing a concessive clause ("although he struck him"); see for instance Gray, *1 and 2 Kings*, 361; James A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Kings*, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1951), 282. However, the combination of על and אשר most often functions to introduce a ground or a cause: of the 25 occurrences of this combination, only 4 cannot be understood to be causal (1 Kgs 18:12; Isa 29:12; Ezek 1:20; Hag 1:11). Importantly, none of these examples lend themselves to a concessive interpretation. Thus, Ernst Würthwein rightly notes that the concessive interpretation of 1 Kgs 16:7 is very unlikely. Ernst Würthwein, *Das erste Buch der Könige: Kapitel 1–16*, Das alte Testament deutsch (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), 195n14. See also Lissa M. Wray Beal, *1 and 2 Kings*, ApOTC (Nottingham: Apollos, 2014), 219; Steven L. McKenzie, *1 Kings 16–2 Kings 16*, IECOT (Stuttgart, Germany: Kohlhammer, 2019), 56.

¹²⁶ So also Beal, *1 and 2 Kings*, 221; Richard D. Nelson, *First and Second Kings*, IBC (Louisville: John Knox, 1987), 101; McKenzie, *1 Kings 16–2 Kings 16*, 51–52.

¹²⁷ Some have alleged that the author of 1 Kgs 16:7 does not find fault with Baasha's destruction of Jeroboam's dynasty *per se*. As early as the mid-800s, Isho'dad of Merv suggested that "[Baasha] is not threatened with evils by the prophet because he killed [the son of Jeroboam] but because he does not fear the punishment which was performed by his hands as a consequence of Nadab's sins." Marco Conti, ed., *1–2 Kings, 1–2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, ACCS (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 97). Gray tries to claim that Baasha's actions *insofar as they fulfill God's word* were meritorious, though his murderous acts were not condoned (Gray, *1 and 2 Kings*, 338, 361). McKenzie believes that Baasha's wrongdoing was twofold: Baasha acted without a prophetic commission and he went about his mission with selfish motives (*1 Kings 16–2 Kings 16*, 52–53). Alter likewise hypothesizes that the problem may have had to do with Baasha's motivations (Alter, *Ancient Israel*, 690–91). However, these solutions seem forced as they do not account for what 1 Kgs 16:7 actually says (so also Würthwein, *Das erste Buch der Könige*, 195). In my view, John W. Olley provides a more persuasive explanation when he says, "[Baasha's] coup and massacre of Jeroboam's family have been described as 'according to the word of the LORD' (15:29; cf. 16:2), yet the word of the Lord that came because of all the evil he had done in the eyes of the Lord continues and also because he destroyed it ('the house of Jeroboam'). . . . That God accomplishes his purposes through wicked individuals and violent acts does not remove moral

could argue that the latter's condemnation had been predetermined by the Lord¹²⁸; after all, it was YHWH's influence that led Baasha to conspire against Jeroboam to begin with (cf. 1 Kgs 14:14; 16:2).¹²⁹ As such, the account of Baasha's rise and fall seems to indicate the presence of DRA. Given the verbs chosen by the author in 1 Kings 14:14 (והקים; "He will raise up") and 16:2 (הרמתיד; "I caused you to rise up"), it seems more likely than not that an active form of DRA is in view. Moreover, readers should probably understand an immediate form of divine agency at work, since the text does not mention any third party involved in spurring Baasha's insurrection. Finally, because Baasha's penalty is described as the earthly destruction of his house (1 Kgs 16:3–4; 16:11–13), God's reprobating influence should be viewed as having non-eternal condemnation in mind.¹³⁰

responsibility." John W. Olley, *The Message of Kings*, Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 158–59. See also Nelson, *First and Second Kings*, 103; Jerome T. Walsh, *1 Kings*, Berit Olam (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 214.

¹²⁸ A number of commentators have noted the theological difficulties that exist in Kings' portrayal of Baasha's uprising and eventual condemnation. Beal gets to the heart of the problem when she asks, "How is it that one raised up by YHWH is subsequently judged for the means by which that individual achieves the throne?" Beal, *1 and 2 Kings*, 221. Brueggemann sees Baasha as the victim of a divinely orchestrated catch-22. Brueggemann, *1 and 2 Kings*, 198. Simon J. DeVries says that YHWH's claim to have raised Baasha up is "theologically problematic" given the manner of his rise to power. Simon J. DeVries, *1 Kings*, 2nd ed., WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 195. Walsh acknowledges that the theological implications are "uncomfortable, to say the least," but he rightly notes some precedent for such a perspective in 1 Kgs 13 and in 1 Kgs 22. Walsh, *1 Kings*, 214. I would add to Walsh's observation that such behavior on God's is part far from rare, as my exploration of DRA throughout the canon will confirm.

¹²⁹ Rather than wrestle with the theological challenges presented by the text, some scholars have tried to mitigate the problems related to the Baasha episode through text-critical and redaction-critical approaches (see for instance Marvin A. Sweeney, *1 and 2 Kings*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 198; Würthwein, *Das erste Buch der Könige*, 194–95; Volkmar Fritz, *Das erste Buch der Könige*, ZBK (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1996), 156). While 1 Kgs 16:7b may in fact have been an editorial addition, such an observation does not provide much help in explaining the meaning of the final form of the text.

¹³⁰ The narrator provides no information regarding whether God's influence on Baasha was retributive or non-retributive.

While readers must piece together narrative clues to recognize the function of DRA in the story of Baasha, the narrator presents a much starker picture of God’s reprobating influence in the case of Ahab. In 1 Kings 22, Ahab partnered with Jehoshaphat to try to reclaim the land of Ramoth-Gilead from the King of Aram (1 Kgs 22:3–4). Before the war commenced however, King Jehoshaphat requested that Ahab first seek the word of the LORD (1 Kgs 22:5). So, Ahab gathered together a group of around 400 prophets and asked them whether or not he should go to Ramoth-Gilead. In response, Ahab’s prophets told the king to proceed with the battle because “the lord” (אֲדֹנָי) would give them victory over Aram (1 Kgs 22:6). Yet, for reasons undisclosed, Jehoshaphat doubted the reliability of the prophets assembled by Ahab.¹³¹ Instead of being assured by their promise of victory, the King of Judah asked to hear from a prophet of YHWH (1 Kgs 22:7).¹³² Despite his initial reluctance, Ahab called for Micaiah, a prophet hated by

¹³¹ Contra Jeffries M. Hamilton, “Caught in the Nets of Prophecy? The Death of King Ahab and the Character of God,” *CBQ* 56 (1994): 654. Hamilton claims that Jehoshaphat did not doubt the accuracy of Ahab’s prophets; instead, he was simply following “the common need” of double-checking a prophetic word. However, it is difficult to see why someone would feel the need to double-check a prophetic word if he did not doubt its accuracy. Moreover, Jehoshaphat seems to suggest that the four hundred prophets were not true representatives of Israel’s God when he asked, “Is there not a prophet of YHWH still here?” (הֲאִין פֶּה נְבִיא לַיהוָה עוֹד); for a similar interpretation, see Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, 162; Alter, *Ancient Israel*, 723). Thus, Moberly is probably correct when he says, “The assumption that the prophets are telling the king what he wants to hear is confirmed by Jehoshaphat’s response. He smells a rat.” R. W. L. Moberly, “Does God Lie to His Prophets? The Story of Micaiah Ben Imlah as a Test Case,” *HTR* 96, no. 1 (2003): 5; see also Helen Paynter, *Reduced Laughter: Seriocomic Features and Their Functions in the Book of Kings*, *BibInt* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2016), 93, 127–28; Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 182; Waltke, *Old Testament Theology*, 721–22.

¹³² The author does not reveal why Jehoshaphat grew suspicious of the four hundred. Some commentators argue that the unanimity of the prophets seemed dubious (see for instance Wiseman, *1 and 2 Kings*, 198; Leithart, *1 and 2 Kings*, 160). However, it is difficult to see anything sinister behind prophetic agreement in-and-of itself. McKenzie suggests that, in addition to the unanimity of the prophets, the ambiguity of the prophecy in 1 Kgs 22:6 may also have concerned the King of Judah (see McKenzie, *1 Kings 16–2 Kings 16*, 203). However, the sign act of Zedekiah (1 Kgs 22:11) and the subsequent prophecy of the four hundred (1 Kgs 22:12) make it unlikely that the initial promise of victory was liable to be misunderstood. Moberly may be correct when he suggests that Jehoshaphat discerned that the four hundred were simply telling Israel’s king what he had wanted to hear (Moberly, “Does God Lie?,” 4–5). Perhaps one could speculate that mantic behavior on the part of the four hundred may have also played a part in arousing Jehoshaphat’s doubt (for this suggestion, see Paynter, *Reduced Laughter*, 93). This suggestion would gain more credence if Ahab’s four hundred court prophets are meant to be viewed in light of the four hundred prophets of Asherah (cf. 1 Kgs 18:19; for examples of those who make this argument, see Waltke,

the king for his habit of delivering scathing prophecies against him (1 Kgs 22:8–9). Surprisingly, Micaiah initially parroted the prophets who had been encouraging the kings to take action against Aram (1 Kgs 22:15; cf. 1 Kgs 22:10–12). However, Ahab detected Micaiah’s insincerity and implored him to speak “only the truth in the name of YHWH” (1 Kgs 22:16).¹³³ Micaiah then disclosed two visions that intimated the coming catastrophe. First, Micaiah told Ahab, “I saw all Israel being scattered to the mountains like sheep without a shepherd. And YHWH said, ‘These have no lords; let each of them return to their house in peace’” (1 Kgs 22:17). Thus, the first vision portends a leaderless Israel, signaling that their rulers would be killed in the upcoming battle.¹³⁴ After Ahab complained about the negativity of the prophetic word (1 Kgs 22:18), Micaiah went on to describe a second, complementary vision:

Therefore, hear the word of YHWH! I saw YHWH sitting upon his throne and all the host of heaven standing near him, to his right and to his left. And YHWH said, “Who will persuade (יפתה) Ahab so that he might go up and he might fall in Ramoth-Gilead?” And one said this and another was saying that. And the spirit (הרוח) went out and stood before YHWH and he said, “I will persuade him.” And YHWH said to him, “How?” And he said, “I will go out and be a spirit of falsehood

Old Testament Theology, 722; Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, 161–62; McKenzie, *1 Kings 16–2 Kings 16*, 203; Olley, *The Message of Kings*, 201).

¹³³ It is unclear why Ahab doubted Micaiah’s initial prophecy. Tiemeyer suspects that the discrepancy between the affirmative oracle and Micaiah’s previous prophecies allowed Ahab to see through the divine scheme to put him to death. Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, “Prophecy as a Way of Cancelling Prophecy: The Strategic Uses of Foreknowledge,” *ZAW* 117, no. 3 (2005): 339. Miller understands the episode similarly, adding that the ambiguity of the oracle also aroused suspicion (Geoffrey Miller, “The Wiles of the Lord: Divine Deception, Subtlety, and Mercy in 1 Reg 22,” *ZAW* 126, no. 1 [2014]: 51n21). Meanwhile, Williams argues that Ahab’s response to Micaiah showed that he had always known that his prophets were speaking falsely. Peter J. Williams, “Lying Spirits Sent by God? The Case of Micaiah’s Prophecy,” in *The Trustworthiness of God: Perspectives on the Nature of Scripture*, ed. Paul Helm and Carl R. Trueman (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 63. On the other hand, several scholars argue that Micaiah must have spoken in a sarcastic or mocking manner. See for instance Moberly, “Does God Lie?,” 7; see also David J. Zucker, “The Prophet Micaiah in Kings and Chronicles,” *JBQ* 41, no. 3 (2013): 158; Keith Bodner, “The Locutions of 1 Kings 22:28: A New Proposal,” *JBL* 122, no. 3 (2003): 537; Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 182; Leithart, *1 and 2 Kings*, 162; Paynter, *Reduced Laughter*, 93.

¹³⁴ So also DeVries, *1 Kings*, 268; Nelson, *First and Second Kings*, 148. Brueggemann suggests that the language of “scattering” (נפצים) implied defeat in battle while also foreshadowing the coming exile of Israel; see Brueggemann, *1 and 2 Kings*, 270–71.

in the mouth of all his prophets.” And he said, “You will persuade [him]; moreover, you will succeed. Go and do so.” So now behold! YHWH has set a spirit of falsehood in the mouth of all these prophets of yours, and YHWH has spoken evil against you. (1 Kgs 22:19–23)

And so Micaiah revealed to Ahab the true “inspiration” behind the proclamation of the four hundred¹³⁵: a spirit of falsehood had been sent by God to deceive the king into undertaking a suicidal mission against Aram.¹³⁶ The rest of the narrative demonstrates that the spirit accomplished its assigned task and that the Lord brought about the fulfillment of the visions: Ahab imprisons Micaiah, goes to war, gets hit by a stray arrow, bleeds out, and finally dies (1 Kgs 22:26ff). As the heavenly court scene makes clear, God was ultimately at work behind-the-scenes in moving Ahab towards destruction through the deceptive encouragement of the king’s court prophets. Moreover, since Ahab’s war of aggression was probably sinful,¹³⁷ and since he likely sinned by rejecting Micaiah’s prophecy in favor of the flattery of false prophets,¹³⁸ 1 Kings 22 can be said to

¹³⁵ As Mayhue correctly observes, “The most defensible position is that 1 Kgs 22:19–22 has not been placed alongside 1 Kgs 22:6 for comparison as the parabolic understanding demands, but rather is a causal explanation for the actual false prophecy in 22:6.” See Richard L. Mayhue, “False Prophets and the Deceiving Spirit,” *Master’s Seminary Journal* 4, no. 2 (1993): 156.

¹³⁶ Some scholars debate the identity of the “spirit of falsehood.” Mayhue argues that “the spirit” who volunteers for the deceptive task must be understood to be Satan (Mayhue, “False Prophets,” 162–63; see also Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:176). Hirth meanwhile argues that the spirit in 1 Kgs 22:21 is none other than the same Spirit of YHWH that regularly empowered the prophets and the judges (Hirth, “Der Geist,” 113–14). Hamori disagrees, arguing that Micaiah was referring to a member of the divine counsel that took on the function of being a deceiving messenger (see Hamori, “Spirit of Falsehood,” 19, 29–31). Dafni comes to a similar conclusion, arguing that the “spirit of falsehood” serves as the negative counterpart to the “spirit of YHWH”; the former inspires all false prophecy while the latter inspires all true prophecy. See Evangelia G. Dafni, “רוח שקר und falsche Prophetie in I Reg 22,” *ZAW* 112, no. 3 (2000): 385. In my judgment, Hamori and Dafni are probably correct: the spirit in 1 Kgs 22:19–23 is a member of the divine council with personal agency who functions in this instance to inspire false prophecy. For a similar interpretation, see Brueggemann, *1 and 2 Kings*, 272.

¹³⁷ The opening of the passage hints at the dubiousness of Ahab’s actions when it notes the peace that persisted between Israel and Aram (1 Kgs 22:1), thereby suggesting that king of Israel was willing to destroy the existing peace for the sake of regaining land (2 Kgs 22:3–4). For similar estimations of Ahab’s war, see DeVries, *1 Kings*, 271; Brueggemann, *1 and 2 Kings*, 273; Moberly, “Does God Lie?,” 4.

¹³⁸ Several scholars point out the ethical significance of Ahab’s rejection of Micaiah’s prophecies (see for instance Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 182; McKenzie, *1 Kings 16–2 Kings 16*, 215; Leithart, *1 and 2 Kings*, 164; Olley, *The Message of Kings*, 203; Beal, *1 and 2 Kings*, 288;

depict God influencing the king of Israel towards evil behavior for the purpose of bringing about the latter's destruction. Therefore, 1 Kings 22 should be understood as a demonstration of DRA.¹³⁹

An examination of various narrative details allows for several conclusions to be made regarding the nature of God's influence over Ahab. First, there is good reason to conclude that God's reprobating action against Ahab was retributive.¹⁴⁰ Readers can discern the retributive nature of divine influence in 1 Kings 22 by attending to earlier prophecies announcing Ahab's downfall.¹⁴¹ On two separate occasions, Ahab is denounced for his behavior by prophets who declare that he would die for his sins (cf. 1 Kgs 20:42; 21:19).¹⁴² In fact, the narrator specifically notes that Ahab's death after the

Brueggemann, *1 and 2 Kings*, 273). Moreover, if Walsh is right to say that the ambiguous character of Ahab's court prophets "hints that, right to the end of his reign, Ahab fails to make a decisive choice between Yahweh and other deities" (see Walsh, *1 Kings*, 365), then the king's rejection of Micaiah signals his final decision to side with idols over against YHWH.

¹³⁹ While modern readers might be troubled by God's actions in 1 Kgs 22, the author of Kings does not share these concerns. As Schreiner helpfully notes, "The narrator is unconcerned about whether anyone would have ethical problems with Yahweh using false prophets to deceive Ahab. The concern of the author is quite different. Yahweh is Lord and king; his purposes will be established." Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 182.

¹⁴⁰ So also Chisholm, "Does God Deceive?," 16; Hamori, "Spirit of Falsehood," 19; Volkmar Hirth, "»Der Geist« in I Reg 22," *ZAW* 101, no. 1 (1989): 114; J. J. M. Roberts, "Does God Lie? Divine Deceit as a Theological Problem in Israelite Prophetic Literature," in *Congress Volume: Jerusalem, 1986*, ed. J. A. Emerton, VTSup 40 (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1988), 218–20; Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 182; McKenzie, *1 Kings 16–2 Kings 16*, 213; Olley, *The Message of Kings*, 203; Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, 161–65; Nelson, *First and Second Kings*, 151–53; Leithart, *1 and 2 Kings*, 164; Beal, *1 and 2 Kings*, 288–89; Sweeney, *1 and 2 Kings*, 257–58.

¹⁴¹ Additionally, Ahab's insincerity in seeking the Lord's counsel may also provide a further reason for why he is subjected to DRA. Roberts makes this point when he argues that God's treatment of Ahab conforms to the principle laid out in Ezek 14:7–10. As he states regarding the passage in Ezekiel, "This frightening explanation for the origin of false prophecy fits the circumstances of the Micaiah ben Imlah story." In Ezek 14:7–10, God threatens to fatally mislead those who approach the prophets seeking YHWH's guidance while continuing in idolatry and wickedness. Roberts believes Ahab fits such a description since the latter was "an unrepentant king" who "inquired of Yahweh seeking confirmation and support for [his] own crooked ways." Roberts, "Does God Lie?," 218–20. Thus, God could have also sent the deceiving spirit as a punishment for Ahab's hypocrisy.

¹⁴² Interestingly, Ahab's initial description of Micaiah in 1 Kgs 22:8 suggests that the two had clashed before (so also Bodner, "Locutions," 537). In fact, Ahab's claim that Micaiah "does not prophesy

battle at Ramoth-Gilead fulfilled Elijah's prophecy in 1 Kings 21:19 (cf. 1 Kgs 22:38).¹⁴³ Since both prophecies announced the penalty of death as a retribution for Ahab's sins,¹⁴⁴ it seems reasonable to conclude that the deceptive spirit was sent as the means by which God would repay the king for his past transgressions.¹⁴⁵ Second, the author of 1 Kings 22 most likely intended to portray an active form of DRA. After all, he depicts YHWH initiating the search for Ahab's deceiver and commanding his volunteer to go and fulfill his assigned task (1 Kgs 22:20–22). Third, the narrative evidently describes a mediate form of DRA. In fact, God's influence in this episode was mediated through multiple agents, as the spirit of falsehood, the four hundred false prophets, and perhaps Micaiah himself, all served to induce Ahab towards divine judgment.¹⁴⁶ Lastly, since the episode

good concerning me but evil" implies that Micaiah had also previously warned the king of the Lord's coming punishment, probably as a response to the monarch's wickedness. Thus, Tiemeyer suggests that Micaiah had formerly foretold of judgment against the king for his sins (see Tiemeyer, "Prophecy," 340). Others posit that Micaiah actually was the unnamed prophet in 1 Kgs 20:42 (see Josephus, *Ant.* 8.14.5; Mayhue, "False Prophets," 138). Zucker argues that Micaiah was Elijah's assistant, and as such, he had a long history of confronting the king over his sins (see Zucker, "Micaiah," 158–59). Whether or not these specific identifications are accurate, the allusion to these previous clashes with Micaiah serves to reinforce the characterization of Ahab as a man who had a generally combative relationship with YHWH and his prophets (cf. 1 Kgs 18:17; 20:42–43; 21:20). Moreover, the allusion to past conflict with Micaiah bolsters the argument that the DRA in 1 Kgs 22 was retributive.

¹⁴³ Some have claimed a tension between 1 Kgs 21:19 and 1 Kgs 22:38, arguing that the former says Naboth's blood would be licked up in Jezreel while the latter has this event occurring in Samaria. However, Foreman has persuasively argued that 1 Kgs 21 actually implies that Naboth was tried and executed in Samaria. As such, no contradiction exists between 1 Kgs 21:19 and 1 Kgs 22:38. See Benjamin Foreman, "The Blood of Ahab: Reevaluating Ahab's Death and Elijah's Prophecy," *JETS* 58, no. 2 (2015): 261–64.

¹⁴⁴ Though only Elijah's prophecy is explicitly referenced (cf. 1 Kgs 22:38), it seems clear that the narrator intends for Ahab's death to be read as the fulfillment of the prophecy in 1 Kgs 20:42 as well. Rightly, P. J. Berlyn, "Checkmate: The King Is Dead," *JBQ* 22, no. 3 (1994): 162; McKenzie, *1 Kings 16–2 Kings 16*, 202; Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, 164.

¹⁴⁵ The retributive reading is also supported by Kee's description of the heavenly council. Kee argues that the heavenly council is modeled after ancient courts of justice. Kee then makes the observation that "as [descriptions of the heavenly council] are supposed to be derived from the human court scene, they surely provoke a kind of judgmental scene in the readers/audiences' minds" (brackets added). Min Suc Kee, "The Heavenly Council and Its Type-Scene," *JSOT* 31, no. 3 (2007): 269. If Kee is correct, then the vision itself suggests that YHWH is sending the spirit of falsehood as a judicial act against Ahab.

¹⁴⁶ As I will discuss below, I believe that Micaiah's prophetic visions were not intended to turn

ends with Ahab's mortal death (1 Kgs 22:37–38), and since the text betrays no concern for Ahab's eternal state, it seems likely that the author had non-eternal DRA in mind.

Contrary to what the text says at face-value, several scholars suggest that God's actions in 1 Kings 22 should *not* be interpreted as an example of DRA.¹⁴⁷ These scholars claim that, despite appearances, the chapter does not depict YHWH orchestrating Ahab's downfall; in reality, God was graciously attempting to save Ahab's life by persuading him to turn from the proposed war against Aram.¹⁴⁸ These scholars assert that, by revealing the vision of the heavenly court to Ahab, YHWH was providing the king with an opportunity to turn away from his self-destructive path; as such, God could hardly have been exercising a reprobating influence upon the man he was trying to bring to repentance.¹⁴⁹ However, those who adopt such a reading ignore the promise of success

Ahab away from his desired course; instead, they intentionally furthered (or at least did not hinder) the deluding influence of the spirit sent by YHWH.

¹⁴⁷ Tiemeyer's account of 1 Kgs 22 seems to suggest a shift in the nature of God's activity midway through the episode. According to her, God initially desired to put Ahab to death, which is why he sent the deceiving spirit (1 Kgs 22:19–23) and moved Micaiah to speak falsely to Ahab (1 Kgs 22:15). Her description at this point seems to be consistent with DRA. However, according to Tiemeyer, after Ahab detected the Lord's ruse (1 Kgs 22:16), YHWH granted Ahab more insight in order that he might be able to repent (see Tiemeyer, "Prophecy," 338–443). I agree with Tiemeyer that God intended to put Ahab to death through the influence of his four hundred prophets; however, she errs when she maintains that Micaiah's disclosure reveals a desire on God's part to lead Ahab to repentance. As my discussion above shows, the prophetic word to Ahab probably does not reflect a saving intent on YHWH's part. See also Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, 164.

¹⁴⁸ Mayhue takes a different route in downplaying the presence of DRA in 1 Kgs 22. Instead of seeing the disclosure of the divine vision as a gracious warning, he limits God's participation in Ahab's duping to mere permission (see Mayhue, "False Prophets," 159). However, his explanation fails on at least two counts. First, mere permission does not account for the divine initiative displayed when God asked for a member of his heavenly counsel to volunteer to persuade Ahab towards his death (1 Kgs 22:19–20). Second, the fact that God *commanded* the spirit of falsehood to deceive the prophets (cf. 1 Kgs 22:22b) sits awkwardly with Mayhue's position. Thus, Provan is much more convincing when he says, "Ahab is therefore predestined to listen to the false prophets; the LORD has decreed it (v.22). He is also predestined to die, no matter what measures he takes to avoid this fate, for the LORD is intent on judgment, rather than salvation." Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, 164.

¹⁴⁹ See for instance Tiemeyer, "Prophecy," 339–43; Moberly, "Does God Lie?," 8–14; Miller, "Wiles of the Lord," 53; Hamilton, "Caught in the Nets," 658–59; House, *Old Testament Theology*, 261–62.

that God had already given to the deceptive spirit: “And [YHWH] said, ‘You will persuade [him]; *moreover, you will succeed. Go and do so*’” (1 Kgs 22:22b). Since God had already guaranteed that the spirit of falsehood would successfully convince Ahab to make his ill-fated choice (cf. 1 Kgs 22:20), readers should not understand the unveiling of the heavenly vision to have had a saving intent.¹⁵⁰ Additionally, those who argue that a divine reprobating purpose would have been undermined by Micaiah’s revelation do so on the unfounded assumption that the prophet expected Ahab to respond positively to his disclosure.¹⁵¹ In fact, given their previous clashes, Micaiah would have had every reason to assume that Ahab would reject his vision.¹⁵² Moreover, those who take this position *assume* that the only plausible reason YHWH could have had for disclosing the heavenly court scene was to deter Ahab from trusting his retinue of prophets.¹⁵³ In actuality, the Lord could have granted Ahab this revelation for a variety of reasons. For instance, the vision may have been given to highlight Ahab’s recalcitrance or even to increase his guilt.

¹⁵⁰ So also Chisholm, “Does God Deceive?,” 16–17; DeVries, *1 Kings*, 272; McKenzie, *1 Kings 16–2 Kings 16*, 210.

¹⁵¹ Schmidt makes a similar point regarding Isa 6. See Joh. Michael Schmidt, “Gedanken zum Verstockungsauftrag Jesajas (Is. VI),” *VT* 21, no. 1 (1971): 84–85.

¹⁵² See n142. While Ahab is said to have responded positively to Elijah’s rebuke in 1 Kgs 21:17ff, the king’s description of Micaiah in 1 Kgs 22:8 provides readers with little reason to assume that a similar response to Micaiah would be forthcoming.

¹⁵³ In fact, Moberly flattens the function of prophetic ministry altogether in his account of 1 Kgs 22:19–23. He argues that Micaiah’s vision must be read in light of “the basic dynamics of Hebrew prophecy” which consist of “a warning of ‘disaster’ . . . which seeks as response a fundamental change of heart and action . . . so that disaster may be averted.” Moberly, “Does God Lie?,” 8. Moberly fails to observe that prophetic warnings were not always meant to bring about repentance or to deter disaster; as Isaiah could attest (cf. Isa 6:8–13), prophets were at times sent to bring about further blindness and obstinacy. In fact, given the clear resemblances between 1 Kgs 22 and Isa 6, it seems reasonable to conclude that Micaiah and Isaiah may have both been assigned reprobating missions. Similarly, see Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 2, *The Theology of Israel’s Prophetic Traditions*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 63–65; for others who note the likeness between Isa 6 and 1 Kgs 22, see Walther Zimmerli, *Old Testament Theology in Outline*, trans. David E. Green (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1978), 106; Stephen A. Geller, *Sacred Enigmas: Literary Religion in the Hebrew Bible* (London: Routledge, 1996), 113; Kee, “Heavenly Council,” 263; Hirth, “Der Geist,” 114.

Perhaps God was playing mind games with Ahab, allowing him to hear about the heavenly court only because it would somehow spur him towards willful blindness. While the book of Kings does not reveal the Lord's exact intention in allowing Micaiah to describe the heavenly court scene to Ahab, it is simply not the case that the communication of the prophetic vision could have *only* been for the purpose of turning Ahab away from his suicidal course of action. On the contrary, given the contents of the vision itself, it seems much more likely that Micaiah's words furthered (or at least did not hinder) the deception decreed by the Lord (1 Kgs 22:20).¹⁵⁴ As such, those who deny the presence of DRA in 1 Kings 22 do so without warrant from the text.

Observations on DRA in the Former Prophets

A few observations can now be made regarding the depiction of DRA in the Former Prophets. First, DRA plays a crucial role in the outworking of Israel's salvation history. The impact of DRA on Israel can be described from at least two perspectives. From a view-on-the-ground, the Lord influenced the life of Israel through subjecting several of its leaders (or would-be leaders) to DRA. So for instance, the Lord made use of DRA to repeatedly strike down Israel's corrupt and unfaithful rulers (Judg 9:22–25; 1 Sam 2:22–25; 1 Kgs 16:1–7; 1 Kgs 22:19–23). In addition, he also used his negative influence against a potential usurper in order to maintain the cause of his chosen king, David (2 Sam 17:14). Though the objects of God's influence in these cases were particular rulers, it seems clear that the Former Prophets present God's dealings with Israel's leaders as having had a shaping effect on the nation's fortunes as a whole. Meanwhile, from a view-from-the-top, the Former Prophets reveal that Israel's entire period in the land could be explained by recourse to DRA. So, according to Joshua,

¹⁵⁴ For others who hold to similar interpretations, see Chisholm, "Does God Deceive?," 16; Nelson, *First and Second Kings*, 152–53; McKenzie, *1 Kings 16–2 Kings 16*, 206; Brueggemann, *1 and 2 Kings*, 272–73.

YHWH secured the gift of land for His people through DRA (Josh 11:16–23); yet at the same time, the author of Judges posits that DRA was an important reason for why Israel would have such a tenuous hold on Canaan throughout their time in the promised land (Judg 2:1–5). Therefore, according to the Former Prophets, the history of Israel from occupation to exile was owing in part to DRA.

Second, to a greater extent than the Pentateuch, the Former Prophets display diverse manifestations of DRA. While arguably providing at least one example of non-retributive DRA (Josh 11:20), this section of the canon introduces and emphasizes God's retributive reprobating agency (Judg 2:1–5; 9:23–24; 1 Sam 2:25; 2 Sam 17:14; 24:1; 2 Kgs 22:19–23). Moreover, these canonical writings also present the first examples of mediate DRA (Judg 2:1–5; 9:23–24; 2 Sam 17:14; 1 Kgs 22:19–23), while also providing cases where God's carries out his negative influence without any mediating agents (Josh 11:20; 2 Sam 24:1; 1 Kgs 16:1–7). Similarly, both active (Josh 11:20; Judg 9:23–24; 2 Sam 17:14; 24:1; 1 Kgs 16:1–7; 22:19–23) and passive (Judg 2:1–5) forms of DRA are attested, though the former predominates. Moreover, many books within the Former Prophets describe multiple cases of DRA (ex., Judges, Samuel, Kings), and the portrayals of God's reprobating activity can differ within the same book (ex., 2 Sam 17:14 versus 2 Sam 24:1). Like the Torah however, the Former Prophets provide no examples of eternal DRA.

Third, without being as explicit as the Pentateuch, the Former Prophets also reveal God's character through their descriptions of DRA. As mentioned above, this section of the canon focuses on retributive DRA; as such, God's negative influence is often depicted as a function of his just vengeance (Judg 2:1–5; Judg 9:23–23; etc.). At the same time, the Former Prophets can portray DRA as an expression of God's grace and faithfulness. So for instance, God's answer to David's prayer for deliverance (2 Sam 15:31) takes the form of DRA (2 Sam 17:14). And as already mentioned, the gift of the land itself was given to Israel through the exercise of DRA (Josh 11:20). However, DRA

in the Former Prophets also testifies to the awesome freedom (2 Sam 24:1) and absolute authority (1 Kgs 22:19–23) that YHWH enjoys as the God of gods and the Lord of lords.

CHAPTER 5
DIVINE REPROBATING ACTIVITY
IN THE LATTER PROPHETS

Thus far, I have shown that both the Torah and the Former Prophets testify to the significance and the multifaceted nature of DRA. Within both sections, the canonical texts demonstrate the importance of the theme by tying it to the display of God's character and to the unfolding of salvation history. Moreover, neither section presents the concept in a monolithic fashion; instead, DRA in both the Torah and the Former Prophets is a rich, variegated reality. In this chapter, I intend to demonstrate that the Latter Prophets continue in the same vein.

DRA in the Book of Isaiah

As has already been discussed, the theme of divine hardening plays a substantial role within the book of Isaiah.¹ Given the importance of this theme, perhaps it is unsurprising that the book of Isaiah bears witness to several instances of DRA.² The occurrences of DRA in Isaiah can be categorized into three groups: (1) DRA against

¹ See my earlier discussion in chap. 2, s.v. "Divine Hardening." For other studies that emphasize the importance of the theme of divine hardening in the book of Isaiah, see Rolf Rendtorff, "Isaiah 6 in the Framework of the Composition of the Book," in *Canon and Theology: Overtures to an Old Testament Theology*, Overtures to Biblical Theology (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 177–80; Antti Laato, "About Zion I Will Not Be Silent": *The Book of Isaiah as an Ideological Unity*, ConBOT (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1998), 96–102; Ronald E. Clements, "Beyond Tradition-History: Deutero-Isaianic Development of First Isaiah's Themes," *JSOT* 10, no. 31 (1985): 101–4.

² As I argued earlier, divine hardening and DRA are *not* identical concepts. While the two themes do share similar features and do often overlap, the concept of DRA includes elements which may or may not be involved in any particular instance of divine hardening. For more on the relationship between the two, see chap. 2, s.v. "Divine Hardening."

Israel, (2) DRA against Assyria, and (3) other cases of DRA. Each will be discussed in turn.³

DRA against Israel

While all cases of DRA are somewhat jarring, perhaps the most shocking examples of God’s reprobating agency are those that involve his own covenant people.⁴ While such examples have already been seen in the Torah (Deut 29:3) and in the Former Prophets (Judg 2:1–5), among the books of the OT, Isaiah may bear the most powerful testimony to God’s willingness to subject Israel to DRA. As I hope to show, Isaiah repeatedly acknowledges God’s role behind Israel’s judgment-inducing sin. I will begin with perhaps the book’s most (in)famous and provocative example: Isaiah’s sixth chapter.⁵

Isaiah 6. In Isa 6, Isaiah ben Amoz describes a vision he received during the year of King Uzziah’s death⁶: “I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne [which was] high and

³ In what follows, I adopt a discourse-oriented approach to the book of Isaiah (for a brief description of the approach, see Jacob Stromberg, *An Introduction to the Study of Isaiah*, T & T Clark Approaches to Biblical Studies [London: T & T Clark, 2011], 98–102). As such, I do not endeavor to uncover the text’s prehistory nor do I interpret passages on the basis of theoretical reconstructions of said prehistory. My goal is to interpret relevant passages as they have come to readers in the canonical book of Isaiah. In addition, I use the name “Isaiah” or “the prophet” to refer to the individual (or group) responsible for the final form of the book. While I believe that Isaiah ben Amoz may have been that person, the arguments that follow do not depend on any particular view of authorship.

⁴ In the following sections, I generally use the name “Israel” as a shorthand for the Jewish people from both the northern and southern kingdoms. Such a practice is supported by Isaiah’s own use of “Israel,” since he could also use the designation without intending to distinguish between Judah and Ephraim. See Reinhard G. Kratz, “Israel in the Book of Isaiah,” *JSOT* 31, no. 1 (2006): 103–28; J. Barton, *Isaiah 1–39*, OTG (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 112–15; John Goldingay, “The Theology of Isaiah,” in *Interpreting Isaiah: Issues and Approaches*, ed. David G. Firth and H. G. M. Williamson (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 175. In cases where I am speaking particularly of the northern kingdom, the context will make my intentions clear.

⁵ For a helpful summary of modern approaches to Isa 6, see Torsten Uhlig, *The Theme of Hardening in the Book of Isaiah: An Analysis of Communicative Action*, FAT 2, vol. 39 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 73–78.

⁶ Scholars disagree regarding whether or not Isaiah’s vision should be understood as his

lifted up, and the hem of his robe filled the temple!” (Isa 6:1). Standing beside him were the mysterious, six-winged Seraphim,⁷ whose voices caused the foundations of the temple to shake and the building to be filled with smoke. These heavenly creatures attended to the Lord as they proclaimed to one another, “Holy, Holy, Holy is YHWH of

inaugural call to prophetic ministry. I agree with those who take Isa 6 to refer to a commission given to Isaiah after he had already begun his prophetic ministry. However, this particular issue does not significantly impact my characterization of DRA in Isa 6 or elsewhere. For those who argue in favor of taking Isa 6 as an inaugural call, see Ivan Engnell, *The Call of Isaiah: An Exegetical and Comparative Study*, Uppsala Universitets Årsskrift (Uppsala, Sweden: Lundequistska bokhandeln, 1949), 42–43; Rolf Knierim, “The Vocation of Isaiah,” *VT* 18, no. 1 (1968): 63–64, 67–68; Stromberg, *Introduction to Study of Isaiah*, 108; Paul R. House, “Isaiah’s Call and Its Context in Isaiah 1–6,” *CTR* 6, no. 2 (1993): 213; J. J. M. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 91–92; William J. Dumbrell, “Worship and Isaiah 6,” *RTR* 43, no. 1 (1984): 1; H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968), 126; Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 1–12*, trans. John Bowden, 2nd ed., OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), 121–23; Peter J. Gentry, “Sizemore Lectures II: ‘No One Holy Like the Lord,’” *Midwestern Journal of Theology* 12, no. 1 (2013): 28; John N. Oswalt, *Isaiah*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 125; Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 2, *The Theology of Israel’s Prophetic Traditions*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 148; Gerhard F. Hasel, *The Remnant: The History and Theology of the Remnant Idea from Genesis to Isaiah*, Andrews University Monographs (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1972), 230; Uhlig, *Theme of Hardening*, 83–84, 119. For those who believe that Isa 6 reflects a commission (whether specific or general) that came after a period of prophetic ministry, see Joseph Addison Alexander, *Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), 144–46; Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, NAC (Nashville: B & H, 2007), 183–84; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 223; Christopher R. Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39*, IBC (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 55; Victor Hurowitz, “Isaiah’s Impure Lips and Their Purification in Light of Akkadian Sources,” *HUCA* 60 (1989): 41n1; Craig A. Evans, *To See and Not Perceive: Isaiah 6.9–10 in Early Jewish and Christian Interpretation*, JSOTSup 64 (Sheffield, England: JSOT, 1989), 22. For the argument that Isa 6 is a retrospective reformulation of his prophetic mandate in light of Isaiah’s mature reflections on Israel’s response to his preaching, see Julian P. Love, “Call of Isaiah: Exposition of Isaiah 6,” *Int* 11, no. 3 (1957): 290–94. For the claim that Isa 6 was the product of Isaiah’s despair over his failed ministry, see Mordecai Menahem Kaplan, “Isaiah 6:1–11,” *JBL* 45 (1926): 251–59. For scholars who do not come to a firm conclusion on the matter, see Andrew T. Abernethy, *The Book of Isaiah and God’s Kingdom: A Thematic-Theological Approach*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2016), 23; Shawn Zelig Aster, *Reflections of Empire in Isaiah 1–39: Responses to Assyrian Ideology*, ANEM (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017), 48–49; Joh. Michael Schmidt, “Gedanken Zum Verstockungsauftrag Jesajas (Is. VI),” *VT* 21, no. 1 (1971): 74–75, 86–87.

⁷ The nature of the seraphim continues to be debated. However, since the identity of the seraphim does not impinge upon the matter of DRA, I shall not delve deeply into the subject. For those who maintain that the seraphim are serpentine creatures, see Karen Randolph Joines, “Winged Serpents in Isaiah’s Inaugural Vision,” *JBL* 86, no. 4 (1967): 410–15; Uhlig, *Theme of Hardening*, 86–88; Gentry, “No One Holy,” 31; Kaiser, *Isaiah 1–12*, 125; Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 95–97. For those who argue that the seraphim are fiery beings, see Alexander, *Isaiah*, 1:146; Engnell, *Call of Isaiah*, 33; Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 189; Leupold, *Isaiah*, 130. For a recent work which posits that Isaiah’s seraphim were intended to be a parody of an Assyrian mythical creature called the *apkallū*, see Aster, *Reflections of Empire*, 56–71.

hosts! His glory is that which fills all the earth!” As others have observed, the vision granted to the prophet emphasized YHWH’s status as king.⁸ However, the scene does not depict a king ready to save; instead, it seems to picture a king ready to judge.⁹ Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the vision fills Isaiah with dread: “And I said, ‘Woe is me, for I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips and I am dwelling in the midst of a people of unclean lips! For my eyes have seen the King, YHWH of hosts!’” (Isa 6:5).¹⁰ Instead of being met with fury, Isaiah was met with purifying grace: one of the Seraphim flew down and touched the prophet’s lips with a coal taken from the altar (Isa 6:6–7). Through an act that symbolized both judgment and mercy,¹¹ Isaiah’s iniquity and sin were turned aside (Isa 6:7b) and the prophet was morally prepared for the task he was about to be given (Isa 6:8).¹² After his purification, Isaiah was allowed to listen as the LORD asked a question

⁸ See for instance Abernethy, *Isaiah and God’s Kingdom*, 14–22; Engnell, *Call of Isaiah*, 32; Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 98; Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 187.

⁹ Uhlig argues that the presence of the Seraphim, the shaking of the foundations, and the mention of smoke all point to God’s judging presence. Uhlig, *Theme of Hardening*, 86–89; also see Uhlig, “Too Hard to Understand? The Motif of Hardening in Isaiah,” in *Interpreting Isaiah: Issues and Approaches*, ed. David G. Firth and H. G. M. Williamson (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 64–65. Knierim meanwhile notes the parallels between Isa 6 and 1 Kgs 22:19–23 to argue that the former was also a vision of judgment (Knierim, “Vocation,” 54–59). Hurowitz reaches the same conclusion but from another angle: he posits that the vision of Isaiah can be shown to have been a vision of judgment by comparing it to Mesopotamian prayer rituals (see Hurowitz, “Isaiah’s Impure Lips,” 81–85). For others who understand Isaiah’s vision similarly, see Leupold, *Isaiah*, 133; Dumbrell, “Worship,” 3; Abernethy, *Isaiah and God’s Kingdom*, 14–17.

¹⁰ Hurowitz fails to persuade when he contends that Isaiah’s exclamation refers to the prophet’s failure to perform the ritual purification normally required before having a prophetic experience. As Hurowitz himself admits, “There is no explicit evidence that [Israelite] prophets purified themselves prior to their prophesying.” In my judgment, such a concession is more damaging to Hurowitz’s case than he believes it to be. Moreover, given his own observations that (1) purification of the mouth can stand for the purification of the entire person, and (2) that the Mesopotamian incantations resulted in forgiveness for transgressions, it would be possible to posit on the basis of the same Mesopotamian sources that Isaiah’s alarm was due to his sinful state rather than due merely to his ritual uncleanness. See Hurowitz, “Isaiah’s Impure Lips,” 70–79.

¹¹ So also Uhlig, *Theme of Hardening*, 94; Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 100; Gentry, “No One Holy,” 34; James M. Hamilton Jr., *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 193–94.

¹² The purification of Isaiah may suggest the future purification of Israel through the fires of

of his divine council: “And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Who will I send? Who will go for us?’” (Isa 6:8a).¹³ Isaiah immediately responded by volunteering for the mission: “And I said, ‘Behold, it is I. Send me!’” (Isa 3:8b). God then commissions Isaiah and commands him to perform a troubling task¹⁴:

And [YHWH] said, “Go and say to this people, ‘Listen intently but do not understand! And look carefully but do not comprehend!’ Make the heart of this people fat and make their ears grow heavy and smear over their eyes, lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and their heart understand, with the result that it turns and heals them.” (Isa 6:9–10)

After hearing the task described, the prophet then asked the Lord how long his hardening ministry was to continue.¹⁵ God’s response in verse 11 made clear that Isaiah was to negatively influence Israel until devastation came upon the land, probably in the form of the Assyrian invasion.¹⁶ Thus, Isaiah 6 seems to indicate that the prophet was not being

judgment. Two features of the vision make this interpretation possible: (1) Isaiah’s willingness to identify with the sin of the people (Is 6:5), and (2) the reference to the survival of the “holy seed” in 6:13. For others who interpret Isaiah’s purification similarly, see Hasel, *Remnant*, 242–43; Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 100; Craig A. Evans, “Isa 6:9–13 in the Context of Isaiah’s Theology,” *JETS* 29, no. 2 (1986): 141; Willem A. M. Beuken, “The Manifestation of Yahweh and the Commission of Isaiah: Isaiah 6 Read against the Background of Isaiah 1,” *CTJ* 39 (2004): 82. Though Isa 6 contains hints of a future restoration of Israel, these do not nullify the presence of DRA in the chapter. On the contrary, the text clearly asserts that the Lord would negatively influence Israel until the nation experienced actual judgment. The survival of a purified remnant would not change the fact that the nation as a whole would have to experience the destruction of God’s judgment as a direct result of YHWH’s influence.

¹³ Young rightly notes that the question is rhetorical and is “designed to elicit a response upon the part of Isaiah.” Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, vol. 1, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 253.

¹⁴ On the basis of the structure of Isa 6, Uhlig rightly observes that “the call to harden the people in verses 9–10 is the goal of the whole passage.” Uhlig, “Too Hard to Understand?,” 64.

¹⁵ So also Hanna Liss, *Die enerhörte Prophetie: Kommunikative Strukturen prophetischer Rede im Buch Yesha’yahu*, Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte (Leipzig, Germany: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2003), 41–42.

¹⁶ Similarly Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39*, 57–58; J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1993), 79; Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, trans. Thomas H. Trapp (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 274; John L. Mackay, *A Study Commentary on Isaiah*, vol. 1 (New York: Evangelical, 2008), 177–78; Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39 with an Introduction to Prophetic Literature*, FOTL (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 136–39. Aster also views 6:11–13 as relating to Assyrian invasion, though he disputes that Isaiah was sent by God to bring about such a state of affairs (see Aster, *Reflections of Empire*, 75–77, 282). For an exploration of the connections between Isa 6 and the Assyrian

sent as a means of salvation; instead, he was now being commissioned to function as the means by which God would secure Israel's condemnation.¹⁷ Therefore, at face value at least, the text characterizes Isaiah's ministry as a form of DRA.¹⁸

Despite the text's seeming clarity, some have argued that the prophetic task described in Isa 6 did not involve DRA.¹⁹ So for instance, some have argued that the imperatives in verses 9 and 10 should actually be read as indicatives.²⁰ That is to say, Isaiah was not being instructed to harden Israel, but was merely being informed that

invasion, see Laato, *About Zion*, 74–75, 96–98.

¹⁷ Liss wrongly concludes that Isaiah's hardening ministry cannot be said to have been intended to bring about the destruction foreseen in v. 11 (see Liss, *Die enerhörte Prophetie*, 41–42). On the contrary, vv. 9–10 already suggests that the hardening was meant to bring about Israel's punishment. First, the similarities between Isa 6:9–10 and 1 Kgs 22:19–23 suggests that the former passage (much like the latter) has judgment as the intended goal of divine influence. Additionally, by specifying the prevention of Israel's healing as the goal of Isaiah's hardening ministry, the passage implies that God's desired outcome was Israel's destruction (though v. 13 specifies that a remnant would be spared). Lastly, as discussed earlier, the vision in its entirety seems to set the stage for the expectation of divine judgment. These factors make it more likely than not that Isaiah's hardening ministry was intended to secure the destruction described in v. 11.

¹⁸ Hasel rightly cautions interpreters against presuming that YHWH could not in fact commission someone to take on such a dreadful task as is found in Isa 6:9–13. As he states, "We must not apply an *a priori* standard of our own making as an absolute canon of judgment as to what God can or cannot ask of his servant." Hasel, *Remnant*, 229.

¹⁹ This interpretative stream is represented by several early translations of Isa 6:9–10. Evans states regarding these early versions: "The general tendency among these traditions was to place the actual cause of spiritual obduracy exclusively upon the people rather than upon God and his prophet Isaiah." Craig A. Evans, "The Text of Isaiah 6:9–10," *ZAW* 94, no. 3 (1982): 418. For arguments defending the priority of the MT's rendering of Isa 6:10, see Engnell, *Call of Isaiah*, 5–15; Dominique Barthélemy, *Critique Textuelle de l'Ancien Testament*, vol. 2, *Isaïe, Jérémie, Lamentations*, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), 39–41; Jan de Waard, *A Handbook on Isaiah*, vol. 1, *Textual Criticism and the Translator* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 28–29.

²⁰ The LXX stands as an early proponent of this interpretation. According to Isa 6:9–10 LXX, God says to Isaiah, "Go and say to this people, 'You will hear with hearing, and will surely not understand, and you will see while seeing, and you will surely not know. For the heart of this people has become dull, and with difficulty have they heard with their ears and they shut their eyes, so that they might not see with [their] eyes and hear with [their] ears and understand with [their] heart and turn and I would heal them.'" As Roberts rightly observes, the LXX "eases the theological harshness of the passage by introducing a causal particle, changing the imperatives to finite verbs, and making the people the subject of the action" (Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 90). For more on the relationship between the MT and the LXX of Isaiah 6:9–10, see Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 61–68.

Israel would not respond positively to his preaching.²¹ Others have attempted to remove the sting of Isaiah 6:9–10 by downplaying God’s involvement in hardening and treating it as a by-product of human disobedience.²² So for instance, Gray says of Isaiah 6:9–10 that “the gradual hardening and ultimately fatal effect on character of continued disobedience to the voice of God is here stated in the bold, direct, dramatic speech of prophecy.”²³ Similarly, Everson contends that the motif of divine hardening was simply another way of referring to human disobedience in general; as such, Isaiah 6 functions to warn readers of the constant danger of developing a hardened heart.²⁴ Meanwhile, others have

²¹ See for instance Bruce Hollenbach, “Lest They Should Turn and Be Forgiven: Irony,” *BT* 34, no. 3 (1983): 313; Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 271; Engnell, *Call of Isaiah*, 18. Eusebius reads the text similarly, though he understands it as a prediction of Israel’s self-hardening during the time of Jesus Christ; see Eusebius of Caesarea, *Commentary on Isaiah*, ed. Joel C. Elowsky, trans. Jonathan J. Armstrong, Ancient Christian Texts (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), 32.

²² Though Motyer does acknowledge that God has a role to play in the hardening process, he restricts it to the establishment of general laws of human psychology. This becomes evident in his description of Isaiah’s hardening ministry: “[Isaiah], in fact, faced the preacher’s dilemma: if hearers are resistant to the truth, the only recourse is to tell them the truth yet again, more clearly than before. But to do this is to expose them to the risk of rejecting the faith yet again and, therefore, of increased hardness of heart. It could even be that the next rejection will prove to be the point at which the heart is hardened beyond recovery. The human eye cannot see this point in advance; it comes and goes unnoticed. But the all-sovereign God both knows it and appoints it as he presides in perfect justice over the psychological processes he created.” Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 79.

²³ George Buchanan Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Isaiah: I–XXVII*, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1912), 109. Gray’s statement is also quoted approvingly by Engnell, *Call of Isaiah*, 44.

²⁴ See A. Joseph Everson, “A Bitter Memory: Isaiah’s Commission in Isaiah 6:1–13,” in *The Desert Will Bloom: Poetic Visions in Isaiah*, AIL (Atlanta: SBL, 2009), 74. Everson’s reading is exactly the kind of approach with which von Rad took issue. Almost a hundred years ago, von Rad leveled a powerful critique against those who would interpret Isa 6 by “appeal[ing] to the undisputed fact that when the word of God is continually rejected, the capacity to hear and understand it dies away.” von Rad, *Prophetic Traditions*, 152–53. He goes on to say, “This interpretation of the hardening of the heart is open to an objection. It depends entirely on the conditional clause, and so becomes a general truth of religion which can be constantly confirmed in the broad realm of religious experience. This means that the process would be a rational one which could be explained in psychological terms. . . . [in the Old Testament] hardening of the heart is always represented as an act of God and not as the result of a law of human nature. . . . If Israel’s alienation from God was due to a psychological process, then it could surely have been brought to its conclusion without waiting for a message from Isaiah. Any attempt to come to terms with what Isaiah says about hardening of the heart by the way of understanding the words indirectly, that is to say, by taking them as the secondary result of theological reflexion, and therefore as the way out from a theological dilemma or an account of a general law of the psychology of religion, is, from the point of view

downplayed the presence of DRA by claiming that the passage presupposes the possibility of repentance.²⁵ Still others evade the issue by positing that Isaiah 6 does not reflect Isaiah's call/commissioning *as it had actually been given*. So for example, Love believes that Isaiah 6 contains Isaiah's retrospective re-interpretation of his call in light of his ministry's meager results.²⁶ He claims that the statements in verses 9–10 contain elements of irony and merely recount the effect that Isaiah's preaching happened to have on an already stubborn people.²⁷ On the other hand, while Kaplan agrees that Isaiah 6 contains Isaiah's reflections at the end of his career, he denies altogether that the chapter refers to Isaiah's call. Instead, he contends that Isaiah 6 gives expression to the prophet's troubled mind.²⁸ Kaplan goes so far as to posit that, on his better days, Isaiah would have rejected the negative characterization of YHWH found in Isaiah 6. Instead of reflecting Isaiah's actual convictions, this dreadful portrait of the Lord resulted from "the heat of anger and disappointment" which caused the prophet to fall back upon an archaic manner of theologizing.²⁹ More recently, Aster has argued that Isaiah 6:8–10 is political satire: the

of hermeneutics, *a priori* to import a standpoint from outside the text itself'(152–53).

²⁵ Engnell, *Call of Isaiah*, 44; E. J. Kissane, *The Book of Isaiah*, vol. 1 (Dublin: Brown & Nolon, 1941), 75.

²⁶ Love, "Call of Isaiah," 291, 294. Wildberger also instructs readers to be open to the possibility that "the present formulations [of Isa 6] may have taken shape within the framework of the impressions which deepened over a long period of time, during which the prophet found little positive response." Love, *Isaiah 1–12*, 259. More recently, Schmid has adopted a modified version of the "retrojection hypothesis" to explain Isa 6:9–10. In Schmid's construal, the command to harden functions as a retrospective theological explanation for the deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib in light of the Isaianic expectation that the city of God would be completely destroyed. See Konrad Schmid, *A Historical Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, trans. Peter Altmann (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 222.

²⁷ Love, "Call of Isaiah," 293–94.

²⁸ As he states, "I venture to suggest that, instead of being a description of Isaiah's call to prophesy, [Isa 6] merely pictures the sense of despair which came over Isaiah in the course of his career." Kaplan, "Isaiah 6:1–11," 251.

²⁹ Kaplan describes the belief in a God who hardens in a somewhat contradictory manner. While he says that such a belief was still the "conventional mode of thought" during Isaiah's day, he also says that such a theological conception "may have functioned in their [i.e., Isaiah and Micaiah] day more as

prophet has presented himself as a parody of the mission of Judahite emissaries sent back to Judah to propagate Assyrian imperial ideology. As such, Isaiah 6:9–10 does not reflect an actual commission given to the prophet; instead, the passage was intended to convince the Judean elites not to participate in propagating Assyrian falsehoods.³⁰ In addition, others have rejected DRA in Isaiah 6 by claiming that such activity cannot be reconciled with Isaiah’s actual practices or with the character of YHWH. So for instance, Hollenbach argues that Isaiah 6:9–10 cannot describe Isaiah’s actual ministry since he nowhere instructs his hearers not to understand his message.³¹ Moreover, he contends that, in light of the biblical portrait of God, readers should recognize the commands in 6:9–10 as self-evidently absurd and should interpret the passage ironically.³²

a literary survival than as living belief.” In any event, Kaplan clearly regards such a belief as being archaic and backwards. See Kaplan, “Isaiah 6:1–11,” 258–59. Unfortunately for Kaplan, his position is difficult to maintain in light of the continued recurrence of the theme of divine hardening through later prophetic writings and into the New Testament.

³⁰ See Aster, *Reflections of Empire*, 72–74. While Aster provides a credible argument that Isa 6 subverts Assyrian imperial ideology, his specific interpretation of Isa 6:8–13 is less than convincing. For starters, his claim that YHWH is presented as a parody of the Assyrian king sits in awkward tension with the solemn description of YHWH’s transcendence and universal rule in Isa 6:1–7. Moreover, Aster fails to take into account the role that blinding and hardening play in the book of Isaiah as a whole. Additionally, if Isa 6 does contain a critique of Assyrian imperial ideology, perhaps it would be better to understand vv. 8–10 as highlighting the weakness of the Assyrian god, Assur, by showcasing YHWH’s sovereign independence. As Aster elsewhere discusses, Assur was believed to be “the deified city of Ashur. He is identical with his city and with the state that evolved from the city,” and as such, “the theology of Assur became inseparable from the imperialist ideology justifying Assyrian dominion” (11). If this is so, then Isa 6:8–10 would make the point that, unlike Assur, YHWH is not defined or impacted by Israel’s political fortunes. On the contrary, YHWH’s transcendence means that he is free even to work against his people when such actions served his holy and just purposes. Such a statement would be consistent with Aster’s own observation that the book of Isaiah “locates YHWH’s power as transcending human and earthly power. . . . The reign of Assur has a *tamšilu*, or earthly counterpart, in the earthly empire. The reign of YHWH has no such counterpart. . . . The element of transcendence is what distinguishes YHWH from Assur, and allows him to be perceived as supreme, regardless of earthly power struggles” (39).

³¹ Hollenbach, “Lest They Should Turn, 312–13. Everson makes a similar argument, positing that Isaiah’s repeated calls for repentance demonstrate that his ministry was never intended to harden. See Everson, “Bitter Memory,” 64–66.

³² Hollenbach, “Lest They Should Turn,” 313. Von Rad rightly points out the circularity of this kind of argumentation when he says, “That, ‘his nature being what it was,’ Jahweh had nothing to do with the idea of the hardening of the heart, is precisely what is open to question.” von Rad, *Prophetic Traditions*,

As this brief survey demonstrates, a significant stream of scholarship denies or downplays the presence of DRA in Isaiah 6. However, each of these proposals stumbles over the actual contents of the chapter, and especially of Isaiah 6:9–10. In fact, I would argue that these verses *plainly* teach that YHWH sent Isaiah on a mission to secure Israel’s condemnation.

The Lord’s instructions for Isaiah in 6:9–10 consists of two parts: the paradoxical command (Isa 6:9), and the command’s explication (6:10).³³ In 6:9, YHWH gives Isaiah a message he is to deliver “to this people” (לעם הזה):³⁴ “Listen intently (שמעו שמוע) but do not understand (ואל־תבינו), look carefully (וראו ראו) but do not comprehend (ואל־תדעו).”³⁵ The perplexing nature of the message has led some interpreters astray. On the one hand, Landy claims that verse 9 reports the actual contents of the word Isaiah was to deliver; as such, God must have sent the prophet to relay an incomprehensible message.³⁶ On the other hand, Hollenbach argues that Isaiah 6:9 must

152n9.

³³ Rightly H. G. M. Williamson, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 1–27*, vol. 2 ICC (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2018), 74. Uhlig describes the relationship between vv. 9 and 10 in a different way. He sees v. 9 as a literal command to Isaiah and v. 10 as a figurative command. While his point is well taken that v. 10 on its own does not provide clarity regarding how Isaiah was to stupefy God’s people, I do not think the contrast between literal and figurative helpfully clarifies the relationship between the two verses. For his discussion, see Uhlig, *Theme of Hardening*, 106–8.

³⁴ As others have noted, the expression “this people” probably contains an element of derision. See Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 18; Kaiser, *Isaiah 1–12*, 131; Leupold, *Isaiah 1–39*, 137; Young, *Isaiah 1–18*, 255.

³⁵ Some see the infinitive absolutes (ראו and שמוע) as stressing the continuation of the activities being commanded (“keep on seeing . . . keep on hearing”; see for instance Young, *Isaiah 1–18*, 256; Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 194; Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 250). While this is certainly possible, it seems more likely that the infinitive absolutes are intended to intensify the quality of the actions being commanded. To use Waltke and O’Connor’s terms, I would argue that שמוע and ראו are being used to “intensify the root situation.” Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 588. I believe this better comports with the context by laying greater stress on the contradiction between the commands to perceive (“listen intently . . . look carefully”) and the commands *not* to perceive (“do not understand . . . do not comprehend”). For a similar perspective, see Uhlig, *Theme of Hardening*, 97–98.

³⁶ See Francis Landy, “Strategies of Concentration and Diffusion in Isaiah 6,” *BibInt* 7, no. 1

be interpreted ironically since the records of Isaiah's preaching do not present him commanding Israel *not* to understand his words.³⁷ Though Landy and Hollenbach arrive at different conclusions, they both misinterpret Isaiah 6:9 because of a similar misstep: each approaches Isaiah 6:9 with a literalistic hermeneutic.³⁸ Instead of reading Isaiah 6:9 as though the Lord was dictating the words that Isaiah was to speak to Israel,³⁹ it seems more likely that the verse was intended to figuratively encapsulate the intended character of Isaiah's ministry in which the prophet would proclaim the Lord's message to Israel only to render them increasingly insensitive to God. This interpretation of 6:9 finds support in the explication provided in Isaiah 6:10.⁴⁰ With a series of *hiphil* imperatives,⁴¹

(1999): 72–73, 81–82. Though Uhlig also sees a reference to the contents of Isaiah's preaching in 6:9, he denies the claim of incomprehensibility (see Uhlig, *Theme of Hardening*, 97–100, 104–6). He reasons that the commands function as an “appeal for attention,” thereby pointing forward to prophetic speech presumed to follow. Moreover, he takes the two negative jussive phrases (ואל-תבינו and ואל-תדעו) as predicting the results that would come from Israel's “seeing” and “hearing.” Though his approach is an improvement over Landy's, it still seems unlikely that Isaiah would have literally commanded Israel to listen to his prophecies *so that* they might not understand them. In addition, his suggestion regarding the negative jussive clauses seems unlikely given the normal function of אל with the jussive. See E. Kautzsch, ed., *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, trans. A. E. Cowley (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2006), sec. 109g.

³⁷ See Hollenbach, “Lest They Should Turn,” 312–13.

³⁸ For the distinction between a literal reading and a literalistic reading, see Iain Provan, *The Reformation and the Right Reading of Scripture* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2017), 86–89.

³⁹ For others who deny that 6:9 reflects the actual contents of Isaiah's preaching, see Leupold, *Isaiah*, 138; Kaiser, *Isaiah 1–12*, 131; Gentry, “No One Holy,” 35; Williamson, *Isaiah 6–12*, 75; Schmidt, “Gedanken,” 86.

⁴⁰ The parallelism between v. 9 and v.10a suggests that the latter verse is meant to explicate the former. As Wildberger rightly observes, the reference to “ears” and “eyes” in v.10 parallels the “hearing” and “seeing” of v. 9, while the “heart” in v. 10 recalls the absence of understanding and knowledge commanded in v. 9 (see Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 272). Such a reading is also suggested by common use of recursive patterns in Hebrew literature; see Peter J. Gentry, “The Literary Macrostructures of the Book of Isaiah and Authorial Intent,” in *Bind Up the Testimony: Explorations in the Genesis of the Book of Isaiah*, ed. Daniel I. Block and Richard L. Schultz (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2015), 230–32. For others who posit a similar relationship between vv. 9 and 10, see Knierim, “Vocation,” 60; Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39*, 56; Williamson, *Isaiah 6–12*, 74.

⁴¹ Evans rightly refutes the argument that these were originally *hophals* or adjectives; see Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 18–19.

Isaiah was commanded to fatten (השמן) the people's heart, to make heavy (הכבד) their ears, and to smear over (השע) their eyes.⁴² Each imperative referred to the same reality: Isaiah was being commanded to lead Israel into a state of complete incomprehension through the proclamation of the divine message (cf. 6:9) so that they would be unable to respond properly to God's word.⁴³ As if these commands were not enough, the reprobating character of Isaiah's mission finds more clarity in the negative purpose statement appended to this series of imperatives⁴⁴: "Lest (פן) they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and their heart understand, with the result that it turns and heals them" (Isa 6:10b). The verse highlights God's negative purpose with the concluding *weqatal* clauses in 6:10b (ושב ורפא לו).⁴⁵ These clauses continue to be governed by פן and thus remain part of the "lest" clause.⁴⁶ The choice of the *weqatal* forms suggests that the

⁴² Landy claims that the author's lexical choices add to the ambiguity of the text. Landy, "Strategies of Concentration," 71–72. He notes that both the שמן root and the כבד root can have positive or negative meanings, while השע may be related morphologically either to שעע ("blind") or שעה ("gaze"). However, Landy's proposal fails because he does not account for the context which renders the meaning of the terms unmistakable.

⁴³ Uhlig rightly observes that the imperatives in v.10 do not by themselves explain *how* Isaiah was to bring about these effects. He also correctly reasons that, by reading 6:10 in partnership with v. 9, it becomes clear that Isaiah was meant to harden Israel through his speech (Uhlig, *Theme of Hardening*, 107–8). Similarly, see Liss, *Die unerhörte Prophetie*, 40.

⁴⁴ As House rightly comments, "The second half of the verse [i.e. 6:10b] explains what the first half seeks to avoid." House, "Isaiah's Call," 221.

⁴⁵ Some ambiguity exists regarding the syntax of the final *weqatal* clause (ורפא לו). Evans suggests that the subject of the verb רפא is "the people" (Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 19). If this is correct, perhaps the prepositional phrase should be understood in a reflexive manner (see Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003], 114), leading to the translation "lest . . . they heal themselves." See Wildberger, *Isaiah*, 250. However, it is also possible to posit an indefinite subject together with *lamed* functioning as a *dativus commodi*: "lest . . . someone heal him" (Uhlig, *Theme of Hardening*, 103–4). In fact, BDB adopts this very translation while positing that the construction is functionally equivalent to a passive statement (i.e., "lest . . . he be healed"). One could also argue that the subject of both ושב and ורפא goes back to the subject of יבין, which is לבבו ("his heart"). The verse could then be translated, "Lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and their heart understand, with the result that it [i.e., their heart] turns and heals them." I lean towards the last option, though I think each of these translations is defensible and none of them changes the overall sense of the passage.

⁴⁶ As Uhlig states, "The whole final line is governed by פן so that the prophet is to prevent 'this

author intends for these clauses to carry a result-modality.⁴⁷ Given their setting within the “lest” clause, they should then be understood to refer to the undesirable results that would follow *if* in fact Israel were permitted to comprehend the divine message. In other words, the *weqatal* clauses refer to the end results that God wanted to prevent⁴⁸: YHWH did not want Israel to repent and to be saved, so he sent Isaiah to keep that from happening.⁴⁹ Given these observations, it seems difficult to avoid the conclusion that God intended for Isaiah’s ministry to have a reprobating influence upon his audience.

While the discussion so far has demonstrated the presence of DRA in Isaiah 6, it remains to explore how the text characterizes God’s reprobating activity. First, a variety of textual details suggest that the passage was intended to depict Isaiah’s hardening ministry as an act of retribution.⁵⁰ So for instance, Isaiah 6:5 may set the stage for Isaiah’s

people’ also from ‘returning’ and from being healed by whomever.” Uhlig, *Theme of Hardening*, 104.

⁴⁷ The shift from *yiqtol* forms (יִשְׁמַע, יִרְאֶה, and יִבִּין) to *weqatal* forms (וְיִשְׁבּ and וְיִרְפֵּא) in 6:10b requires some explanation. Following Robar’s analysis of *weqatal* forms, I understand the phrases וְיִשְׁבּ לֹ וְיִרְפֵּא as involving purpose/result modality within the subjunctive clause introduced by פֶּן. See Elizabeth Robar, *The Verb and the Paragraph in Biblical Hebrew: A Cognitive-Linguistic Approach*, Studies in Semitic Languages and Linguistics 78 (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2015), 123–27.

⁴⁸ In his more recent commentary, Oswalt wrongly downplays the role of God’s purpose in Isa 6:10 (see Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 128). In an earlier work however, he rightly suggests that God did desire to prevent repentance (though his explanation for why this was so goes beyond what can be deduced from the text). See John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 189–90.

⁴⁹ Young captures the sense of the text powerfully when he says, “In all this activity and proclamation of Isaiah there is an end to be achieved. It is a negative end; the people must not turn from their sins to God, for if they turn they will be healed. Strange indeed are the ways of the great God.” Young, *Isaiah 1–18*, 258.

⁵⁰ For others who see some form of divine retribution behind Isaiah’s hardening commission, see Katherine M. Hayes, “‘A Spirit of Deep Sleep’: Divinely Induced Delusion and Wisdom in Isaiah 1–39,” *CBQ* 74, no. 1 (2012): 43–46; G. K. Beale, “Isaiah VI 9-13: A Retributive Taunt against Idolatry,” *VT* 41, no. 3 (1991): 257; John L. McLaughlin, “Their Hearts Were Hardened: The Use of Isaiah 6,9-10 in the Book of Isaiah,” *Bib* 75, no. 1 (1994): 6; Beuken, “The Manifestation of Yahweh,” 77–79; Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 42; Alexander, *Isaiah*, 1:144; Laato, *About Zion*, 102; Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 102; Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 185–86; Dumbrell, “Worship,” 7; House, “Isaiah’s Call,” 220–21; Leupold, *Isaiah*, 137; Kaiser, *Isaiah 1–12*, 131–32; Gentry, “No One Holy,” 35–36; Schmidt, “Gedanken,” 77–78; Young, *Isaiah 1–18*, 258–59; Rendtorff, “Isaiah 6,” 174–76; Uhlig, “Too Hard to Understand?,” 68–70; Robert B. Chisholm Jr., “Divine Hardening in the Old Testament,” *BSac* 153, no. 612 (1996): 430–33; Childs, *Isaiah*,

negative commission as it portrays the nation as a people of unclean lips.⁵¹ Moreover, Isaiah 6:10 hints at Israel's wickedness when it describes God's intention to prevent Israel from being able to repent (נָשׁוּבָה)⁵²; such a statement assumes that the nation is in need of repentance, which would then suggest that Isaiah was sent as God's response to the nation's sins.⁵³ In addition, Isaiah's vision of YHWH upon his throne (Isa 6:1–4) may have already been meant to convey the threat of divine judgment.⁵⁴ Lastly, the literary shape of the book may suggest that chapters 1–5 were intended to set the stage for Isaiah's hardening commission in Isaiah 6.⁵⁵ These factors together make a strong case

56; Heikki Räisänen, *The Idea of Divine Hardening: A Comparative Study of the Notion of Divine Hardening, Leading Astray and Inciting to Evil in the Bible and the Qur'ān*, Publications of the Finnish Exegetical Society 25 (Helsinki, Finland: Kirjapaino Oy Savo, 1972), 59–62; Edward P. Meadors, *Idolatry and the Hardening of the Heart: A Study in Biblical Theology* (New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 56–57; Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets*, First Perennial Classics ed. (New York: Harper, 2001), 112–14. For a proponent of a non-retributive position, see Hanna Liss, "Undisclosed Speech: Patterns of Communication in the Book of Isaiah," *JHebS* 4 (2002): sec. 2.1.3.

⁵¹ As many scholars note, the "uncleanness" (טָמֵא) of Isaiah and his people cannot be limited to cultic impurity; instead, the problem here almost surely involves moral impurity. See Uhlig, "Too Hard to Understand?," 65–66; Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 268; Gentry, "No One Holy," 34; Dumbrell, "Worship," 4–5; Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 192; Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 99; Leupold, *Isaiah*, 134. Moreover, there is no basis in the text for Landy's suggestion that Isa 6:5 condemns all human speech (and thought) about God as sacrilegious and self-defeating. See Landy, "Strategies," 66.

⁵² Rightly McLaughlin, "Their Hearts were Hardened," 6.

⁵³ Roberts makes the important point that Isa 6 must be understood in light of Isaiah's understanding of salvation history. As he states, "Yahweh had decided to purge Israel for her sins, and no premature repentance was going to turn Yahweh aside from the course he had chosen. Yet this judgment was not the last word. Out of this judgment would arise a purged and glorified city of God. . . . Thus Isaiah could assert that Israel's disobedience, God's judgment, and his ultimate redemption of Zion were all taken up in Yahweh's plan for his people and the world." J. J. M. Roberts, "Isaiah in Old Testament Theology," *Int* 36, no. 2 (1982): 138.

⁵⁴ So also Uhlig, *Theme of Hardening*, 86–89; Leupold, *Isaiah*, 133; Dumbrell, "Worship," 3; Knierim, "Vocation," 54–59.

⁵⁵ So also Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 42; Hayes, "Spirit of Deep Sleep," 43–46; Beuken, "Manifestation," 79; House, "Isaiah's Call," 221; Gentry, "No One Holy," 35; Childs, *Isaiah*, 57. In addition, some have argued that Isaiah's ministry was punishment against the sin of idolatry in particular (see Beale, "Isaiah VI 9–13," 257; Meadors, *Idolatry and Hardening of Heart*, 56–57). In my judgment, Isa 6 does not provide sufficient exegetical warrant to make such a specific determination.

that Isaiah 6 presents readers with a retributive form of DRA.⁵⁶ Second, the passage clearly portrays a mediated form of reprobating activity.⁵⁷ There seems to be little question that God's negative influence on his people would come via Isaiah's prophetic ministry.⁵⁸ Third, the text is best understood as illustrating an active form of DRA, since YHWH seeks for a messenger and actively sends Isaiah to perform this reprobating task.⁵⁹ Lastly, Isaiah 6 probably refers to non-eternal DRA, since the text does not seem to have eternal punishment in view.⁶⁰

Other passages in Isaiah. While Isaiah 6 is perhaps the most famous Isaianic text dealing with DRA, there are other passages in the book that also describe God influencing Israel towards their destruction. Within Isaiah 1–39, both 8:14–17 and 29:9–14 seem to refer to reprobating activity against Israel.⁶¹ In both passages, God is

⁵⁶ Many scholars argue that God hardened Israel only after they had already hardened themselves (see for example Hayes, "Spirit of Deep Sleep," 44; Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 102; Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 185–86; House, "Isaiah's Call," 221; Kaiser, *Isaiah 1–12*, 131–32). While this interpretation maintains a form of retributive DRA, it also comes close to emptying God's punitive act of any significance. After all, what exactly is the point of God hardening those who are already self-hardened? The claim that YHWH only hardens the (self-) hardened differs little from the notion that divine hardening is another way of speaking about self-hardening. Thus, I believe Child's critique of the latter theory also pertains to the former: "The mystery of divine hardening cannot be explained by shifting the initiative to Israel, as if hardening were only an idiom describing how Israel hardened its own heart by disobedience. It is constitutive of biblical hardening that the initiative is placed securely with God in the mystery of his inscrutable will." Childs, *Isaiah*, 56. See also von Rad, *Prophetic Traditions*, 152–53.

⁵⁷ Although I would not deny God's supernatural work in the hardening, Chisholm rightly describes the mediated nature of DRA in Isa 6 when he says, "Once again a reference to divine hardening appears, but in this case Yahweh did not directly and supernaturally harden pagans. Instead He would harden His own people indirectly through the ministry of His prophetic messenger." Chisholm, "Divine Hardening," 430.

⁵⁸ Uhlig is probably correct to describe the hardening as the perlocutionary effect of Isaiah's speech acts. See Uhlig, *Theme of Hardening*, 115–16.

⁵⁹ As Chisholm rightly points out, God did not have to send Isaiah on this mission. See Chisholm, "Divine Hardening," 432.

⁶⁰ Contra Young, *Isaiah 1–18*, 259–61.

⁶¹ While it seems clear that DRA is depicted in Isa 29:9–14, some ambiguity exists with reference to Isa 8:14–16. However, I have been persuaded by Uhlig's argument that these latter verses also

presented as working against Israel's salvation by preventing the nation as a whole from grasping the meaning of his work and his word. In Isaiah 8:14–16, YHWH accomplishes this by restricting the comprehension of the prophetic instruction among a limited group,⁶² leaving the rest of Israel incapable of rightly responding to the divine word⁶³; meanwhile, in Isaiah 29:9–14, the Lord pours out a “spirit of deep sleep” (רוח תרדמה) among the people by deluding their prophets in order dull the nation to Isaiah's message.⁶⁴ While both seem to describe a non-eternal, retributive, mediate form of

refer to reprobating activity. Uhlig contends for a connection in Isa 8:14–16 between God's assumed role as a “stumbling block,” the prophet's work to seal the testimony, and divine hardening. Moreover, Uhlig credibly posits that “the sealing of the prophetic declaration (Isa 8:16) is the realization of the ‘stumbling block’ of Isa 8:14. . . . YHWH becomes a stumbling block (צור מכשול) by binding up (צור) the prophetic message.” Uhlig, *Theme of Hardening*, 276.

⁶² As I have noted elsewhere, I take למדי in 8:16 to refer to a minority group within Israel who were not hardened by God and were therefore faithful to YHWH (see chap. 2, s.v. “Divine Hardening”).

⁶³ The nature of the “binding” and “sealing” in Isa 8:16 has been the subject of some debate. Some have argued that this refers to a legal or official procedure. On the one hand, Irvine argues that the text speaks to the deposit of Isaiah's words in the temple archive. Such a deposit would then provide Ahaz with the means to assess oracles of other intermediaries (see Irvine, *Isaiah, Ahaz*, 205–6). On the other hand, Isbell believes that the verse in question speaks to a legal act performed by Isaiah's students in order to ensure the verification of their teacher's message in the future (see Charles David Isbell, “The Limmûdîm in the Book of Isaiah,” *JSOT* 34, no. 1 [2009]: 99–101). In my view, both of these interpreters mistake figurative language for literal language. As Wildberger correctly observes, the “binding” (צור) and “sealing” (חתם) mentioned in Isa 8:16 must be understood metaphorically. So he states, “Just as someone puts something particularly valuable into a tied up or sealed purse for safe-keeping, Isaiah wants to deposit his valuable treasure, his admonition and instruction, within his disciples.” Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 366; see also Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 228–29; Young, *Isaiah 1–18*, 313; Mackay, *Isaiah 1–39*, 228. Balogh agrees, specifying that Isa 8:16 uses a legal metaphor to make the point that “the addresses [*sic.*], the ‘disciples’, receive these authentic instructions to adhere to them, to make use of them and not in order to conceal them for coming generations.” Csaba Balogh, “Isaiah's Prophetic Instruction and the Disciples in Isaiah 8:16,” *VT* 63 (2013): 17–18. Moreover, given YHWH's announcement that he would be a “stone of stumbling” and a “trap” to both houses of Israel (Isa 8:14), and given Isaiah's belief that YHWH was “hiding his face from the house of Jacob” (Isa 8:17), it seems likely that Isa 8:16 intends a contrast between those who would be granted the ability to take Isaiah's message to heart (YHWH's “disciples”) and the rest who would not (so also Smith, *Isaiah 1–18*, 313). Thus, Calvin rightly says regarding Isa 8:16, “God compares this teaching to a sealed letter. It may be felt and handled by many people, but it is only read and understood by a few—that is, by those to whom it is sent and addressed. . . . The Lord will reserve for himself some disciples by whom his letter will be read with advantage, though it is closed to others.” John Calvin, *Isaiah*, Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2000), 85.

⁶⁴ It is difficult to determine whether the “spirit of deep sleep” refers to a personal agent (cf. Judg 9:23; 1 Kgs 22:19–23) or to the disposition of Israel (cf. Num 5:14). In other words, does Isa 29 refer to God sending a spirit to effect spiritual stupor among the Israelites, or does it speak figuratively of God

DRA,⁶⁵ the two texts exhibit a difference with regard to the manner in which YHWH's involvement is envisioned: namely, Isaiah 8:14–16 may describe YHWH's influence as being passive,⁶⁶ while Isaiah 29:9–14 seems to depict DRA as being active.⁶⁷

In addition to these passages from the first half of the book, the closing section (Isa 56–66) also bears witness to DRA against Israel in Isaiah 63:7–64:11.⁶⁸ Within this

producing a disposition of stupor among the Israelites? In her study of biblical references to divinely sent deceitful spirits, Hamori does not come to a firm conclusion regarding the “spirit of deep sleep” in Isa 29. As she states, “The sense of רוח here may overlap with inclination and also reflect familiarity with the tradition of the spirit of falsehood.” Hamori, “Spirit of Falsehood,” 24. In common with several commentators (see for instance Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 499; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 404; Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1–39*, 233), I lean towards interpreting the “spirit” as a figurative reference to Israel's disposition, but I do so tentatively. In any event, what the passage does make clear is that “the sleep imposed by Yhwh prevents the comprehension of prophetic vision.” Hayes, “Spirit of Deep Sleep,” 49.

⁶⁵ In neither passage is there any evidence that Isaiah had Israel's eternal state in mind. Moreover, in both texts, Israel's sin seems to be the occasion for God's negative influence. On the one hand, Isa 8:13–14 suggests that Israel's disposition (i.e., their refusal to fear God) was the reason they experienced YHWH as a stumbling stone instead of as a refuge (so also Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 95; Oswalt, *Isaiah 1–39*, 234). On the other hand, Isa 29:13–14 seems to provide the reason for God's deluding influence upon Israel describe in vv. 9–12 (see Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1–39*, 235). Lastly, both passages suggest a mediating agent between God and Israel. Isa 8:14–16 pictures Isaiah as being involved. Meanwhile, if “the prophets” and “the seers” function in apposition to “your eyes” and “your heads” in Isa 29:10 (see Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 368), then the passage would describe God's influence upon Israel as taking place through the ministry of false prophets (cf. 1 Kgs 22:19–23). At the same time however, Isa 29:10 does suggest that the religious leaders are subjected to an immediate form of DRA, as God directly impacts their discernment.

⁶⁶ The passage seems to describe God's retributive influence as a withholding of understanding. That is, YHWH functions as a stumbling block by “sealing” the prophetic word, i.e., granting comprehension (through the ministry of Isaiah) to a select few while choosing not to democratize access to the meaning of the divine message. For this reason, it seems best to label Isa 8:14–16's description of DRA “passive.”

⁶⁷ The verbs used in Isa 29:10 ascribe an active role to YHWH, who stands behind Israel's deluded state (rightly Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1–39*, 233).

⁶⁸ Several scholars argue that the theological assertions of the petition found in Isa 63:7–64:11 are corrected or rejected in Isa 65. See for instance Uhlig, *Theme of Hardening*, 303–8; Judith Gärtner, “‘Why Do You Let Us Stray from Your Paths...’ (Isa 63:17): The Concept of Guilt in the Communal Lament Isa 63:7–64:11,” in *Seeking the Favor of God*, vol. 1, *The Origins of Penitential Prayer in Second Temple Judaism* (Atlanta: SBL, 2006), 151–63; Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, “The Lament in Isaiah 63:7–64:11 and Its Literary and Theological Place in Isaiah 40–66,” in *The Book of Isaiah: Enduring Questions Answered Anew*, ed. Richard J. Bautch and J. Todd Hibbard (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 57–64; Jacob Stromberg, *Isaiah after Exile: The Author of Third Isaiah as Reader and Redactor of the Book*, Oxford Theological Monographs [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011], 30–32; Brooks Schramm, *The Opponents of Third Isaiah: Reconstructing the Cultic History of the Restoration*, JSOTSup (Sheffield,

penitential prayer,⁶⁹ both Isaiah 63:17 and 64:4–6 suggest that Israel remained in its sinful state after the exile because of God’s own activity. In these verses, the petitioner depicts YHWH as having caused Israel to stray from his ways (למה תתענו יהוה מדרכיך), as having hardened their hearts to keep them from fearing his name (תקשיח לבנו מיראתך),

England: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 154–56; Blaženka Scheuer, “‘Why Do You Let Us Wander, O Lord, from Your Ways?’ (Isa 63:17). Clarification of Culpability in the Last Part of the Book of Isaiah,” in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Chronological and Thematic Development in Isaiah 40–66*, ed. Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer and Hans M. Barstad, FRLANT (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 170n37. Despite the popularity of this approach, I view the relationship between Isa 65 and Isa 63:7–64:11 as complementary rather than conflicting for at least two reasons. First, the theological continuity between the prayer in Isa 63:7–64:11 and the book of Isaiah as a whole makes it unlikely that Isa 65 serves as a rebuttal of the former. For example, the divine hardening posited in Isa 63:7–64:11 is in keeping with the teaching of earlier passages (especially Isa 6:9–10). Thus, the prayer could hardly require correction at this point since its perspective is consistent with the rest of the book (contra Stromberg, *Isaiah after Exile*, 30–31; Tiemeyer, “Lament in Isaiah,” 59–60; Gärtner, “Concept of Guilt,” 151–56). Moreover, as in the rest of Isaiah, the prayer does not affirm divine sovereignty *at the expense of* human responsibility. Rightly Anthony J. Tomasino, “Isaiah 1.1–2.4 and 63–66, and the Composition of the Isaianic Corpus,” *JSOT* 57 (1993): 86; Räisänen, *Idea of Divine Hardening*, 64–65. As demonstrated by the petitioner’s confessions, Isa 63:7–64:11 maintains *both* the priority of divine agency *and* Israel’s responsibility. Given these theological points of contact between the penitential prayer and the book of Isaiah, Isa 65 can hardly be read as a repudiation of the former without also being a rejection of the theology of the latter. Second, the alleged tensions between Isa 63:7–64:11 and Isa 65 may be alleviated by reading both in light of Isaiah’s remnant theology (for the importance of remnant theology in Isaiah, see Barry G. Webb, “Zion in Transformation: A Literary Approach to Isaiah,” in *The Bible in Three Dimensions: Essays in Celebration of Forty Years of Biblical Studies in the University of Sheffield*, ed. David J. Clines, Stephen E. Fowl, and Stanley E. Porter [Sheffield, England: JSOT, 1990], 72–81). With this theme in mind, the passage may be interpreted as the penitent prayer of a member of the remnant on behalf of the nation as a whole (cf. Dan 9:3–19). Then, in keeping with the remnant theology developed throughout the book, God responds to the prayer in Isa 65 by declaring his intention to save the nation through judgment; that is to say, God would deliver Israel precisely by redeeming a righteous remnant and by destroying the wicked.

⁶⁹ In my judgment, it is best to view these verses as a penitential prayer which is set *rhetorically* during the exilic period and which is offered by a member of the righteous remnant on behalf of Israel under judgment. For other proposals, see Stromberg, *Isaiah after Exile*, 30–32; Uhlig, *Theme of Hardening*, 287–315; Tiemeyer, “Lament in Isaiah 63:7–64:11,” 52–70; Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 86–100; Scheuer, “Clarification of Culpability,” 169–73; H. G. M. Williamson, “Isaiah 63,7–64,11. Exilic Lament or Post-Exilic Protest?,” *ZAW* 102 (1990): 48–58; Gärtner, “Concept of Guilt,” 145–63; Stephen Breck Reid, “A Time for Dangerous Memory: Isaiah 63:7–64:11,” *Brethren Life and Thought* 52, no. 4 (2007): 216–19; Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 40–66*, FOTL (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 350–53; Schramm, *Opponents of Third Isaiah*, 150. While such a characterization does not privilege any particular view of authorship or dating, it *does* allow for the possibility that the prayer was crafted in anticipation of the exile by Isaiah ben Amoz—as argued for instance by R. Reed Lessing, *Isaiah 56–66*, ConcC (St. Louis: Concordia, 2014), 383–84; Alexander, *Isaiah*, 2:413; Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 521.

and as having delivered them over into the power of their iniquities (ותמוגנו ביד-עוננו).⁷⁰

As a result of these divine actions,⁷¹ Israel was prevented from repenting and from experiencing salvation (Isa 64:4b, 8–11).⁷² Thus, the text seems to provide an example of an active, immediate form of DRA.⁷³ And since the judgment in view seems to be the extension of the exile (cf. 64:8–11), it seems unwarranted to posit a reference to eternal

⁷⁰ This last clause has presented significant challenges to interpreters. Perhaps Barthélemy is correct to suggest that the author uses the verb ותמוגנו in a pregnant sense, thereby unifying two themes derived from the holy war tradition. As he explains, “‘Tu nous as liquéfiés au pouvoir de’ signifie: ‘tu nous as fait perdre courage et nous as livrés à.’” Barthélemy, *Isaïe, Jérémie, Lamentations*, 451. I would like to thank Peter J. Gentry for bringing Barthélemy’s interpretation to my attention.

⁷¹ As others rightly observe, appeals to divine permission do not adequately capture the sense of God’s agency as described in Isa 63:17 and 64:4–6. Instead, God is depicted as causing Israel’s waywardness. See Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 45–46; Alexander, *Isaiah*, 2:426; Scheuer, “Clarification of Culpability,” 171; Uhlig, *Theme of Hardening*, 292–96; Gärtner, “Cause of Guilt,” 157; Tomasino, “Isaiah 1.1–2.4 and 63–66,” 86n15; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56–66*, 263; Sweeney, *Isaiah 40–66*, 351–52, 355.

⁷² Isaiah 64:4b is notoriously difficult, and what Alexander says of the whole of v. 4 certainly pertains to its latter half: “There is perhaps no sentence in Isaiah, or indeed in the Old Testament, which has more divided and perplexed interpreters, or on which the ingenuity and learning of the modern writers have thrown less light.” Alexander, *Isaiah*, 2:431. I tentatively understand the 64:4b to say, “Behold, you [YHWH] were angry and we sinned. [If we remain] in them [i.e., sins] forever, then will we be saved?” With regard to the first clause, I see no reason to switch the arrangement of the verbs (as does the CSB translation). Furthermore, I agree with those interpreters who argue that the order of the verbs suggests the prioritization of divine agency behind Israel’s actions (see Gärtner, “Concept of Guilt,” 149; Uhlig, *Theme of Hardening*, 295n33; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56–66*, AB [New York: Doubleday, 2003], 264). And with respect to the second clause, I agree with Lessing when he takes ברה as a reference to Israel’s sins and posits a verb of being or remaining to complete the sense of the text (see Lessing, *Isaiah 56–66*, 358). Moreover, I understand the whole clause to be an if-then statement, with the apodosis taking the form of a rhetorical question.

⁷³ Chisholm acknowledges that Isa 63:17 could refer to “direct involvement on Yahweh’s part,” though he believes that the rhetorical features of a prayer of lament leave open the possibility of a more indirect explanation of God’s work. As he states, “The speaker in Isaiah 63:17 . . . may have been referring to the hardships of exile, which discouraged and even embittered the people, causing many of them to retreat from their faith in the Lord.” Chisholm, “Divine Hardening,” 433. I believe his suggestion runs into at least two problems. First, Chisholm goes beyond the actual evidence in the text when making his suggestion, as the passage itself provides no reason to believe that the petitioner viewed the nation’s unbelief as resulting from their external circumstances. While such an explanation is theoretically possible, it finds little grounding in the passage at hand. Second, given Isaiah’s willingness to speak about God’s immediate DRA elsewhere (and in genres other than that of Isa 63:7–64:11; see for instance Isa 10:5ff; 19:1–3, 14; 44:18), readers have no reason to explain away the actual language used in Isa 63:17 (and 64:4–6).

condemnation. However, it is more difficult to determine whether the passage involves retributive or non-retributive DRA.⁷⁴ While the implicit connection with Isaiah 6 makes possible a retributive reading,⁷⁵ readers must reckon with the fact that Isaiah 63:7–64:11 provides no answer to the question posed in 63:17: “Why do you cause us to wander from your ways, O YHWH?” Moreover, the prayer’s sense of desperation and grief is due in no small part to the petitioner’s inability to understand God’s reasons. Thus, exegetes may do well to leave open the matter of God’s motivations behind His reprobating influence in Isaiah 63:7–64:11.

DRA against Assyria

In addition to its depiction of God’s negative influence upon Israel, the book of Isaiah may also present Assyria as having been an object of DRA.⁷⁶ Before exploring the evidence for this claim, two preliminary points need to be stated. First, it seems clear that the author of Isaiah sees YHWH as the one ultimately responsible for the Assyrian

⁷⁴ On the one hand, some interpreters believe that DRA in Is 63:7–64:11 is retributive. For instance, McLaughlin argues that Isa 63:10 identifies the reason for God’s reprobating influence among the post-exilic community. McLaughlin, “Their Hearts Were Hardened,” 15–16) Thus, the sins of ancestors were the reason for God’s reprobating activity in Isa 63:17 and 64:4–6. Chisholm suggests a different basis for a retributive reading as he points to Isa 64:5–6 as establishing the cause of God’s actions. Chisholm, “Divine Hardening,” 433. Meanwhile, Lessing takes a canonical approach to argue that God only hardens the hearts of those who have already hardened themselves. Lessing, *Isaiah 56–66*, 352; see also Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 517. On the other hand, there are those who see in this passage evidence of non-retributive DRA. So for example, Uhlig takes issue with McLaughlin’s interpretation as he argues that “formerly, YHWH became the enemy of his people because of their sins (cf. 63:10); this time the people claim that their sins are the consequence of YHWH’s anger (64:4b).” Uhlig, *Theme of Hardening*, 295. Scheuer also maintains a non-retributive reading as she argues that the author of Isa 63:7–64:11 assigns YHWH with ultimate responsibility for human suffering (see Scheuer, “Clarification of Culpability,” 172–73).

⁷⁵ For others who note this connection, see Gärtner, “Cause of Guilt,” 56–58; Scheuer, “Clarification of Culpability,” 171; Tomasino, “Isaiah 1.1–2.4 and 63–66,” 86n15.

⁷⁶ I have been helped greatly by the work of Mary Katherine Y. H. Hom in identifying Isaianic references to Assyria. I have generally followed her assessments, though I also see such references to Assyria in Isa 17:12–14 and 29:1–8. For her list of Isaianic passages related to Assyria, see Mary Katherine Y. H. Hom, *The Characterization of the Assyrians in Isaiah: Synchronic and Diachronic Perspectives*, LHBOTS (New York: T & T Clark, 2012), 11.

imperial campaigns.⁷⁷ This is true of Assyria's campaigns against Israel⁷⁸ and its conquests of neighboring lands.⁷⁹ Second, Isaiah also maintains that YHWH planned to bring judgment upon Assyria once he finished wielding them as his punitive tool.⁸⁰ These two observations *make it possible* that Isaiah presents Assyria as an object of reprobating influence; however, by themselves, they do not suffice to *prove* this to be the case. Proof of the matter would require one to demonstrate that 1) the book of Isaiah presents Assyria's hostilities against Israel to have been sinful; and that 2) Isaiah predicts that

⁷⁷ So also Aster, *Reflections of Empire*, 132–33; Roberts, "Isaiah," 139–40; Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 330; Andrew Davies, *Double Standards in Isaiah: Re-Evaluating Prophetic Ethics and Divine Justice*, BibInt (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2000), 61–62; Hamilton, *God's Glory*, 196; Michael Chan, "Rhetorical Reversal and Usurpation: Isaiah 10:5–34 and the Use of Neo-Assyrian Royal Idiom in the Construction of an Anti-Assyrian Theology," *JBL* 128, no. 4 (2009): 720–26; Jaap Dekker, "Isaiah, Prophet in the Service of the Holy One of Israel (Isa 1–39)," in *The Lion Has Roared: Theological Themes in the Prophetic Literature of the Old Testament*, ed. H. G. L. Peels and S. D. Snyman (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012), 61; Goldingay, "The Theology of Isaiah," 183–84.

⁷⁸ This theme is referred to repeatedly throughout Isaiah (see for instance Isa 1:5–9; 5:25–30; 7:17–20; 8:3–10; 10:1–34; 28:1–29; 36:10). Perhaps the motif finds its most memorable expression in Isa 10:5ff. In this section, Assyria is called "the rod of [YHWH's] anger" (Isa 10:5a) and is described as the instrument of God's wrath (10:15ff). Not only are the Assyrians depicted as a weapon in God's hands, but YHWH's wrath is likewise said to have been the weapon in theirs (Isa 10:5b; for a similar interpretation, see Davies, *Double Standards*, 62; Chan, "Rhetorical Reversal," 720–22). Moreover, God says of Assyria, "I have sent them against a godless nation, and I have commanded them against the people with whom I am enraged, to completely spoil and plunder [them] and to make them into a trampled land, like mud on the streets" (Isa 10:6). As such language indicates, God was not merely permitting Assyria to ravage Israel but was in fact commanding them to do so (cf. Isa 36:10).

⁷⁹ So for instance, Isaiah presents Assyria as the means by which God would strike Aram (Isa 8:3–4), both Egypt and Cush (Isa 20:1–6; cf. Isa 18:1ff; 19:1–4), and perhaps also Philistia (Isa 14:28–32). Moreover, in Isa 37:26, YHWH explains why Assyria was wrongheaded to boast about their military successes against the nations: "Have you not heard from a long time ago? I have done it, and, from days long past, I have established it. Now I have brought it to pass so that you might lay waste to fortified cities, turning them into ruined heaps." Although Smith (*Isaiah 1–39*, 624) argues that the Assyrian boasts in Isa 37:24–25 did not refer to their imperial conquests, it seems more likely that the mythological allusions served to highlight the delusional heights of pride that Assyria reached *because of* their military campaigns (rightly, Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 469–70). This reading of Isa 37 is bolstered by Isa 10:12–15, where Assyria is likewise rebuked for boasting in military victories granted to them by YHWH (so also Aster, *Reflections of Empire*, 271–73).

⁸⁰ Among other passages, see Isa 10:5–19; 10:24–34; 11:15; 14:24–27; 17:4–14; 29:1–8; 30:27–32; 31:8–9; 33:1; 37:26–29.

YHWH would judge Assyria for their aggression towards Israel. But can these propositions be shown to have been within Isaiah's intended meaning?

At first glance, the answer appears to be "no." Instead of Assyria being judged for acts of war, different passages in Isaiah suggest that the nation would be devastated for two reasons: their arrogance⁸¹ and their perverse motives.⁸² Given these charges, one might argue that the nation of Assyria was not the object of reprobating influence since neither of these attitudes (pride and blood-thirstiness) were necessary parts of their divine assignment.⁸³ Intriguingly however, Isaiah provides readers with a more complex

⁸¹ Examples of texts that cite Assyria's arrogance as the reason for their destruction include Isa 10:12–19; 10:33–34; 37:6–7; 37:14–20; 37:23–29. Thus, Machinist reasonably concludes that "all the actions of the Assyrian monarch are understood [by Isaiah] to come not from the command of his god Aššur, but from the power of the Israelite god; and the monarch's failure, indeed refusal, to recognize this constitutes the formal grounds for his eventual punishment at the hands of Yahweh." Peter Machinist, "Assyria and Its Image in the First Isaiah," *JAOS* 103, no. 4 (1983): 734. See also Barton, *Isaiah 1–39*, 55; Davies, *Double Standards*, 62; Hom, *Characterization*, 51.

⁸² I would argue that Isa 10:5–7 impugns Assyria for their rapacious and violent inclinations. The text makes this apparent through the contrast between the divine commission (Isa 10:5–6) and the Assyrian motivations (Isa 10:7). Although YHWH was using Assyria to repay a godless nation (10:5–6), Assyria did not see itself as an instrument of the Lord's justice (10:7a); instead, its driving intention was to do violence to others (Isa 10:7b). As Hamilton rightly comments, "Isaiah describes the concursus of Yahweh's righteous will with the wicked intentions of the Assyrians in Isaiah 10:5–15." Hamilton, *God's Glory*, 196. For others who agree that Isa 10:5–7 chides Assyria for their ungodly motivations, see Oswalt, *Isaiah 1–39*, 263–64; Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 114.

⁸³ In addition, some have argued that Assyria was punished for overstepping the parameters of their divine commission. Hom for instance believes that this idea is found in Isa 10:7 and 28:27–29 (see Hom, *Characterization*, 38, 115–16). Jensen meanwhile argues that Assyria as the "rod" and "staff" of God's anger was intended to be a tool for chastisement; instead, they moved beyond their calling and sought to destroy Israel. Joseph Jensen, "Weal and Woe in Isaiah: Consistency and Continuity," *CBQ* 43, no. 2 (1981): 180–81. Aster is more specific about the nature of the Assyrian transgression: he claims that Sargon II's practice of changing the demographic composition of conquered lands went beyond Assyria's divine commission, as such a move would effectively end the existence of subjugated nations (Aster, *Reflections on Empire*, 184–88). While it is possible that Isaiah saw Assyrian overreach as the impetus for YHWH's judgment, I believe there are several reasons to question this view. First, the language used in 10:7 (להכרית, להשמיד) does not call to mind efforts to repopulate lands with other ethnicities (contra Aster). Second, although Jensen is correct that YHWH did not intend to annihilate Israel forever, Isa 10:22 indicates that the destruction of a majority of Israelites was precisely what YHWH had decreed (so also Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 170; Kaiser, *Isaiah 1–12*, 241–42; Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 263). Moreover, Isaiah elsewhere describes God's use of his "rod" as including destructive acts towards his people (see for instance Isa 1:5–9; 5:25–30; 37:24–27). Third, if Assyria was guilty of exceeding its mission, then such an accusation would reflect poorly upon YHWH given his claim to have wielded Assyria as his weapon (cf. Isa 10:5–6; 10:12; 10:15). After all, how skillful could an axman be who did not exercise complete mastery

picture.⁸⁴ While the prophet does condemn the Assyrians for their arrogance and bloodthirstiness, I would argue that he elsewhere implies that the Assyrian military campaign against Israel was *itself* a sin for which the nation would be judged. At least four passages lend credibility to this claim.

First, Isaiah 30:27–33 may suggest that Assyria was going to be destroyed for carrying out their role as God’s instrument of punishment.⁸⁵ The text hints in this direction by referring to Assyria’s judgment while alluding to passages that describe their God-given mandate.⁸⁶ So for instance, Isaiah uses water and storm imagery to connect Assyria’s destruction with their divine assignment.⁸⁷ The prophet predicts YHWH’s future onslaught against Assyria by saying, “His breath will be like a torrent overflowing

over his axe? Lastly, Hom’s argument from Isa 28:27–29 is tenuous at best, as there is little reason to think that the reference to the cart’s wheels is a veiled indictment of the Assyrian use of chariots.

⁸⁴ Moreover, even if Isaiah maintained that Assyria was condemned *solely* on the basis of their arrogance and violent disposition, his portrayal of God’s influence upon the nation could still be construed as a form of DRA. After all, according to this reading of Isaiah, God would still have inspired the Assyrian war effort knowing beforehand that these military conquests would only serve to bolster the nation’s pride and foster their thirst for war. As such, it would be difficult to deny that God knowingly influenced Assyria towards the sin for which they would eventually be condemned.

⁸⁵ For a convincing account of why Isa 30:1–33 should be read as a unity, see Willem A. M. Beuken, “Isaiah 30: A Prophetic Oracle Transmitted in Two Successive Paradigms,” in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah: Studies of an Interpretive Tradition*, ed. Craig C. Broyles and Craig A. Evans, vol. 1, VTSup (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1997), 396–97.

⁸⁶ For a helpful overview of the inner-biblical connections exhibited by Isa 30:27–33, see Hom, *Characterization*, 120–39. While some have argued that the name “Assyria” is used here merely as a cipher to refer to any national power hostile to Israel (see for instance Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1–39*, 248), the allusions within Isa 30:27–23 support the view that the prophecy refers to the historical nation of Assyria. However, that is not to say that Isa 30:27–33 was intended to apply exclusively to Assyria. In fact, the reference to “nations” in v. 28 and the typological use of Assyria elsewhere in Isaiah (see Hom, *Characterizations*, 190–93) suggest that Isa 30:27–33 may be meaningfully applied to other enemies of God’s people. Thus, Alexander expresses the intent of the passage well when he says, “The express mention of Assyria in [Isa 30:31], though it does not prove it to have been from the beginning the specific subject of the prophecy, does shew that it was a conspicuous object in Isaiah’s view, as an example both of danger and deliverance, and that at this point he concentrates his prophetic vision on this object as a signal illustration of the general truths which he has been announcing.” Alexander, *Isaiah*, 1:487.

⁸⁷ Oswalt rightly comments that the imagery used in the passage is reminiscent of other theophanies of judgment. See Oswalt, *Isaiah 1–39*, 565.

(שוטף)—it will divide (יחצה) at their necks (עד-צוואר)!” (Isa 30:28a).⁸⁸ The imagery and the language clearly recall Isaiah 8:7–8,⁸⁹ where Isaiah prophesies that YHWH would bring against his people “the waters of the mighty and plentiful river, the king of Assyria and all his glory,” which would “pass into Judah, overflow (שטף) and go through, touching even their neck (עד-צוואר).”⁹⁰ Thus, Isaiah 30:28 makes the point that the nation that once destroyed Ephraim and threatened Judah like an overwhelming flood would itself be overwhelmed by the storm-waters of divine anger (cf. 30:30).⁹¹ A second connection between Assyria’s future destruction and past function is established by the reference to the rod (שבט) and the staff (מטה) in Isaiah 30:31–32.⁹² These clearly evoke Isaiah’s

⁸⁸ The use of the verb יחצה (“it will divide”) is unexpected. Some commentators seem to take it as another way of saying that the waters would rise to neck-level (see for instance Oswalt, *Isaiah 1–39*, 566). While possible, such an interpretation does not explain the peculiar verb choice, especially given the use of יגיע earlier (cf. Isa 8:8). Perhaps the verb was chosen to make the stronger, more graphic point that God’s anger would in effect divide Assyria at the neck—in other words, kill the nation by violently ridding it of its head (i.e., the Assyrian king; cf. Isa 30:33).

⁸⁹ For others who observe the textual relationship between Isa 30:27–33 and 8:7–8, see Alexander, *Isaiah*, 1:485; Mackay, *Isaiah 1–39*, 651; Oswalt, *Isaiah 1–39*, 564; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 423; Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 525; Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39*, 220; Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 252; Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 398; Childs, *Isaiah*, 224; Patricia K. Tull, *Isaiah 1–39*, SHBC (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2010), 461. Laato also recognizes the connection between Isa 30:28 and 8:8, but he draws the wrong conclusion from it: he posits that the use of Isa 8:7–8 indicates that Isa 30:28 refers to God’s use of Assyria to judge his people (see Laato, *About Zion*, 108). However, a reference to the judgment of God’s people seems out of place given the focus on Israel’s salvation in Isa 30:18–33. As Goldingay rightly notes, Isa 30:18 functions as “the chapter’s hinge” (Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 170), so that the focus shifts from prophesying Israel’s doom to foretelling their future deliverance. See also Beuken, “Isaiah 30,” 396–97.

⁹⁰ Aster argues that Isaiah uses the flood imagery to subvert Assyrian imperial ideology. See Aster, *Reflections of Empire*, 106–8.

⁹¹ Thus, Roberts is essentially correct when he observes that “the allusion [in Isa 30:28] to this earlier passage [i.e. Isa 8:7–8] is intentional. It suggests that Assyria will be meted out the same punishment it had inflicted on others.” Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 398; see also Childs, *Isaiah*, 224.

⁹² Guillaume has argued that מטה should be repointed from *maṭṭēh* to *miṭṭāh*, so the word might be understood to mean “bed” rather than “staff.” However, his suggestion faces several stiff problems. First, his interpretation finds no support in any of the ancient versions. Second, his rendering requires multiple unsubstantiated departures from the MT. Third, his view does not take Isaiah’s use of the word pair מטה-שבט into account (cf. Isa 9:3; 10:5; 10:15; 10:24; 14:5; 28:27). Given this pattern, the use שבט in 30:31 strongly increases the likelihood that מטה in 30:32 means “staff.” Lastly, the historical justification for his interpretation seems slender at best. Thus, despite the difficulties presented by v. 32, it seems best to retain the MT’s witness to מטה as “staff.” For his arguments, see Alfred Guillaume, “Isaiah’s Oracle

description of Assyria in Isaiah 10:5,⁹³ though the nation's role has been changed. Assyria would no longer function as the rod and staff by which YHWH would punish Israel⁹⁴; instead, they would themselves be severely flogged with another "appointed rod" of YHWH's anger.⁹⁵ These inner-biblical connections do more than merely highlight an ironic reversal in Assyria's fortunes; instead, they seem to imply that God would judge the instrument of his wrath as an act of retributive justice. That is, because Assyria was a devastating flood and a staff of wrath towards God's people, so also would YHWH raise up a devastating flood and a staff of wrath against them.⁹⁶ Thus, Isaiah 30:27–33 may suggest that Assyria would be condemned for carrying out the assignment given to them by the Holy One of Israel.⁹⁷

against Assyria (Isaiah 30, 27–33) in the Light of Archaeology," *BSOAS* 17, no. 3 (1955): 413–15.

⁹³ Roberts rightly notes an "ironic allusion." Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 399. For others who note the connection between Isa 30:27–33 and 10:5ff, see Mackay, *Isaiah 1–39*, 654; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 423; Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 526; Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39*, 220; Laato, *About Zion*, 107; John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1–33*, rev. ed., WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 475; Tull, *Isaiah 1–39*, 461; Beuken, "Isaiah 30," 394.

⁹⁴ Some have plausibly argued that Isaiah's depiction of Assyria as YHWH's rod and staff served to subvert Assyrian imperial ideology. See for instance Chan, *Rhetorical Reversal*, 720–26; Aster, *Reflections of Empire*, 187–88.

⁹⁵ The MT's מַעֲבֵר מִטָּה מוֹסְדָה has caused commentators no shortage of difficulty. I take the phrase to be a construct chain with the noun מוֹסְדָה being used metaphorically, giving rise to the translation "stroke of the appointed/predestined rod." For similar views, see Barthélemy, *Isaïe, Jérémie, Lamentations*, 219–20; Alexander, *Isaiah*, 1:487.

⁹⁶ Roberts correctly notes that, according to Isa 30:30–32, YHWH would beat Assyria with a different, yet unidentified rod. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 399. Given that similar language may have been used elsewhere to condemn Babylon (cf. Isa 14:5–6), I believe readers should intuit the latter as this new rod. Such an identification would also then suggest that the new rod, Babylon, would follow a similar trajectory as the old rod, Assyria (so also Richard L. Schultz, "Nationalism and Universalism in Isaiah," in *Interpreting Isaiah: Issues and Approaches* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009], 133). In fact, Laato is probably right to state that "the destruction of Assyria in the Book of Isaiah is a paradigm for the destruction of the enemies of Israel and Judah beginning with Babylonia." Laato, *About Zion*, 105.

⁹⁷ Goldingay seems to see DRA at work in Isa 30:27–33. As he states, "The belief in God's sovereignty in the nations' affairs goes beyond that in chapter 10. Yahweh not only uses their own instinct for self-aggrandizement, Yahweh inspires them in their actions—and thus leads them astray, because they come to their own destruction. The way of thinking recalls the motif of the stiffening of the Pharaoh's mind in Exodus. While human beings are responsible for their actions (cf. 'Pharaoh stiffened his resolve,' e.g.,

A second hint that Assyria's military campaign contributed to the nation's judgment may be present in Isaiah 8:5–10. In this section, YHWH continues to announce his plan to bring the armies of Assyria against Ephraim so that their devastating effects would be felt even in Judah.⁹⁸ While Isaiah 8:5–8 focuses on horrors that would come upon both the northern and southern kingdoms at the hands of the Assyrians, the tone of the prophecy changes in 8:9–10: “Break [רעו] peoples, and be shattered! (Take heed, all you distant countries of the earth!) Gird yourselves and be shattered! Gird yourselves and be shattered! Take counsel but it will be broken, speak a word but it will not be established, because God-is-with-us!”⁹⁹ The overall sense of the passage seems to be as follows: because of his commitment to his people, YHWH promises the demise of all warring nations (including Assyria) that attack the two houses of Israel.¹⁰⁰ However,

Exod. 8:15), the great Dramatist also inspires the actors to act the part in the play that contributes to the unfolding of its plot.” Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 173.

⁹⁸ I agree with those commentators who take “this people” (הַאֲמֹת הַזֶּה) in Isa 8:6 to refer to the northern kingdom (contra Stuart A. Irvine, *Isaiah, Ahaz, and the Syro-Ephraimitic Crisis*, SBL Dissertation [Atlanta: Scholars, 1990], 188–91). Such a conclusion is suggested by the prediction in Isa 8:3–4 as well as by the accusation that “this people” rejoiced in Rezin and the son of Remaliah (cf. Isa 7:1; so also Laato, *About Zion*, 104; Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 133–34). Additionally, I would argue that the literary context strongly suggests that the imperatives in vv. 9–10 are rhetorically addressed to Assyria. For others who understand Isa 8:9–10 to refer to Assyria either explicitly or implicitly, see Hom, *Characterization*, 35; Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39*, 82; Andrew H. Bartelt, *The Book around Immanuel: Style and Structure in Isaiah 2–12*, Biblical and Judaic Studies (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1996), 116; Childs, *Isaiah*, 74; Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 134; Mackay, *Isaiah 1–39*, 220; Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1–39*, 77; Oswalt, *Isaiah 1–39*, 228; Laato, *About Zion*, 104.

⁹⁹ While other aspects of this translation will be defended in the discussion that follows, two points may be addressed here. First, I take Isa 8:9b (“Take heed, all you distant countries of the earth!”) to be a parenthetical call for witnesses rather than as the second command in the series of imperatives addressed to the enemies of God's people. Such an interpretation better preserves the parallelisms that run through Isa 8:9–10, where every imperative directed towards Israel's enemies is followed by a prediction of defeat. Second, I translate עִמָּנוּ אֵל here as “God-is-with-us” because the prophet probably intended to ground his prophecy in the birth of the promised child (cf. Isa 7:14) and in God's commitment to Israel (similarly, see Alexander, *Isaiah*, 1:189; Irvine, *Isaiah, Ahaz*, 195).

¹⁰⁰ Conrad takes a different interpretation, arguing that 8:9–10 addresses the nations to be invaded rather than the invading nation. Accordingly, he understands the passage to lambast the uselessness of these nations' defenses in the face of the Lord's war on all the earth (see Conrad, *Reading Isaiah*, 55). However, Conrad's reading seems to neglect the immediate context: the prophet has not been discussing God's war upon all the earth, but his work of bringing Assyria against the Syro-Ephraimite coalition. As

ambiguity exists regarding the meaning of the initial command (רעו) in Isaiah 8:9.¹⁰¹

Some have suggested that רעו comes from the root רוע and should be translated “raise a shout.”¹⁰² However, the root רוע never occurs in the *qal* stem, making it an unlikely candidate for Isaiah 8:9. Others have raised the possibility that the command comes from רעה II (“to associate with”) and should be viewed as a command to band together or to unite.¹⁰³ While possible, this root is not used elsewhere in the OT to describe armies or peoples gathering together.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, the vowel pointing of the Masoretic text does not lend itself to this interpretation.¹⁰⁵ Thus, it seems right to reject רעה II as a possibility

Hom rightly states, “vv. 9–10 continue the passage by indicating that YHWH will retaliate and defeat the attacking nations, of which Assyria would surely have been foremost in the reader’s mind by way of its dominant presence in vv. 7–8.” Hom, *Characterization*, 33.

¹⁰¹ The LXX has γῶστε (“know”) in the place of the MT’s רעו. On the basis of this evidence, Kaiser argues that the Hebrew text should be read דעו and be translated “mark it” (see Kaiser, *Isaiah 1–12*, 187n1; see also Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 240nd). However, the difference between the LXX and the MT is best explained by positing the mistaken substitution of *dalet* for *resh*. So also Waard, *Handbook on Isaiah*, 37.

¹⁰² GKC, sec. 110f. See also Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 224n300; Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 94; Yehoshua Gitay, *Isaiah and His Audience: The Structure and Meaning of Isaiah 1–12*, SSN (Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum & Co., 1991), 154.

¹⁰³ See for instance Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 133; Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 352; Childs, *Isaiah*, 69–70; H. G. M. Williamson, “A Form Critical Reappraisal of Isaiah 8:9–10,” in *Partners with God: Theological and Critical Readings of the Bible in Honor of Marvin A. Sweeney*, ed. Shelley L. Birdsong and Serge Frolov, Claremont Studies in Hebrew Bible and Septuagint (Claremont, CA: Claremont Press, 2017), 153; Irvine, *Isaiah, Ahaz*, 194n56.

¹⁰⁴ Sources disagree regarding the occurrences of רעה II in the OT. BDB lists seven occurrences (Isa 11:7; Ps 37:3; Prov 13:20; 18:24; 22:24; 28:7; 29:3). HALOT omits two passages from BDB’s list (Ps 37:3 and Prov 18:24), while including an additional six (Judg 14:20; Isa 8:9; 44:20; Hos 12:2; Job 24:21; Ps 37:37). Even taking the unlikely view that every entry cited in BDB and HALOT is correctly understood to be a form of רעה II, one would find no examples where the verb is used of military or national alliances. Instead, the verb seems to be exclusively reserved for statements about personal companionship, whether literal or figurative. Thus, though Wildberger ultimately adopts the position that רעו is from רעה II, even he admits that this would be a unique use of the verb (see Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 352).

¹⁰⁵ On this point, see Waard, *Handbook on Isaiah*, 38. Relying on Rosenmüller’s work, Barthélemy argues for the possibility that the root רעע may have taken on a function equivalent to the root רעה II (“to associate with”) after the fashion of verbs like שחה (“to bow,” cf. שחה) and שסס (“to plunder,” cf. שסה). Barthélemy, *Isaïe, Jérémie, Lamentations*, 53. However, he fails to cite any other cases wherein forms from רעע function equivalently to רעה II. Moreover, this would still not address the objection that the

in favor of either רעע I (“to be evil” or “to do evil”) or רעע II (“to break” or “to be broken”). Some who opt for the latter root interpret the imperative in an intransitive, passive sense (“be broken”).¹⁰⁶ But there are problems with this position.¹⁰⁷ First, it disrupts the normal pattern of רעע II, which arguably does not occur as a *qal* finite verb without a direct object.¹⁰⁸ And second, it denudes the parallelism found within Isaiah 8:9–10, in which calls for enemy action are followed by pronouncements of defeat.¹⁰⁹ Thus, if understood as a form of רעע II, it seems more likely that רעו reflects a command to destroy.¹¹⁰ While this interpretation is plausible, it is at least equally likely that the verb רעו comes from the root רעע I.¹¹¹ In fact, it may be best to read the imperative as a *double entendre*.¹¹² If this view is adopted, Isaiah 8:9 would indicate that the Lord was

root רעה II is never used with respect to armies or peoples.

¹⁰⁶ This interpretation is reflected in English translations like the ESV, NASB, and NKJV.

¹⁰⁷ So also Williamson, “Isaiah 8:9–10,” 149.

¹⁰⁸ See Jer 15:12; Ps 2:9; Job 34:24. It is also possible that Jer 2:16 and Mic 5:5 should be added to this list, though the verb forms contained therein may not be from רעע II. The one possible exception to the pattern is Jer 11:16, where the form ורעו may be interpreted as an intransitive *qal* from רעע II. However, the verb in Jer 11:16 is disputed and is likely a form of רעע I (see for instance Barthélemy, *Isaïe, Jérémie, Lamentations*, 566). As such, there is no *clear* example of רעע II occurring in the *qal* stem as an intransitive finite verb.

¹⁰⁹ The verb רעו should be understood as parallel to התאזרו in 8:9c rather than והאזינו in 8:9b (so also Barthélemy, *Isaïe, Jérémie, Lamentations*, 52). As mentioned earlier, I would argue that 8:9b refers to a parenthetical call for witnesses (see n85). Thus, the poem consistently commands enemy activity (“break peoples,” “gird yourself,” “take counsel,” “speak a word”) before it predicts the enemy’s downfall (“be shattered,” “be shattered,” “it will be broken,” “it will not be established”).

¹¹⁰ Barthélemy believes this is the most likely explanation (see Barthélemy, *Isaïe, Jérémie, Lamentations*, 54; see also Oswalt, *Isaiah 1–39*, 224). If this reading is adopted, I would suggest that עמים may function as the direct object (“Break peoples and be shattered!”) rather than as a vocative (“Break, o peoples, and be shattered!”).

¹¹¹ So also Young, *Isaiah 1–18*, 307; Alexander, *Isaiah*, 1:188–89. Historically, some have adopted רעע I as the root while translating it to refer to “rage.” As Williamson rightly notes, such a translation “has no ancient support . . . and it does not seem to be paralleled anywhere else or be otherwise justified.” Young, “Isaiah 8:9–10,” 149.

¹¹² Roberts helpfully shows that the *double entendre* is a recurring literary feature in Isa 1–39; moreover, he rightly notes that modern readers are more likely to miss intended wordplay than they are to

commanding Israel’s enemy (i.e., Assyria) to take hostile action while implicitly describing such action as itself being evil.¹¹³ When read together with Isaiah 8:5–8, as well as in light of Isaiah’s other statements about YHWH’s use of the Assyrian nation,¹¹⁴ the prophecy in 8:9 would suggest that God was influencing Assyria towards a sinful endeavor. Moreover, given the predictions of destruction that immediately follow the commands to wage war (“Break peoples, and be shattered! . . . Gird yourselves and be shattered! Gird yourselves and be shattered!”), it would seem as though Isaiah 8:5–10 posits that Assyria would be judged for their sinful, yet divinely-mandated, acts of aggression against both the northern and southern kingdoms.

Third, Isaiah 17:1–14 also seems to imply that YHWH would hold Assyria to account for their war against Israel. Isaiah 17:1–3 predicts the destruction of the Syro-Ephraimite coalition—a prediction which God would bring to pass through the Assyrian army (Isa 7:7–17; 8:1–4).¹¹⁵ The passage then shifts its focus to what awaits the northern kingdom in particular (Isa 17:4–11).¹¹⁶ Their fate would be a bleak one, although the prophet does foresee the survival of a remnant who would repent after their day of judgment (Isa 17:7–8).¹¹⁷ After describing Israel’s impending humiliation, Isaiah turns his

mistakenly identify them. These observations lend indirect support for my contention regarding Isa 8:9. See J. J. M. Roberts, “Double Entendre in First Isaiah,” *CBQ* 54 (1992): 39–48.

¹¹³ Of course, since foreign armies were not actually being addressed by the prophet, the imperatives should be understood as a polemical characterization of Israel’s enemies rather than as a series of actual commands being delivered to them. Nevertheless, if the imperative is understood in the manner proposed, then it would function to characterize the Assyrian conquest as being immoral.

¹¹⁴ See nn79–82.

¹¹⁵ So also Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 242–43; Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 342–43; Oswalt, *Isaiah 1–39*, 349.

¹¹⁶ I agree with most commentators who take the northern kingdom to be the subject of Isa 17:4–11. See for instance Oswalt, *Isaiah 1–39*, 349; Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 242–43; Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39*, 141–43; Young, *Isaiah 1–18*, 470; Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 339.

¹¹⁷ While the reference to “man” (אדם) may indicate that Isa 17:7–8 refers to mankind turning to YHWH (see Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 255–56), the context seems to suggest a reference to Israel’s

attention towards the enemies of God’s people and predicts that annihilation (אִינְנוּ) would be “the portion (חֶלֶק) of those who raid us (שׁוֹסִינּוּ) and the lot (גּוֹרֵל) of those who plunder us (לְבַזִּינוּ)” (Isa 17:14b).¹¹⁸ Though the text addresses hostile nations in general, the passage seems to suit Assyria particularly well.¹¹⁹ First of all, Assyria was the nation that YHWH used to destroy Israel (cf. Isa 7:16–17; 8:3–8); as such, it seems natural to draw the conclusion that verses 12–14 apply to Assyria. Second, a reference to Assyria is made likely by the choice of the verbs שָׁסָה and בָּזָז since these were used to describe the Assyrian campaign against God’s people (cf. Isa 10:6; 10:13). Thus, while it is meaningful that the author does not explicitly name the enemies he has in mind,¹²⁰ readers have good reason to see a veiled reference to the nation of Assyria. Significantly,

repentance (so also Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 243). Jensen has helpfully demonstrated that a judgment-restoration pattern is typical of the book of Isaiah and that the promises of deliverance are no less Isaianic than the prophecies of doom. Moreover, he shows that the book of Isaiah testifies to a salvation-historical understanding of judgment and restoration. As Jensen states, “the ‘day of Yahweh’ is not so much an ‘either/or’ warning as something certain to come. . . . The ‘day of Yahweh’ is not the end, however, but a stage on the way to Yahweh’s salvation.” For his entire argument, see Jensen, “Weal and Woe,” 167–87.

¹¹⁸ The referent of “us” in Isa 17:14 is not immediately apparent. Roberts argues that the prophet speaks on behalf of Jerusalem, so that vv. 12–14 address any nation (including the northern kingdom) that may attempt an assault on the city of David (Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 244; see also Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 257). However, the context does not favor this interpretation as the fate of Jerusalem is not presently being discussed. Though these verses probably reflect Zion theology, Seitz is likely correct when he says that the prophet “adopted the promises of Zion’s final deliverance to the situation of Israel’s final survival from the assault of the nations” (Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39*, 143). Rather than indicating a focus on Jerusalem, Isaiah’s use of the first-person plural (“us”) shows a willingness to identify with the northern kingdom. Such an attitude would fit with the prophet’s belief that Judah and Ephraim comprised “the two houses of Israel” (cf. Isa 8:14) and that the division between these two kingdoms would be overcome in the future (cf. Isa 11:13).

¹¹⁹ I agree with Childs’s assessment of Isa 17:12–14 when he says, “The form is not that of a direct threat against Assyria. The enemy remains vague and undefined, yet an indirect threat is clearly intended.” Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis*, SBT (London: Cunningham and Sons, 1967), 53. For others who either see a subtle reference to Assyria or who claim that the Assyrian crisis stands as the background for the prophecy, see Alexander, *Isaiah*, 1:331–32, 340; Antti Laato, “Understanding Zion Theology in the Book of Isaiah,” in *Studies in Isaiah: History, Theology, and Reception*, ed. Tommy Wasserman, Greger Andersson, and David Willgren, LHBOTS (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2017), 45–46; Goldingay, “Theology of Isaiah,” 184; Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 160; Oswalt, *Isaiah 1–39*, 356; Young, *Isaiah 1–18*, 473; Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 339.

¹²⁰ See Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 160.

by describing Assyria's fate of as their "portion" (חלק) and their "lot" (גורל), Isaiah 17:14 may be invoking the principle of retributive justice: hostile nations (Assyria especially) who seek to raid (שׁוּסִינוּ) and plunder (לְבוּזֵינוּ) Israel can expect to receive only destruction as the spoils of their campaigns.¹²¹ If this is so, in light of YHWH's command "to take spoil and to seize plunder" in Isaiah 10:6 (ESV), then it would seem that Assyria was threatened with judgment for doing precisely what they were summoned to do.

Lastly, Isaiah 29:1–8 may also indicate that Assyria was to be judged for carrying out their divine assignment.¹²² The first half of the passage (vv. 1–4) describes YHWH's intention to cause Jerusalem distress (וְהִצִּיקוּתִי) and to bring them low through (Assyrian) military action.¹²³ In the second half (vv. 5–8), God makes the promise that the multitude of nations that come up against Jerusalem will all be destroyed in a flash.¹²⁴ Though the passage refers to "the multitude of all the nations" (הַמִּזְוֹן כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם), it seems probable that Assyria would have been (at the very least) included among the nations doomed for attacking Jerusalem.¹²⁵ This would then suggest that Assyria was sent by

¹²¹ While neither word is used exclusively to refer to the spoils of war, both חלק (cf. Gen 14:24; Num 31:36; 1 Sam 30:24) and גורל (cf. Joel 3:3; Obad 11; Nah 3:10) can be used by OT writers to refer to plunder. Given the present context, it seems highly probable that Isa 17:14 uses both words in just this fashion.

¹²² For a defense of reading these verses as a unit, see Robin L. Routledge, "The Siege and Deliverance of the City of David in Isaiah 29:1–8," *TynBul* 43, no. 1 (1992): 181–90.

¹²³ As Roberts rightly comments, "Yahweh describes his coming siege of Jerusalem as involving the typical siege equipment and tactics common at the time, and while he uses the first person to attribute this action to the divine will, it seems probably in the light of v. 7 that the actual human agents God will use for these actions are the troops of the Assyrians and their supporting vassals." Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 364.

¹²⁴ I agree with interpreters who take Isa 29:5–8 to be a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem's enemies. For others who take this position, see for instance Laato, "Zion Theology," 38–39; Routledge, "Siege and Deliverance," 181; Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 160; Oswalt, *Isaiah 1–39*, 528–29; Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 364–65; Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 237; Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 496–97; Mackay, *Isaiah 1–39*, 600; Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39*, 213–14. For a defense of the view that Isa 29:1–7 should be read as a consistent threat against Jerusalem, see G. C. I. Wong, "On 'Visits' and 'Visions' in Isaiah XXIX 6–7," *VT* 45, no. 3 (1995): 370–76.

¹²⁵ While Seitz is right to say that the divine actions described in Isa 29:1–8 are not

YHWH to wage war on Jerusalem (Isa 29:3–4) *and* that they would then be eviscerated *for waging war* on Jerusalem (Isa 29:7–8). Such observations seem to imply both that Assyria would be judged for their hostile actions against Israel and that God moved them towards those same hostile actions to begin with.¹²⁶

If I have rightly understood these four passages (Isa 30:27–33; 8:9–10; 17:1–14; 29:1–8), and taken into account the prophet’s clear and consistent testimony regarding YHWH’s use of Assyria, then Isaiah can be said to have affirmed these three propositions: (1) YHWH moved Assyria to engage in military campaigns against Israel; (2) YHWH viewed those military campaigns as sinful, and (3) YHWH would punish Assyria for those same military campaigns.¹²⁷ In other words, Isaiah seems to present Assyria as having been the object of DRA. While the book does not reveal the motivations that lay behind God’s reprobating influence against Assyria,¹²⁸ it provides

“equivalent” with any particular assault on Jerusalem (see Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39*, 214), the context and the descriptions employed clearly call to mind the Assyrian campaign (so also Routledge, “Siege and Deliverance,” 182; Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 333; Oswalt, *Isaiah 1–39*, 527; Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 363–64; Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 237–38; Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 494–96; Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1–39*, 231; Childs, *Isaiah*, 217–18). Perhaps Mackay is correct to interpret the text’s lack of specificity as implying that the events around 701 BCE foreshadowed future deliverances of Jerusalem (see Mackay, *Isaiah 1–39*, 606).

¹²⁶ Many commentators note that, according to Isa 29:1–8, the humans involved in besieging Jerusalem acted as agents of the divine will. See for instance Oswalt, *Isaiah 1–39*, 527; Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 364; Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 237–38; Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 496; Mackay, *Isaiah 1–39*, 602–3; Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1–39*, 231.

¹²⁷ This does not negate the fact that God was also punishing Assyria for their perverse motives and their arrogance. Instead, Isaiah indicates that Assyria was guilty of multiple offenses for which they would be devastated.

¹²⁸ Isaiah does not disclose why YHWH chose Assyria to serve as the instrument of his wrath. As such, I have little confidence that readers can discern whether Assyria was subjected to retributive or non-retributive DRA.

enough detail to describe such influence as an active,¹²⁹ immediate,¹³⁰ and non-eternal form of DRA.¹³¹

Other Cases of DRA

While most of the Isaianic materials related to DRA have to do with Israel and with Assyria, there are two cases that describe other objects of God's reprobating influence. The first involves the nation of Egypt. In Isaiah 19, YHWH announces his intention to come in judgment against Egypt and its false gods (19:1). While they would take recourse in their occultism and their magical arts (19:3b), Egypt would find itself powerless against YHWH, who would subject them to the rule of a cruel master (19:4).¹³² Moreover, the Lord would dry up the Nile and its many channels, thereby devastating the nation's economy (19:5–9). What is of interest to this dissertation however, is that, as part

¹²⁹ God is not depicted as withholding from Assyria what they would need to refrain from engaging in hostile action; instead, God brings the Assyrians (יביא; cf. Isa 7:17), he summons them (ישרק; cf. Isa 7:18ff), he causes them to rise up (מעלה; cf. Isa 8:7), he sends and commands them (אשלחנו and אצונו; cf. Isa 10:6), and he wields them (מניפו; cf. Isa 10:15). Such language seems more in keeping with an active view of DRA.

¹³⁰ Isaiah does not describe a secondary agent that mediates between God and Assyria; instead, he presents God as directly wielding the Assyrian armies (cf. Isa 10:15). In fact, the book of Isaiah places such an emphasis on the ultimacy of divine agency that YHWH can speak in the first person of Assyria's assault on Jerusalem (cf. Isa 29:3; see also Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 364).

¹³¹ Someone could argue that the Assyrians were objects of eternal DRA on the basis of Isa 14:4–21, since some believe that Isa 14:4ff refers to the death of Sargon II (see Aster, *Reflections of Empire*, 240–44; Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 207). However, even if Isa 14:4 refers to the king of Assyria, it remains unclear that the author intended Isa 14:4–21 to be read as a literal description of his eternal state. On the contrary, given that (1) Isa 14:4ff is described as a parable (משל; cf. Isa 14:3), (2) the earth and the trees are poetically described as singing for joy (Isa 14:7–8), and (3) the passage may reflect the use of Canaanite mythology (Isa 14:12–14), it seems more likely that the unit is a figurative poem reflecting on the king's mortal death (contra Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 143–44).

¹³² Hays argues that Isaiah's use of the סכר root in 19:4 evidences a *double entendre* typical of Isaiah. In his view, the verb refers both to damming up Egypt (which would lead nicely to vv. 5–10) and to delivering Egypt into the hand of a harsh ruler. See Christopher B. Hays, "Damming Egypt/Damning Egypt: The Paronomasia of *skr* and the Unity of Isa 19,1–10," *ZAW* 120, no. 4 (2008): 616. In addition, Roberts argues that, though the MT form is plural (אדנים), the singular adjective (קשה) demonstrates that a lone master is intended (see Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 254).

of his punitive work, YHWH would “provoke” (וּסְכַסְכַּתִּי) the nation to turn against itself so that “every man would wage war against his brother and each against his friend; city against city, kingdom against kingdom” (19:2).¹³³ Moreover, the Lord would make use of the nation’s wise men and counselors in order to lead the kingdom astray. As Isaiah 19:13–14 states, “The princes of Tanis have become fools, the princes of Memphis have been deceived. They, the cornerstone of her tribes, have caused Egypt to go astray. YHWH has mixed within her a spirit of confusion so that they cause Egypt go astray in all its doings, as when a drunkard is made to fall into his vomit.” Such divine activity seems like a case of DRA, since YHWH here speaks of his intention to provoke the Egyptians towards sinful self-destruction. Furthermore, the opening references to Egypt’s idols (19:1) and its idolatrous practices (19:3) may suggest that God’s reprobating influence would be an act of retribution against idolatry.¹³⁴ Additionally, a confluence of immediate and mediate DRA seems to be involved: God immediately spurs the Egyptian society towards violence,¹³⁵ and he directly deludes Egypt’s counselors so that, through

¹³³ Aster argues that this passage fits within the historical context of the last third of the eighth century, as various centers of Egyptian power struggled to respond to the threat of the Assyrian military campaign in 734 BC. Shawn Zelig Aster, “Isaiah 19: ‘Burden of Egypt’ and Neo-Assyrian Imperial Policy,” *JAOS* 135, no. 3 (2015): 469.

¹³⁴ While Roberts is surely right to note that the oracle is intended to persuade Judah not to build alliances with Egypt (see Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 255), the prophecy does seem to contain a polemic against the latter’s idolatrous practices (cf. Isa 19:1, 3). Even the reference to the drying of the Nile may have a similar function. As Marlow states, “It [i.e. Isa 19:5–10] serves further to highlight the contrast between the deities upon which the Egyptians rely and the supreme power of YHWH. Both the idols of Egypt . . . and Pharaoh’s wisest advisors . . . are derided as weak and ineffective compared with YHWH. In verses 5–10, in a dramatic and climactic passage, the Nile—source of life and cosmic order for the Egyptian nation—is also shown to fail, symbolizing the end of Egyptian life and society.” J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 559, 756.

¹³⁵ Isa 19:2 seems to speak of YHWH exercising a direct influence on Egyptian society in general (see Alviero Niccacci, “Isaiah XVIII–XX from an Egyptological Perspective,” *VT* 48, no. 2 [1998]: 217). So Calvin comments, “[YHWH] inflames their minds for battle, and prompts them to slay each other by mutual wounds.” John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, trans. William Pringle, 500th anniversary ed., vol. 2, *Calvin’s Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 50. Thus, Isa 19 seems to present God as directly inciting individuals towards violence while also making use of the nation’s counselors to promote Egypt’s self-destruction.

their mediation, he might mislead the nation at large (Isa 19:13–14).¹³⁶ Lastly, given the actions taken by YHWH and the lack of any reference to eternal states, it seems best to understand Isaiah 19 as portraying an active, non-eternal form of DRA.¹³⁷

A final possible example of DRA in the book of Isaiah is found in chapter 44. Towards the end of a polemical satire against idolatry (Isa 44:9–20),¹³⁸ Isaiah 44:18 says of those who manufacture idols, “They do not know nor do they understand, for he has smeared (טח) their eyes to prevent them from seeing, [to prevent] their hearts from gaining insight.” While other readings are possible, it seems likely that טח should be understood as a transitive verb with YHWH as the implicit subject.¹³⁹ Thus, Isaiah sees YHWH himself as being finally behind the folly of idolatry.¹⁴⁰ Given that this divinely

¹³⁶ If the “spirit of confusion” (רוח עושים) is taken as a personal agent, then Isa 19:14 would refer to two mediating agents: the spirit and Egypt’s wise men (see Hamori, “Spirit of Falsehood,” 23). However, I tentatively take the expression as a figurative reference to God’s influence upon the minds of the Egyptian wise men (cf. Isa 29:10).

¹³⁷ Intriguingly, Isa 19 does not view judgment as YHWH’s final purpose for Egypt. As is well known, Isa 19:19–25 contain a shocking promise of salvation for Egypt, who would be regarded as YHWH’s people after they acknowledge his sovereignty (Isa 19:18). However, this promise of future salvation does not nullify or diminish the reality of the judgment described in 19:1–17 (rightly Aster, “Isaiah 19,” 465; Niccacci, “Isaiah XVIII–XX,” 222; Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 346).

¹³⁸ It seems likely that Isaiah here mocks the idolatry of nations in general rather than of any nation in particular. So Clifford rightly observes that “[the] comparison between the nations and Israel as they line up before Yahweh is central to the chapter [i.e. Isa 44]. The idol passage, with its vivid narratives, accentuates the infinite series of purposeless acts imposed upon the nations.” Richard J. Clifford, “The Function of Idol Passages in Second Isaiah,” *CBQ* 42 (1980): 463.

¹³⁹ The intransitive position is less feasible since the root טח seems to be derived from טוח, which regularly takes an object in the *Qal* stem (cf. Lev 14:42; Ezek 13:10–12, 14–15; 22:28; 1 Chr 29:4). Moreover, the third singular form makes more likely a singular subject (which weakens the argument for עיניהם, “their eyes,” as the subject). Given Isaiah’s stress on the incapacity of idols to do anything (Isa 41:23–24; 44:12–20; 46:1–7; 57:13; see also Davies, *Double Standards*, 102–3) and his other references to YHWH’s hardening activities, it seems more likely that the Lord is doing the smearing. For others who take the verb transitively with YHWH as the subject, see McLaughlin, “Their Hearts were Hardened,” 12–14; Alexander, *Isaiah*, 2:170; Calvin, *Commentary on Isaiah*, 3:376–78; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 2002), 238–39; John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 183n60.

¹⁴⁰ Carr seems to come to the same conclusion, as he posits an allusion from Isa 44:18 back to Isa 6:9–10. See William W. Carr Jr., “Will Just Any ‘God’ Do? Isaiah’s Answer for the Question of

induced lack of sense results in shame for the idolater (Isa 44:9–11), it seems reasonable to conclude that verse 18 describes a case of DRA.¹⁴¹ And while there is insufficient evidence to determine whether God’s negative influence is portrayed as retributive or non-retributive, the text does supply enough detail to infer that it is active, immediate, and non-eternal.¹⁴²

Summary of DRA in Isaiah

It is difficult to deny the significance and the variety of DRA within the book of Isaiah. First of all, the significance of DRA emerges not only from Isaiah’s repeated references to the concept, but also from its place within Isaiah’s view of history and of the world. Both Israel’s experience of exile and its life after exile are explained by recourse to DRA (Isa 6:9–10; 8:14–16; 29:9–14; 63:17; 64:4–6). Moreover, Assyria, God’s chosen instrument of judgment, is also described as an object of divine reprobating influence (Isa 10:5ff).¹⁴³ If that is not enough, Isaiah goes on to present DRA in global terms: not only are the activities of specific nations like Israel (Isa 6:9–10, et al.), Assyria (Isa 10:5ff), and Egypt (Isa 19:1–14) due to DRA, but idolatry *in general* results from God’s reprobating influence (Isa 44:18).¹⁴⁴ Such observations should keep interpreters from understating DRA’s importance to Isaianic theology. Secondly, an examination of

Theological Pluralism,” *Concordia Journal* 39, no. 1 (2013): 41.

¹⁴¹ As Calvin provocatively puts it, “The reason now assigned is not intended to lessen their guilt, but to shew how monstrous and detestable [idolatry] is; for men would never be so foolish, if the vengeance of heaven did not drive them to ‘a reprobate mind.’” Calvin, *Commentary on Isaiah*, 2:376.

¹⁴² If I am right to view YHWH as the subject of נָט , then Isa 44:18 would be presenting God taking immediate action against idol manufacturers. Moreover, since the book as a whole does not seem to refer to eternal judgment, the “shame” spoken of in vv. 9–11 probably refer to a negative, earthly fate.

¹⁴³ And given Assyria’s typological function within Isaiah, readers should see Babylon as following the same pattern. See Hom, *Characterizations*, 190–93.

¹⁴⁴ Such a thought may not be unique within the OT, as Deut 4:19–20 may provide a similar witness.

this theme shows that Isaiah did not adopt a monolithic view of the concept; instead, he attests to variety within God’s reprobating agency. He describes both active (Isa 6:9–10; 10:5ff; 19:1–3, 14; 29:9–14; 44:18; 63:17; 64:4–6) and passive (Isa 8:14–16) forms of DRA. He testifies to mediate (Isa 6:9–10; 8:14–16; 29:9–14), immediate (Isa 10:5ff; 44:18; 63:17; 64:4–6), and even compound (Isa 19:1–3, 14) instances. And though he sometimes explains DRA as an act of retribution (Isa 6:9–10; 8:14–16; 19:1–3, 14; 29:9–14), he elsewhere leaves the question of God’s motivations unanswered (Isa 10:5ff; 44:18; 63:17; 64:4–6). From this, it should be clear that Isaiah bears powerful witness to the multifaceted nature of DRA.¹⁴⁵

DRA in the Book of Jeremiah

Unlike the book of Isaiah, Jeremiah¹⁴⁶ makes only a modest contribution to a study of DRA.¹⁴⁷ In fact, the only clear instance of reprobating agency reported in the

¹⁴⁵ In addition to the passages already cited, Davies believes that Isa 48:8 also bears witness to DRA against Israel. However, I am not persuaded that the text carries the import that Davies claims. For his argument, see Davies, *Double Standards*, 117–18.

¹⁴⁶ The problems related to the textual history of the book of Jeremiah are well documented and are beyond the scope of this project. For brief overviews of the relationship between MT Jeremiah and LXX Jeremiah, see C. L. Crouch, *An Introduction to the Study of Jeremiah*, T & T Clark Approaches to Biblical Studies (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2017), 31–37; Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 3rd ed. [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012], 286–89). In keeping with most final form approaches to Jeremiah, the observations that follow are based on the MT edition of the book.

¹⁴⁷ Two other possible examples of DRA within Jeremiah should be briefly discussed. First, Jer 52:2–3 (cf. 2 Kgs 24:19–20) may be understood to mean that Zedekiah’s evildoing, which resulted in exile, was due to God’s wrath against Jerusalem and Judah. While this reading is possible, the text’s brevity and ambiguity cloud the meaning of the passage (see my discussion of 2 Kgs 24:19–20 in chap. 4, s.v. “DRA in the Book of Kings”); also see William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 440; John Bright, *Jeremiah*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1984), 266; William McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 1362. Second, one could infer that Jeremiah’s affirmation of the necessity of the new covenant implies a passive sort of DRA. In other words, one could argue that the prophet’s teaching regarding Israel’s inability to obey (Jer 13:23; 17:1) and YHWH’s promise to grant that ability at a future time (Jer 24:7; 31:31–34; 32:40) logically suggests that YHWH withheld that ability during the period leading up to the exile. While I believe such an argument may be plausible on a theological level, I do not think it can be shown that Jeremiah intended for readers to draw such a conclusion. On Israel’s moral inability and YHWH’s initiative in granting repentance in the book of Jeremiah, see J. G. McConville, *Judgment and Promise: An Interpretation of the*

book resembles a phenomenon already seen in both Deuteronomy and Isaiah¹⁴⁸: namely, that of YHWH raising up an enemy nation against Judah/Israel only to hold them accountable for their acts of aggression.¹⁴⁹ In Jeremiah, Babylon serves as YHWH's instrument of punishment (Jer 5:14–17; 25:8–11; 34:21–22; 51:20–23) which would likewise be punished (Jer 25:12–14).¹⁵⁰ While the text posits their pride (Jer 50:29–32),¹⁵¹ sadistic glee (Jer 50:11),¹⁵² and idolatry (Jer 50:38; 51:47, 52) as grounds for their condemnation,¹⁵³ Jeremiah also claims that Babylon would be punished for sacking Israel (Jer 30:16–17, 20; 50:15–20; 51:24, 34–40, 49–50) and for destroying the temple (Jer 50:28; 51:11).¹⁵⁴ Since these latter two actions can be traced to YHWH's own influence

Book of Jeremiah (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1993), 92–103; Hamilton, *God's Glory*, 217–22.

¹⁴⁸ Shead sees Jeremiah's ministry as an additional instance of DRA. He argues that, like Isaiah, Jeremiah was given his prophetic mandate in order to produce hardness of heart. See Andrew G. Shead, *A Mouth Full of Fire: The Word of God in the Words of Jeremiah*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012), 219, 229. While a theological case may be made for such a position, the text of Jeremiah itself provides no explicit support for Shead's contention.

¹⁴⁹ Others have noted the similarities between Jeremiah's depiction of Babylon and Isaiah's depiction of Assyria. See for instance J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 559, 756; Leslie C. Allen, *Jeremiah*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 287–88; Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 37–52*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 456.

¹⁵⁰ In commenting on Jeremiah's application of the "cup of wrath" imagery to Babylon, Reimer rightly says, "Babylon was Yahweh's instrument of punishment; but her *משפט* has come, and Yahweh is to punish Babylon also." David J. Reimer, *The Oracles against Babylon in Jeremiah 50–51: A Horror among the Nations* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1993), 238. For others who make similar observations, see House, *Old Testament Theology*, 314; Allen, *Jeremiah*, 287–88, 513; Louis Stulman, *Order amid Chaos: Jeremiah as Symbolic Tapestry* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 77, 96; Klaas Smelik, "The Function of Jeremiah 50 and 51 in the Book of Jeremiah," in *Reading the Book of Jeremiah: A Search for Coherence*, ed. Martin Kessler (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 92.

¹⁵¹ Rightly House, *Old Testament Theology*, 323.

¹⁵² See Shead, *Mouth Full of Fire*, 210.

¹⁵³ House argues that YHWH punished Babylon's idolatry on the grounds of both his general revelation regarding the folly of idolatry and the special revelation granted to Nebuchadnezzar through Daniel. See House, *Old Testament Theology*, 325.

¹⁵⁴ For others who similarly observe that Jeremiah presents Babylon's destruction to have been a punishment for their military actions against Judah, see Pamela J. Scalise, "Justice and Judgment in the

upon Babylon (cf. Jer 5:14–18; 7:14; 19:6–15; 25:8–11; 26:6), it seems warranted to conclude that the Chaldeans were objects of DRA.¹⁵⁵

DRA in the Book of Ezekiel

According to Michael Lyons, the book of Ezekiel “represents a response to the traumatic events of the sixth century BCE” and is an attempt “to address the problems and questions caused by the trauma of deportation, and [to] create hope for his community.”¹⁵⁶ While it may not be as prominent in Ezekiel as in Isaiah, DRA plays a role in how the book achieves these aims. To be specific, the book of Ezekiel turns to DRA as part of its explanation for both Israel’s exile and Israel’s future salvation.

DRA as an Explanation for Exile

Though the book of Ezekiel repeatedly charges Israel with responsibility for their own exile, Ezekiel 20 also indicates that YHWH played a behind-the-scenes role in the nation’s downfall.¹⁵⁷ Specifically, Ezekiel 20:25–26 suggests that YHWH negatively

Book of Jeremiah: Discerning the Boundaries of God’s Wrath,” *ExAud* 89–105, no. 20 (2004): 95–96; Kenneth T. Aitken, “The Oracles against Babylon in Jeremiah 50–51: Structures and Perspectives,” *TynBul* 35 (1984): 35–36, 49–50, 53, 56; J. G. Amesz, “A God of Vengeance? Comparing YHWH’s Dealings with Judah and Babylon in the Book of Jeremiah,” in Kessler, *Reading Jeremiah*, 114; Smelik, “Function of Jeremiah 50 and 51,” 92; Allen, *Jeremiah*, 513; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 559, 756–57, 767; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 37–52*, 456; Tremper Longman III, *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, NIBC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008), 307. Though Reimer argues that the notion of retribution against Babylon was a late and supplementary development, even he admits that the MT attributes the destruction of Babylon to divine punishment for what they did to Zion (see Reimer, *Oracles against Babylon*, 242–43, 290).

¹⁵⁵ Like the pictures of YHWH’s DRA against foreign nations provided by Deuteronomy and Isaiah, Jeremiah’s depiction of God’s influence on Babylon should be understood as immediate, active, and non-eternal. Moreover, although DRA plays a relatively small role in Jeremiah, it is used to account for events of supreme importance in Israel’s history, as both the exile and the return from exile are tied to God’s reprobating influence against Babylon.

¹⁵⁶ Michael A. Lyons, *An Introduction to the Study of Ezekiel*, T & T Clark Approaches to Biblical Studies (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2015), 115, 183. Also see Henry McKeating, *Ezekiel*, OTG (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 73–78.

¹⁵⁷ Joyce wrongly concludes that, in Ezek 20:25–26, Israel’s responsibility for their sins is subsumed by Ezekiel’s theocentric focus. See Paul Joyce, *Divine Initiative and Human Response in Ezekiel*, JSOTSup (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 128. Such a position is hard to

influenced Israel through the propagation of “no-good laws” so that his people might be decimated through the exile. Since this reading is debated,¹⁵⁸ a closer examination of these verses is required.

Ezekiel 20 recalls a confrontation the prophet had with the elders of the exilic community during the seventh year of their exile.¹⁵⁹ According to verse 1, the elders of Israel approached Ezekiel in order to seek some information from YHWH. However, according to verses 2–3, YHWH refused to be consulted by them. Ezekiel 20:4–31 then explains why YHWH rebuffed the elders’ inquiry: he would not provide them with answers because Israel had refused to live according to the Lord’s covenant stipulations throughout its entire history.¹⁶⁰ As such, the book recounts the “abominations of [Israel’s] fathers” (cf. 20:4) in five stages: the abominations of Israel in Egypt (vv. 5–9), the abominations of the first wilderness generation (vv. 10–17), the abominations of the

maintain given the fact that YHWH repeatedly rebukes Israel for their sins throughout Ezek 20:1–44.

¹⁵⁸ Hahn and Bergsma are right to refer to these verses as “one of the most infamous interpretive cruxes of the book of Ezekiel.” Scott Walker Hahn and John Sietze Bergsma, “What Laws Were ‘Not Good’? A Canonical Approach to the Theological Problem of Ezekiel 20:25–26,” *JBL* 123, no. 2 (2004): 201.

¹⁵⁹ For the significance of the year in which this exchange took place, see Ronald E. Clements, *Ezekiel*, Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 89.

¹⁶⁰ Ezekiel provides a polemical summary of Israel’s history that is particularly focused on the nation’s unrelenting sinfulness. As Darr states, “In 20.1–44, Ezekiel reworks Israel’s *Heilsgeschichte* into a story of divine determination in the face of unrelieved human recalcitrance.” Kathryn Pfisterer Darr, “Ezekiel’s Justifications of God: Teaching Troubling Texts,” *JSOT* 55 (1992): 98. So also Clement, *Ezekiel*, 90; Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 614; Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Message of Ezekiel: A New Heart and a New Spirit*, Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 156; Lyle Eslinger, “Ezekiel 20 and the Metaphor of Historical Teleology: Concepts of Biblical History,” *JSOT* 81 (1998): 98; Gili Kugler, “The Cruel Theology of Ezekiel 20,” *ZAW* 129, no. 1 (2017): 51; Kelvin G. Friebel, “The Decrees of Yahweh That Are ‘Not Good’: Ezekiel 20:25–26,” in *Seeking Out the Wisdom of the Ancients: Essays Offered to Honor Michael V. Fox on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Ronald L. Troxel, Kelvin G. Friebel, and Dennis R. Magary (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 21–22; Corrine Patton, “‘I Myself Gave Them Laws That Were Not Good’: Ezekiel 20 and the Exodus Tradition,” *JSOT* 69 (1996): 74–75; Preston M. Sprinkle, “Law and Life: Leviticus 18.5 in the Literary Framework of Ezekiel,” *JSOT* 31, no. 3 (2007): 285.

second wilderness generation (vv. 18–26), the abominations of Israel in the land (vv. 27–29), and the abominations of the exilic community (vv. 30–31).¹⁶¹ Ezekiel’s historical overview reveals some consistencies regarding the nature of Israel’s sins (i.e., they consistently rebelled against YHWH and worshipped idols) and regarding the explanation for the nation’s survival (i.e., God did not destroy the nation for his name’s sake).¹⁶² In addition to displaying clear patterns,¹⁶³ Ezekiel 20:5–31 also evidences an escalation with respect to God’s acts of judgment.¹⁶⁴ So for instance, while Israel was not punished for their sins in Egypt,¹⁶⁵ the wilderness generations were subjected to penalties of increasing

¹⁶¹ For similar conclusions regarding the structure of Ezek 20:5–31, see Dalit Rom-Shiloni, “Facing Destruction and Exile: Inner-Biblical Exegesis in Jeremiah and Ezekiel,” *ZAW* 117 (2005): 199; Sprinkle, “Law and Life,” 286; Rusty Osborne, “Elements of Irony: History and Rhetoric in Ezekiel 20:1–44,” *CTR* 9, no. 1 (2011): 5–6; Daniel I. Block, “The God Ezekiel Wants Us to Meet: Theological Perspectives on the Book of Ezekiel,” in *The God Ezekiel Creates*, ed. Paul M. Joyce and Dalit Rom-Shiloni, LHBOTS (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2015), 173n49; Wright, *Ezekiel*, 157. For a helpful summary of various proposed structures for Ezek 20:3–31, see Leslie C. Allen, “The Structuring of Ezekiel’s Revisionist History Lesson (Ezekiel 20:3–31),” *CBQ* 54 (1992): 448–52.

¹⁶² In his study of Ezek 20, Eslinger wrongly concludes that YHWH’s refusal to destroy Israel was not a free act of grace. According to Eslinger, God only showed Israel “grace” because his obsession with his own reputation essentially forced his hand (see Eslinger, “Ezekiel 20,” 104–5). However, Ezek 20:17 points to YHWH’s pity as a reason why he chose not to destroy his people (ותחס עיני עליהם משחתם); as such, readers should not overlook God’s care for Israel as an explanation for his self-restraint. Moreover, Eslinger’s claim does not comport with Ezekiel’s depiction of YHWH’s initial, gracious choice of Israel (cf. Ezek 16:6–14). Furthermore, the book of Ezekiel elsewhere shows that God can act simultaneously out of a concern for his reputation and out of compassion for his people (cf. Ezek 39:25). In addition, scholars have shown that the book of Ezekiel *does* depict YHWH to be a God of grace and compassion (see Block, “Theological Perspectives,” 171–92; Lyons, *Introduction to Ezekiel*, 143–46). For all these reasons, Eslinger’s denial of grace in Ezek 20 fails to persuade.

¹⁶³ For a discussion of some of these patterns, see Block, *Ezekiel*, 621–24; Eslinger, “Ezekiel 20,” 98.

¹⁶⁴ So also Block, *Ezekiel*, 624; Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 20–48*, WBC (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 11; Ralph W. Klein, *Ezekiel: The Prophet and His Message* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), 75–76.

¹⁶⁵ In an earlier work, Kugler suggested that Israel may have been unpunished while in Egypt because they had not yet been given the law (Kugler, “Cruel Theology,” 53n21). However, Kugler has departed from her earlier reading, as she now claims that the Egypt generation was punished with a detour in the wilderness (see Gili Kugler, *When God Wanted to Destroy the Chosen People: Biblical Traditions and Theology on the Move*, BZAW [Berlin: de Gruyter, 2019], 153n19). I find her earlier position more tenable since it seems unlikely that Ezekiel presents the journey through the wilderness as a punishment; instead, the trek through the wilderness seems to be a necessary step in Israel’s acquisition of the promised

severity: the first wilderness generation may have been barred from the promised land, but the second received the promise that the nation would be scattered upon foreign lands.¹⁶⁶ Moreover, the first wilderness generation was subjected to a single punishment (i.e., no entry into the land) but the second generation was treated to a twofold penalty¹⁶⁷: the promise of exile (v. 23) and the provision of “no-good laws” (v. 25). But how should one understand the relationship between the promise of exile and the provision of the “no-good laws”?¹⁶⁸ I would argue that the distribution of “no-good laws” functioned to harden Israel in their sin, thereby ensuring the fulfillment of the promise of exile in verse 23.¹⁶⁹ A few observations lend credence to this claim.

land.

¹⁶⁶ Ezek 20:23 tells readers that while Israel was in the wilderness, YHWH swore that they would experience the exile. But where in the Pentateuch is such an oath described? Kugler argues that the Torah never refers to such an oath; as a result, she views this promise of future exile as a theological innovation that allows Ezekiel to explain how YHWH could pour out his wrath on the wilderness generation without failing to bring them into the land as he had promised (see Kugler, “Cruel Theology,” 50–52). However, Kugler overlooks a few Pentateuchal texts that may describe what Ezekiel had in mind. For instance, Hahn and Bergsma may be correct to identify the Lord’s oath in Ezek 20:23 with Deut 32:40 or Deut 4:27 (see Hahn and Bergsma, “What Laws were ‘Not Good’?,” 204–5). Osborne posits Deut 28:64 as another possible source (see Osborne, “Elements of Irony,” 11), while Allen (*Ezekiel 20–48*, 11) and Zimmerli (Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24*, Hermeneia [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979], 411) cite Exod 32:34. Additional candidates might include the threats of exile found in Leviticus (cf. Lev 18:24–30; 20:22; 26:33–46). Though these texts in Leviticus do not contain unconditional promises of expulsion, they do contain warnings whose conditions (at least according to Ezekiel) had already been met by the time of the second wilderness generation.

¹⁶⁷ Rightly, Darr, “Ezekiel’s Justifications,” 99; Klein, *Ezekiel*, 76.

¹⁶⁸ Of course, this question only makes sense if v. 25 actually asserts that God gave Israel “no-good laws.” Richter disputes this reading by claiming that v. 25 should be read as a rhetorical question; see Von Hans-Friedemann Richter, “Schädliche Gesetze Gottes? (zu Ez 20,25–26),” *ZAW* 119 (2007): 616–17. However, Richter’s interpretation should be rejected since (as he himself admits) his reading lacks grammatical support from the text. As Davis rightly observes, “There is no syntactical indication that these statements are not to be read in the same declarative manner as the rest of the survey.” Ellen F. Davis, *Swallowing the Scroll: Textuality and the Dynamics of Discourse in Ezekiel’s Prophecy*, JSOTSup (Sheffield, England: Almond, 1989), 113.

¹⁶⁹ For others who take a similar position, see Kugler, *When God Wanted to Destroy*, 153; Hahn and Bergsma, “What Laws were ‘Not Good’?” 218; Eslinger, “Ezekiel 20,” 108–9; Patton, “Ezekiel 20,” 89; Michael A. Fishbane, “Sin and Judgment in the Prophecies of Ezekiel,” *Int* 38, no. 2 (1984): 142–43; Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 368–69; Allen, *Ezekiel 20–48*, 12; Ludwig Köhler, *Old Testament Theology*, trans. A. S. Todd (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1957), 195; Franz

First of all, the flow of thought within Ezekiel 20:21b–26 suggests that verses 25–26 are intended to clarify how the Lord was going to fulfill the divine oath in verse 23. In my judgment, Ezek 20:21b–26 forms a section within 20:18–26 that is focused on God’s multifaceted response to the transgressions of the second wilderness generation. Hence, Ezekiel 20:21b–22 informs readers that, in the face of the nation’s covenant disloyalty (Ezek 20:21a), God’s concern for his reputation prevented him from pouring out his anger and destroying his people (Ezek 20:21b–22). However, Ezekiel 20:23–26 goes on to show that self-restraint was not YHWH’s only response. In addition to temperance, God also promised future exile (Ezek 20:23) as the penalty for the covenant breaking described in verse 21a. Such a reading is suggested by the clause initial וְגַ in verse 23, which forms a logical connection between God’s oath in 20:23 and the preceding verses (20:21b–22). This would then suggest that the promise of exile was motivated by the transgressions described in verse 21a. Such a reading may suggest that the clause initial וְיִ in verse 24 introduces the ground for the Lord’s statement in verse 25 rather than (or in addition to) verse 23.¹⁷⁰ Moreover, since Ezekiel 20:24 essentially

Hesse, *Das Verstockungsproblem im alten Testament: eine frömmigkeitsgeschichtliche Untersuchung*, BZAW (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1955), 70–71.

¹⁷⁰ The relation of v. 24 to its surrounding verses is somewhat ambiguous, since it could plausibly function as the ground for either v. 23 or vv. 25–26. Though not crucial to my overall argument, I take v. 24 to be the protasis for vv. 25–26. So also Jurrien Mol, *Collective and Individual Responsibility: A Description of Corporate Personality in Ezekiel 18 and 20*, SSN (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2009), 55. First of all, וְיִ regularly introduces protases that precede their apodoses (for some examples, see Gen 22:16–17; Num 20:12; Judg 2:20–21; 1 Sam 15:23; 30:22; 1 Kgs 3:11–12; 8:18; 11:11; 13:21–22; 14:6–10; 20:28, 42; 2 Kgs 1:16; 10:30; 21:11–12; 22:19–20; Isa 3:16–17; 8:5–7; 29:13–14; 30:12–13; 37:29; Jer 5:14; 7:13–14; 23:38; 25:8–9; 29:31–32; 35:18–19; Ezek 5:7–8, 11; 13:8, 22–23; 16:36–37, 43; 34:8–10). Second, the retributive symmetry between Israel’s actions in v. 24 and God’s actions in vv. 25–26 suggest that the latter function as a response to the former: God’s death-dealing laws were given because Israel spurned his life-giving laws. Third, Ezek 20:24–25 resembles Ezek 5:11, 16:43, and 23:35, which also employ a $\text{וְגַ} . . . \text{וְיִ}$ formulation. Significantly, in these three passages, the וְיִ clause clearly functions as the ground for the following וְגַ clause. Given this similarity, it could be argued that the $\text{וְגַ} . . . \text{וְיִ}$ construction in Ezek 20:24–25 should be understood in the same way. Fourth, Ezekiel contains no examples of a וְיִ clause being preceded by an apodosis introduced by וְגַ ; as such, interpreting v. 24 as the ground for v. 23 would require treating these verses as a unique construction. These observations have led me to conclude that v. 24 probably provides the reasons for the judgment described in v. 25–26. However, even if one took the position that v. 24 grounds v. 23, it seems likely that God’s actions in v. 25–26 are still

repeats the description of Israel’s covenant unfaithfulness in verse 21a (which provided the motivation for God’s promise of exile in v. 23),¹⁷¹ it seems likely that Ezekiel 20:25 alludes back to the Ezekiel 20:23 by shedding light on the oath described therein.¹⁷² Specifically, Ezekiel 20:25 probably explains *how* God was going to bring about the exile promised in verse 23.¹⁷³ Thus, one might paraphrase Ezekiel 20:23–25 as follows: “In addition to restraining my anger, I also swore in the wilderness that I would scatter them among the nations. That is, because they did not abide by my life-giving statutes, I also gave them no-good statutes which would lead to the death of the nation, or in other words, exile.”¹⁷⁴

meant to be understood as a response to the sins of Israel outlined in v. 24.

¹⁷¹ Both v. 21a and v. 24 mention the rejection of YHWH’s covenant statutes and the profanation of the Sabbaths. While v. 24 makes the additional mention of idolatry, the parallels between the two verses suggest that v. 24 essentially restates and expands upon the transgressions of v. 21a.

¹⁷² To use the categories developed by Schreiner in relation to Pauline studies, I posit that the logical relationship between Ezek 20:23 and 20:25 is that of idea–explanation. See Thomas R. Schreiner, *Interpreting the Pauline Epistles*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 103.

¹⁷³ While Friebel rightly concludes that v. 25 connects back to v. 23, he misconstrues the nature of the connection by mistakenly seeing the “no-good laws” to be *identical* to the promise of future exile (see Friebel, “Decrees of Yahweh,” 29–30). Friebel’s thesis falters for a few reasons. First of all, Friebel nowhere demonstrates that the repeated use of **גַּם אֲנִי** indicates a relationship of identity between verses. Thus, even if the repetition of **גַּם אֲנִי** in v. 25 “[could] be understood as a literary device indicating a resumption of the subject of v. 23” (29), the construction would not necessarily indicate that the provision of the “no-good laws” was synonymous with the promise of exile. Second, Friebel mistakenly refers to Ezek 20:12 for support when the verse actually undercuts his argument. If Friebel is correct to say that the use of **גַּם** in v. 12 is similar to its use in v. 25, then the “no-good laws” of v. 25 cannot be identical to the divine oath in v. 23 since the provision of the Sabbaths in v. 12 is not identical to the giving of divine statutes and judgments in v. 11. Third, Friebel’s suggestion requires readers to assign a unique meaning (i.e., promise of exile) to **חַק/חָקָה** and **מִשְׁפָּט** in v. 25 which is highly unlikely given the consistent use of these terms throughout the chapter (cf., Ezek 20:11, 13, 16, 18–19, 21, and 24). Lastly, Friebel’s reading fails to do justice to the retributive reversal highlighted in v. 25 which entails the provision of negative “legal” statutes: because Israel has rebutted God’s life-giving laws, the nation will now be subjected to God’s death-dealing laws.

¹⁷⁴ For a helpful exploration of theological logic that may undergird Ezekiel’s thinking at this point, see Kugler, “Cruel Theology,” 54–55.

Second, the allusion in Ezek 20:25 to Lev 18:5 suggests that the “no good” laws were provided in order to bring about the covenant curses—curses which included the exile (cf. Lev 18:24–30; 20:22; 26:33–46; Deut 4:25–27; 28:63–64). As Sprinkle rightly argues, Ezekiel repeatedly uses language from Lev 18:5 as “a convenient shorthand” for the stipulations of the Sinai covenant and its promise of life which was conditioned on obedience.¹⁷⁵ This phenomenon is evident in Ezekiel 20, wherein the author repeatedly refers to “my statutes” (חקותי) and “my judgments” (משפטי) which grant life to the obedient (“the man who does them will live by them”; יעשה אותם האדם וחי בהם).¹⁷⁶ As Ezekiel 20 makes clear, Israel failed to live up to these life-giving covenant conditions. And, according to Ezekiel 20:25, YHWH repaid Israel’s covenant violations by granting his people a contrary set of laws, one that led to death instead of life.¹⁷⁷ Given the contrast between these two sets of laws, it would be natural to conclude that obedience to the one meant disobedience to the other; in other words, living in accordance with the “no-good laws” necessarily entailed violations of the covenant. Therefore, by providing Israel with these death-dealing statutes, YHWH was influencing the nation towards becoming an even more unfaithful covenant partner.¹⁷⁸ Since Israel was repeatedly warned that covenant disobedience would compromise their claim on the

¹⁷⁵ Sprinkle, “Law and Life,” 281. Also see Block, “Theological Perspectives,” 174n57; Dexter Callender Jr., “The Recognition Formula and Ezekiel’s Conception of God,” in Joyce and Rom-Shiloni, *The God Ezekiel Creates*, 77, 80.

¹⁷⁶ Ezek 20:11, 13, 16, 19, 21, 24. These passages clearly allude to Lev 18:5 which can be translated, “And you will keep my statutes and my judgments and the man who does them will live by them. I am YHWH” (ושמרתם את־חקתי ואת־משפטי אשר יעשה אתם האדם וחי בהם אני יהוה).

¹⁷⁷ Darr rightly notes that “this second giving of laws is the antithesis of the first.” Darr, “Ezekiel’s Justifications,” 99. See also Kugler, *When God Wanted to Destroy*, 153–54; Allen, “Revisionist History,” 456; Sprinkle, “Law and Life,” 287; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 368–69; Allen, *Ezekiel 20–48*, 12; Lyons, *Introduction to Ezekiel*, 146.

¹⁷⁸ Commenting on Ezek 20:25, Klein rightly says, “Through this process of hardening, God threatens to lead those who anger him into greater sin, for which they will then receive greater punishment.” Klein, *Ezekiel*, 77.

promised land (Lev 18:24–30; 20:22; 26:33–46; Deut 4:25–27; 28:63–64; cf. Jer 9:12–16), it follows that the introduction of the “no-good laws” ensured the nation’s exile.¹⁷⁹

Third, the flow of the argument from Ezekiel 20:25 onwards seems to draw connections between the “no-good laws” to pagan sacrifices and between pagan sacrifices to the exile. Immediately following the reference to the “no-good laws” in verse 25, the text introduces the subject of defiling gifts: “And I defiled them by their gifts when they offered every firstborn, so that I might devastate them, so that they might know that I am YHWH” (Ezek 20:26).¹⁸⁰ Though the matter of sacrifices is not

¹⁷⁹ The actual referent of the “no-good laws” remains highly debated. Many have argued that these laws refer either to the Sinai legislation as a whole or to particular stipulations within it (for examples, see Patton, “Ezekiel 20,” 78–79; Eslinger, “Ezekiel 20,” 108–9; Kugler, “Cruel Theology,” 54; Walther Zimmerli, “The Message of the Prophet Ezekiel,” *Int* 23, no. 2 [1969]: 145–46; von Rad, *Prophetic Traditions*, 402; Walther Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, OTL [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970], 270–72). Meanwhile, Hahn and Bergsma argue that the laws refer to the Deuteronomic code, which Ezekiel would have regarded as a degraded version of the Sinai covenant (see Hahn and Bergsma, “What Laws were ‘Not Good?’” 218). Friebel rightly disputes these claims, arguing instead that the “no-good laws” must be distinguished from God’s covenant stipulations. He makes three arguments to support his conclusion: (1) Ezekiel distinguishes the life-giving laws from other statutes by referring to the covenant stipulations with a feminine plural noun (חוקות) as opposed to the masculine plural noun found in v. 18 and v. 25 (חוקים); (2) the covenant laws are consistently referred to as “my statutes” (חוקותי) or “my judgments” (משפטי) throughout Ezek 20, while other stipulations lack the 1cs pronominal suffix; and (3) since YHWH states repeatedly that obedience to the laws of the covenant would lead to life (cf. Ezek 20:11, 13, 21), it seems unreasonable to equate them with the death-dealing laws of v. 25. See Friebel, “Decrees of Yahweh,” 28–30. I would only add that the reference to the “no-good laws” in Ezek 20:25 is probably intended rhetorically; in all likelihood, the verse should *not* be understood to refer literally to divinely sanctioned laws. In fact, I would argue that the “laws” of v. 25 likely refer to Israel’s man-made, religious stipulations which were handed down from generation to generation. Three textual features support this conclusion: (1) the entire section from Ezek 20:4–32 is meant to recount the “abominations of the fathers” (cf. Ezek 20:4); (2) Ezek 20:25 forges a connection between the “no-good laws” and “the statutes of their fathers” (Ezek 20:18) by the use of the masculine noun חקים (“statutes”); and (3) the verses that follow Ezek 20:25–32 repeatedly connect pagan practices with the traditions of Israel’s forefathers. If this reading is right, then Ezek 20:25 states rhetorically that YHWH responded to Israel’s covenant-transgressions by moving the nation to abide by its own increasingly deviant traditions. For others who understand the identity of the “no-good laws” similarly, see John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Twenty Chapters of the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, trans. Thomas Myers, 500th anniversary ed., vol. 2, *Calvin’s Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 315–16; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 369; Allen, *Ezekiel 20–48*, 12; Lamar Eugene Cooper Sr., *Ezekiel*, NAC (Nashville: B & H, 1994), 205; House, *Old Testament Theology*, 337; Mol, *Collective and Individual*, 234; Wright, *Ezekiel*, 160–61.

¹⁸⁰ I agree with interpreters who see a reference to child sacrifice in Ezek 20:26. For others who take this position, see Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 270; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 369; Block, *Ezekiel*, 636; Allen, *Ezekiel 20–48*, 12; Davis, *Swallowing the Scroll*, 114; George C. Heider, “A Further Turn on Ezekiel’s Baroque Twist in Ezek 20:25–26,” *JBL* 107, no. 4 (1988): 722–23; Kugler, “Cruel Theology,”

mentioned prior to verse 26, it becomes the focus of the Lord's displeasure in relation to the generation in the land (Ezek 20:28b) and the generation in exile (Ezek 20:31).

Rhetorically speaking, Ezekiel's historical overview seems to describe the giving of the "no-good laws" as a turning point in Israel's history; from that point onwards, the nation would consistently defile itself through its sacrificial system.¹⁸¹ Thus, the logical progression of the passage suggests that the "no-good laws" included sacrificial prescriptions that angered rather than appeased YHWH.¹⁸² Moreover, Ezekiel 20:26 suggests that God intentionally acted against Israel *through* their adoption of a corrupt sacrificial system *so that* he might destroy them (למען אשמם).¹⁸³ And, given (1) the oath previously mentioned in verse 23, (2) the actual outworking of Israel's history, and (3) the use of the root שמש elsewhere in Ezekiel,¹⁸⁴ the destruction alluded to in verse 26 likely refers to the exile.

If my exposition of Ezekiel 20:25–26 is on-target, then the provision of the "no-good laws" should be interpreted as a divine act intended to influence the nation of Israel towards sin so that they might experience the curse of exile.¹⁸⁵ Thus, these verses

54; Patton, "Ezekiel 20," 78–89; Eslinger, "Ezekiel 20," 108–9; Zimmerli, "Message of Ezekiel," 145; Sprinkle, "Law and Life," 287; Friebel, "Decrees of Yahweh," 26–28; Osborne, "Elements of Irony," 12; House, *Old Testament Theology*, 337; Calvin, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 317; Räisänen, *Idea of Divine Hardening*, 52.

¹⁸¹ In fact, the 1CS *piel* stem verb וַאֲשַׁמֶם in Ezek 20:26 suggests that YHWH was himself involved in influencing Israel towards self-defiling religious practices. So also Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 636.

¹⁸² For others who read vv. 25–26 similarly, see Calvin, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 314–18; Sprinkle, "Law and Life," 287; House, *Old Testament Theology*, 337; Klein, *Ezekiel*, 77–78; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 368–69; Allen, *Ezekiel 20–48*, 12.

¹⁸³ As Davis says of this passage, "Even Israel's willful self-destruction is, however inexplicably, an outworking of the sovereign will of YHWH." Davis, *Swallowing the Scroll*, 114. See also Block, *Ezekiel*, 636–37.

¹⁸⁴ Other passages in Ezekiel link the root שמש with being exiled from one's homeland. See for instance Ezek 25:3; 29:12; 30:6–26; 33:21–29; 35:10–15; 36:2–3, 33–35.

¹⁸⁵ Thus Kugler rightly says of Ezek 20:25 that "God intentionally provides offensive laws, laws aiming to harm the people by causing them to sin more frequently, thus enabling God to execute the

would serve as an example of Ezekiel resorting to DRA as part of his explanation for Israel's expulsion from the land.¹⁸⁶ In addition, this text depicts God's reprobating agency as a punitive measure,¹⁸⁷ and it characterizes the Lord as being directly and actively involved in leading Israel towards their destruction ("I also gave them no-good laws . . . I defiled them by their gifts"). These different factors lead me to conclude that Ezekiel 20:25 bears witness to retributive, immediate, and active DRA.

DRA as an Explanation for Salvation

As Ezekiel 20:25–26 shows, the book of Ezekiel refers to DRA as part of its explanation for how Israel ended up in exile. However, the author also understands DRA to play a role in providing Israel with hope for the future. In particular, Ezekiel ties DRA to Israel's future prospects in two places (Ezek 14; Ezek 38–39).

In Ezekiel 14:1–11, the prophet describes being approached by the elders of the exilic community who were seeking a message from God.¹⁸⁸ At the same time, the

consequent punishment—the exile." Kugler, *When God Wanted to Destroy*, 153.

¹⁸⁶ Since Ezekiel envisions exile as the resulting penalty, the text should be understood to refer to non-eternal DRA.

¹⁸⁷ The relationship between Ezek 20:24 and 20:25 leads to this conclusion, as does the character of the chapter as a whole. So Räisänen rightly says of v. 25, "The context makes clear that the strange act of Yahweh is to be understood as an act of punishment." Räisänen, *Idea of Divine Hardening*, 52. For others who agree that the provision of the "no-good laws" was an act of retribution, see Kugler, *When God Wanted to Destroy*, 153–54; Allen, "Revisionist History," 456; Darr, "Ezekiel's Justifications," 99; Heider, "Baroque Turn," 723–24; Patton, "Ezekiel 20," 79; Sprinkle, "Law and Life," 287; Klein, *Ezekiel*, 77; Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 272; Block, *Ezekiel*, 635–36; Wright, *Ezekiel*, 160–61.

¹⁸⁸ Mayfield argues that the book of Ezekiel is structured by its chronological markers and that these time stamps serve to establish the setting for the main literary units as a whole. See Tyler D. Mayfield, *Literary Structure and Setting in Ezekiel*, FAT (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 97. If this is so, then Ezek 8:1 would indicate that the events of Ezek 14:1–11 took place in the sixth year after Ezekiel's exile in 597 BC. Given this setting, perhaps the elders came to the prophet for assurance that their exile would be quickly reversed or that Jerusalem would be spared. As Fishbane posits, "The anxiety of the times produced cadres of prophetic spokesmen, each group vying for a popular following, and each group claiming to represent YHWH's authentic word. Like his contemporary Jeremiah (cf. 14:13–18), Ezekiel felt that the most dangerous of these prophets were those who spoke deluded and premature oracles of

word of YHWH came to the prophet informing him of the elders' lack of exclusive fealty to YHWH.¹⁸⁹ These leaders presumptuously sought a word from the Lord while worshipping other gods alongside YHWH; therefore, God announced that he would respond suitably to them and to anyone else who would dare seek him while harboring allegiances to other deities (cf. Ezek 14:8). What is noteworthy for my purposes is that, according to Ezekiel 14:9–10, part of the Lord's response to Israel's idolatrous leaders involved reprobating influence.¹⁹⁰ In these verses, YHWH says,

Now concerning the prophet, if he is deceived so that he speaks a word, I, YHWH, have deceived that prophet so that I might stretch out my hand against him and destroy him from the midst of my people, Israel. They will bear their punishment; the punishment of the one who seeks will be the same as the punishment of the prophet.

Here, YHWH assumes responsibility for deceiving those prophets who sinfully entertain the inquiries of idolaters¹⁹¹; as such, Ezekiel clearly testifies to God's involvement behind the sin of false prophecy.¹⁹² Moreover, the verbs chosen suggest that God deceived these

consolation to the citizens of Jerusalem and the exiles in Babylon." Fishbane, "Sin and Judgment," 136.

¹⁸⁹ The statement that the elders "caused their idols to ascend upon their hearts" (העלו גלוליהם על-לבם) should not be understood to refer to the literal practice of wearing amulets or the like; instead, the expression most likely refers to the issue of religious devotion. For similar interpretations, see Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 248; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 300, 306; Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 425; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel*, IBC (Louisville: John Knox, 1990), 71; Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 180.

¹⁹⁰ As I've mentioned elsewhere, the presence of DRA does not imply the absence of human responsibility. Thus, I disagree with Joyce when he argues that 14:9–10 is evidence that "at times even the presentation of judgment in Ezekiel is so God-centered that Israel's responsibility is apparently subsumed." Joyce, *Divine Initiative*, 128. As Duguid rightly points out, "the fact that they are unwittingly doing the sovereign will of God in no way exempts the prophet, as secondary cause, from responsibility for his own words." Iain M. Duguid, *Ezekiel*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 185.

¹⁹¹ As Roberts states, "This oracle is directed not only against those individuals who, while still holding on to their sins and idols, turn to Yahweh for a word about their future; it is also against those prophets who respond to the inquiries of such individuals without calling them to account for their sins and idols." J. J. M. Roberts, "Does God Lie? Divine Deceit as a Theological Problem in Israelite Prophetic Literature," in *Congress Volume: Jerusalem, 1986*, ed. J. A. Emerton, VTSup 40 (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1988), 219.

¹⁹² As Zimmerli artfully states, "The frightening mystery that man's sinning may not only be his freedom . . . echoes here afresh." Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 308. While such a phenomenon may be disconcerting, Greenberg rightly notes that the concept of "divine interference with human freedom in

men into prophesying falsely *so that* he might judge them for their lies.¹⁹³ Therefore, such divine activity seems like a clear example of DRA against false prophets.¹⁹⁴ In addition, since the Lord goes on to state that both the prophets *and* the one who inquires (שדרר) would receive the same punishment (cf. Ezek 14:10),¹⁹⁵ it seems that the latter were also subjected to a similar reprobating influence.¹⁹⁶

In my judgment, Ezekiel 14:9–10 provides enough detail to conclude that DRA here is retributive,¹⁹⁷ and active. In other words, Ezekiel 14:9–10 indicates that YHWH caused the leaders of the exilic community (i.e., both the elders and the prophets) to trust in deceptive hopes as an act of retribution against them so that they might experience his

order to punish” finds a counterpart in “a similar, eschatological interference in order to redeem Israel once for all from sin—the doctrine of the new heart.” Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 254.

¹⁹³ The *weqatal* forms suggest a purpose modality; see Robar, *The Verb and Paragraph*, 123–27.

¹⁹⁴ Similarly, see Hesse, *Verstockungsproblem*, 70–71.

¹⁹⁵ Block posits that a “subtle shift” occurs between 14:3–7 and 14:10 with respect to the meaning of עו; in the earlier verses, עו refers to iniquity, while in v.10, עו refers to the punishment for iniquity. See Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 435n74.

¹⁹⁶ Roberts comes to a similar conclusion when he says, “In effect, the deception of the worshipper, who inquires of Yahweh while faithlessly holding on to his sins and idols, and the faithlessness of the prophet, who discharges his office without, as Micah puts it, ‘declaring to Jacob his transgressions and to Israel his sin’ . . . will be rewarded by Yahweh’s own deception.” Roberts, “Does God Lie?,” 219. Moreover, Greenberg also provides further corroboration of this point when he observes that the punishments of the prophet and the inquirer “are couched in similar terms . . . *thus giving the ground for their equation* in vs. 10 [emphasis added]” Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 252.

¹⁹⁷ At least two indications within Ezek 14:1–11 lead to the conclusion that God’s reprobating influence against the prophets and the elders was retributive. First, v. 10 describes God’s influence against both the prophets and the elders as “punishment” (עו). Such a designation suggests that the DRA described in v. 9 was meted out as a penalty for sin. Second, Ezek 14:2–8 repeatedly makes the point that God would repay those who sought him while harboring loyalty towards other gods. Given this context, it is reasonable to interpret God’s reprobating agency described in vv. 9–10 as being part of the act of divine retribution alluded to in vv. 2–8. For others who see God’s influence as retributive in 14:9, see Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 183; Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 434–35; Roberts, “Does God Lie?,” 219; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 254; Cooper, *Ezekiel*, 160–61. Though Chisholm rightly views the divine deception as an act of retribution, he unconvincingly posits a distinction between the prophet’s initial self-deception in v. 9a and the Lord’s deception in v. 9b. For his explanation of these verses, see Robert B. Chisholm Jr., “Does God Deceive?,” *BSac* 155 (1998): 23–25.

earthly vengeance.¹⁹⁸ However, the text may indicate that God moved in distinct ways against the false prophets and those who hypocritically sought a divine word. On the one hand, God seems to have employed an immediate form of DRA against the false prophets.¹⁹⁹ On the other hand, God’s deceptive influence on the prophets seems to have itself been the means by which the Lord would mislead those who insincerely sought his counsel.²⁰⁰ If so, then Ezekiel 14:9–10 would attest to both immediate and mediate DRA. Lastly, and perhaps most surprisingly, the section closes by intimating that the Lord’s destructive influence served a saving purpose.²⁰¹ As Ezekiel 14:11 maintains, YHWH set himself against the exilic community’s prophets and elders “so that the house of Israel might not wander away from me again and so that they might not be defiled by all their transgressions again, so that they might be my people and I might be their God.” Such a statement indicates that YHWH intended to purge idolaters from among his people through his reprobating influence in order to re-establish his covenant relationship with

¹⁹⁸ The phrase “from the midst of my people Israel” in 14:9 suggests that the prophet has in mind earthly rather than eternal destruction. As such, DRA in Ezek 14 should be understood as non-eternal.

¹⁹⁹ Unlike 1 Kgs 22:20–22, which depicts the Lord employing mediating agents in order to deceive prophets, Ezek 14:9–10 emphasizes YHWH as the active agent behind the deception (so also Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 254). It does this by employing a personal pronoun together with the divine name in apposition alongside a factitive *piel* verb: “I, YHWH, deceived that prophet” (אני יהוה פתיתי את הנביא (ההוא)).

²⁰⁰ Greenberg’s comments on Ezek 14:9–10 may suggest that he shares this interpretation. As he states, “The obtuseness of the Israelites, including prophets, is culpable, and God punishes it by corrupting the spring of inspiration, *leading inquirer and respondent alike to destruction* [emphasis added]” Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 154.

²⁰¹ So also Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 184; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 254–55. Commenting on Ezek 14:11, Zimmerli helpfully outlines YHWH’s three final purposes behind his act of judgment: 1) he would prevent Israel from going astray by destroying idolaters and disobedient prophets, 2) he would set Israel free from “the uncleanness of its offenses,” and 3) he would “again truly make Israel his people.” Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 309.

Israel.²⁰² Thus, according to Ezekiel 14, DRA would play a role in establishing Israel's future salvation.

Ezekiel links DRA to Israel's redemption a second time in his prophecy against Gog of Magog.²⁰³ In Ezekiel 38–39, YHWH commands Ezekiel to “set his face against” Gog of Magog and to prophesy against him (38:1).²⁰⁴ The Lord predicts that evil thoughts will come upon Gog (38:10),²⁰⁵ and he will then plan to attack a defenseless Israel without any provocation (38:11–13). Gog's intention would be unmistakably wicked: he would start this war of aggression in order to seize spoil and take plunder.²⁰⁶ However,

²⁰² See Cooper, *Ezekiel*, 161.

²⁰³ The Gog Oracle (Ezek 38–39) presents interpreters with several exegetical difficulties. Some of the issues that have attracted the attention of scholars include (1) the relationship between the MT and the OG of Ezek 38–39, (2) the redaction history of the chapters, (3) the identity of Gog, (4) the use of OT materials in the Gog oracles, and (5) the reception history of the Gog oracles in Jewish and Christian circles. Thankfully, these problems do not impinge upon the focus of this study and as such, I do not discuss these matters in much detail.

²⁰⁴ I tend to agree with those interpreters who see the name “Gog” to be a figurative label for the eschatological enemies of God's people rather than the name of a literal person/nation or a cypher for a particular nation. For discussions related to the identity of Gog, see Michael C. Astour, “Ezekiel's Prophecy of Gog and the Cuthean Legend of Naram-Sin,” *JBL* 95, no. 4 (1976): 567–79; Ralph H. Alexander, “A Fresh Look at Ezekiel 38 and 39,” *JETS* 17, no. 3 (1974): 157–69; Lydia Lee, “The Enemies within: Gog of Magog in Ezekiel 38–39,” *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 73, no. 3 (2017): 1–7; Daniel I. Block, “Gog and Magog in Ezekiel's Eschatological Vision,” in *Eschatology in Bible and Theology: Evangelical Essays at the Dawn of a New Millennium*, ed. Kent E. Brower and Mark W. Elliott (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 97; William A. Tooman, *Gog of Magog*, FAT (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 139–40; Sverre Bøe, *Gog and Magog: Ezekiel 38–39 as Pre-Text for Revelation 19, 17–21 and 20, 7–10*, WUNT (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 88–99; Paul E. Fitzpatrick, *The Disarmament of God*, CBQMS (Washington DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2004), 85–88; McKeating, *Ezekiel*, 114–22. For an overview of how different religious communities have used the Gog and Magog tradition to demonize their political or cultural opponents, see Nicholas M. Railton, “Gog and Magog: The History of a Symbol,” *EvQ* 75, no. 1 (2003): 23–43.

²⁰⁵ Fitzpatrick suggests that the author means to insinuate that God placed these evil thoughts in Gog's mind. Fitzpatrick, *Disarmament*, 106. While this interpretation is possible, care must be taken to also do justice to Ezekiel's presentation of Gog as a responsible moral agent. As Bøe rightly comments, “The stress on God's part in the design of the Gog-attack does not take away or lighten the responsibility and judgment of Gog.” Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 117.

²⁰⁶ Though she rightly notes that greed motivates Gog's attack, Carvalho misses the mark in claiming that the text “engages economic social structures.” Corrine L. Carvalho, “The God That Gog Creates: ‘Drop the Stories and Feel the Feelings,’” in Joyce and Rom-Shiloni, *The God That Ezekiel*

the text reveals that Gog's future actions would owe to more than simply rapacious desires: in reality, YHWH would be the one to drag Gog to battle against Israel (38:4, 16).²⁰⁷ As the Lord states, "Behold! I am against you, O Gog, chief ruler of Meshek and Tubal! I will turn you around and drive you and bring you from the farthest parts of the north! I will bring you against the mountains of Israel!" (Ezek 39:1b-2). Thus, God claims responsibility for summoning Gog and his forces against Israel.²⁰⁸ Moreover, the Lord predetermined the end result of Gog's hostilities²⁰⁹:

And it will come about on that day when Gog comes against the land of Israel, declares the Lord YHWH, that my wrath will be kindled And I will summon a sword against him before all my mountains, declares the Lord YHWH. Each man's sword will be against his brother and I will enter into judgment with him with plague and with bloodshed. (Ezek 38:18, 21-22a)

Taken together, these textual details lead to the conclusion that (1) the Lord would influence Gog and his allies to wage an unjust campaign against Israel; and (2) that Gog and his forces would experience YHWH's vengeance as the divinely orchestrated

Creates, 121. I am likewise unconvinced by her claim that "Gog is not just evil; he is the evil rich" (122).

²⁰⁷ While there are similarities between Ezekiel's presentation of Gog, Isaiah's presentation of Assyria, and Jeremiah's presentation of Babylon, the three should not be conflated. As Bøe rightly notes, Ezekiel parts ways with the other major prophets in that he does not present Gog as the Lord's instrument for punishing Israel. See Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 117-18.

²⁰⁸ As Block states, "Gog's invasion occurs at the overt instigation of Yahweh; he comes not merely with Yahweh's permissive will, but as His agent." Block, "Gog and Magog," 103. He makes the same point in Daniel I. Block, "Gog and the Pouring Out of the Spirit: Reflections on Ezekiel Xxxix 21-9," *VT* 37, no. 3 (1987): 270; Block, "Gog in Prophetic Tradition: A New Look at Ezekiel XXXVIII 17," *VT* 42, no. 2 (1992): 171. Several other scholars and commentators reach similar conclusions. See for instance Fitzpatrick, *Disarmament*, 89; Tooman, *Gog of Magog*, 68-69; Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 116; Wright, *Ezekiel*, 318; Klein, *Ezekiel*, 160-61; Clements, *Ezekiel*, 175; Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel*, 179; Jacob Milgrom and Daniel I. Block, *Ezekiel's Hope: A Commentary on Ezekiel 38-48* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012), 16-17; Lyons, *Introduction to Ezekiel*, 140; Carvalho, "God that Gog Creates," 121; Astour, "Prophecy of Gog," 568.

²⁰⁹ Though I would not refer to Gog and his allies as "abstract pawns," Astour nevertheless correctly notes that these have been "predestined by Yahweh to spread terror by their irresistible multitudes and then to be spectacularly destroyed." Astour, "Prophecy of Gog," 568. Similarly, see Tooman, *Gog of Magog*, 255-56; Wright, *Ezekiel*, 320; Klein, *Ezekiel*, 163; Milgrom and Block, *Ezekiel's Hope*, 16.

outcome of their attack. Therefore, Ezekiel's depiction of the fate of Gog and his cohorts suggests the presence of DRA.

God's reprobating influence in the Gog Oracle may be further characterized. First of all, Ezekiel repeatedly describes YHWH to be actively involved in leading Gog and his allies to battle (cf. Ezek 38:4, 16): YHWH will turn Gog (ושובבתיד), violently drag him (ונתתי חחים בלחייד), bring him and his army out (והוצאתי אותך ואת-כל-חילך), and bring him back (והבאתיך). Moreover, the text nowhere suggests that God would act upon Gog and his forces through an intermediary. For these reasons, it seems likely that an active, immediate form of DRA is involved. In addition, the text does not describe God's reprobating influence as being motivated by a desire to punish Gog and his horde for sins committed beforehand.²¹⁰ On the contrary, Ezekiel 38–39 stresses that everything YHWH did to Gog was for the express purpose of bringing honor to himself (cf. Ezek 38:16, 23; 39:7–8, 13, 21–22, 25, 27–28).²¹¹ As such, it seems more likely than not that Gog was subjected to a non-retributive form of DRA. Lastly, given the conclusion to the Gog Oracle (cf. Ezek 39:21–29),²¹² the focus on restoration in Ezekiel 33–48,²¹³ and the

²¹⁰ Though he elsewhere suggests that Ezek 38–39 implies that Gog deserved his/its fate, Tooman correctly observes that the Gog Oracle nowhere depicts God's negative influence as an act of retribution. As he says, "Ezekiel, as a whole, manifests a deterministic view of Israel's history. . . . The author of GO extends this determinism to include the nations of the earth. This accounts for the conspicuous silence on the topic of Gog's crime. What has Gog done that makes him deserve this punishment? For the author this is irrelevant." Tooman, *Gog of Magog*, 244.

²¹¹ So also Astour, "Prophecy of Gog," 568; Block, "Gog and Magog," 104, 115–16; Block, "Gog in Prophetic Tradition," 171; Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 117–18; Tooman, *Gog of Magog*, 158, 255–56; Fitzpatrick, *Disarmament*, 96; Wright, *Ezekiel*, 318–19; Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 519; Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel*, 179.

²¹² Block helpfully discusses the function of Ezek 39:21–29 in relation to the Gog oracle as a whole. As he observes, these verses serve as a fitting conclusion to the oracle by emphasizing the restoration of the covenant relationship between YHWH and his people. See Block, "Gog and the Pouring Out," 266–69.

²¹³ Mayfield rightly notes that most scholars see a tripartite division of Ezekiel, with the last division (i.e., Ezek 33–48) focused on the restoration of Israel (see Mayfield, *Literary Structure*, 24–28). While Mayfield may be correct to criticize conceptual approaches to literary structure, even he acknowledges that such approaches "may be helpful interpretively . . . because of their ability to explain the grouping of a majority of similar oracles within a prophetic book" (*Literary Structure*, 51). As such, the

function of Ezekiel 38–39 in relation to chapter 37 and chapters 40–48,²¹⁴ it seems probable that these chapters present the Lord’s actions against Gog as a means by which God would deliver his people, inaugurate the covenant of peace, and grant Israel *shalom* in their land.²¹⁵ If this is the case, then Ezekiel depicts DRA to be a part of YHWH’s saving work on Israel’s behalf.²¹⁶

Summary of DRA in Ezekiel

I have shown that Ezekiel bears witness to both the complexity and significance of DRA. On the one hand, the book portrays the multifaceted nature of DRA: (1) it describes examples of both retributive DRA (Ezek 14:9–10; 20:25–26) and non-retributive DRA (Ezek 38–39), and (2) it attests to immediate DRA (Ezek 20:25–26; 38–39), while also bearing witness to the interplay between immediate and mediate DRA (Ezek 14:9–10). On the other hand, the book of Ezekiel testifies to the importance of

emphasis on Israel’s future deliverance found in Ezek 33–48 provides the backdrop for understanding Ezek 38–39. So also J. Paul Tanner, “Rethinking Ezekiel’s Invasion by Gog,” *JETS* 39, no. 1 (1996): 36–37.

²¹⁴ Fitzpatrick persuasively argues that in the MT, Ezek 38–39 bridges the gap between chaps. 37 and 40–48. He notes that Ezek 37:26 promises both the establishment of the sanctuary and the inauguration of the covenant of peace. On the one hand, Fitzpatrick sees the fulfillment of the former promise described in Ezek 40–48; on the other hand, he posits that the latter promise comes to fruition in Ezek 38–39. See Fitzpatrick, *Disarmament*, 180–81.

²¹⁵ Furthermore, Margaret Odell and Francesca Stavrakopoulou have highlighted other aspects of Ezek 38–39 which likewise suggest that the defeat of Gog serves God’s saving work on Israel’s behalf. First, Odell has argued persuasively that Ezek 38–39 envisions the moral transformation of the inhabitants of Jerusalem—a transformation which takes place in connection with the destruction of Gog. See Margaret S. Odell, “The City of Hamonah in Ezekiel 39:11–16: The Tumultuous City of Jerusalem,” *CBQ* 56 (1994): 489. Second, Stavrakopoulou posits that, in Ezek 39:11ff, Gog’s burial site functions as a “mortuary monument, marking the defeat of Israel’s invading enemy and asserting YHWH’s territorial claim on the land.” Francesca Stavrakopoulou, “Gog’s Grave and the Use and Abuse of Corpses in Ezekiel 39:11–20,” *JBL* 129, no. 1 (2010): 78. As such, Gog’s grave serves to “assert Israel’s claim to its land and legitimize the exiles’ return” (84).

²¹⁶ For others who see God’s actions against Gog as being salvific, see Tooman, *Gog of Magog*, 195, 248; Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 87; Fitzpatrick, *Disarmament*, 180–81; Mayfield, *Literary Structure*, 208; Wright, *Ezekiel*, 316–17; Klein, *Ezekiel*, 165–66; Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel*, 179; Lyons, *Introduction*, 175–76; Block, “Gog and the Pouring Out,” 269–70; Alexander, “Fresh Look,” 158.

DRA in two ways. First, it explains both exile (Ezek 20:25–26) and Israel’s future salvation (Ezek 14:1–11; 38–39) through recourse to God’s reprobating influence. Second, Ezekiel also ties DRA to the display of God’s character in the Gog Oracle, wherein the prophet repeatedly makes the point that God’s negative influence upon Gog and his hordes would be the means by which the Lord would demonstrate his holiness to Israel and the nations. Thus, according to Ezekiel, DRA plays an important role in Israel’s history and in God’s own self-revelation.

DRA in the Twelve

The twelve minor prophets do not require a lengthy treatment since this last section of the *Nevi'im* adds little to the understanding of DRA.²¹⁷ While a few passages within the minor prophets are relevant to this study, these bear witness to a familiar form of DRA: namely, God’s instrumental use of nations followed by his judgment of those

²¹⁷ Much work has been done on the question of whether or not the twelve books of the minor prophets form a single, literary work. As it stands, the majority position seems to be that the minor prophets should be approached as one book. Such a conclusion has been defended from various approaches, such as redaction criticism (Nogalski has been a particularly influential proponent of this approach; see for instance James D. Nogalski, *Literary Precursors to the Book of the Twelve*, BZAW [Berlin: de Gruyter, 1993], 276–82; Nogalski, *Redactional Processes in the Book of the Twelve*, BZAW [Berlin: de Gruyter, 1993], 274–80; Nogalski, “One Book and Twelve Books: The Nature of the Redactional Work and the Implications of Cultic Source Material in the Book of the Twelve,” in *Two Sides of a Coin: Juxtaposing Views on Interpreting the Book of the Twelve/the Twelve Prophetic Books* [Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2009], 11–46; Nogalski, “The Book of the Twelve Is Not a Hypothesis,” in *The Book of the Twelve: One Book or Many?*, ed. Elena Di Pedè and Donatella Scaiola, FAT [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016], 37–59), literary criticism (Paul R. House, *The Unity of the Twelve*, JSOTSup [Sheffield, England: Almond, 1990], 63–109), and canonical criticism (Christopher R. Seitz, “On Letting a Text ‘Act Like a Man’: The Book of the Twelve; New Horizons for Canonical Reading, with Hermeneutical Reflections,” *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 22, no. 2 [2004]: 161–68). Despite the increasing popularity of the majority position, some have pointed out weaknesses in the theory. Ben Zvi has been an especially vocal critic, as he has consistently argued for the integrity and the independence of each of the minor prophets (see especially Ehud ben Zvi, “Twelve Prophetic Books or ‘The Twelve’: A Few Preliminary Considerations,” in *Forming Prophetic Literature: Essays on Isaiah and the Twelve in Honor of John D. W. Watts*, JSOTSup [Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996], 125–56). Without necessarily commenting on the broader issue, I opted for the latter approach in this study and have explored the witness of each of the books of the Twelve individually in order to preserve unique perspectives any of them might have on the subject of DRA.

same nations. Such divine activity may be attested in Joel, Micah, Habakkuk, and Zechariah.

The book of Joel seems to describe God's desire to use an unidentified army as his means of repaying his people for their sins (Joel 2:1–11).²¹⁸ However, Joel also testifies that God would strike down “the northerner” because “he did great things” (Joel 2:20).²¹⁹ In Joel 2:20, “the northerner” denotes the army that would attack Israel on account of divine influence²²⁰; moreover, the “great things” this army is accused of probably includes their assault on God's nation.²²¹ This interpretation is suggested by the

²¹⁸ As is well known, the interpretation of Joel 2:1–11 is disputed. Some take the section to continue the description of the locust plague reported in Joel 1. See for instance Elie Assis, “The Structure and Meaning of the Locust Plague Oracles in Joel 1,2–2,17,” *ZAW* 122 (2010): 401–11; David Fleer, “Exegesis of Joel 2:1–11,” *ResQ* 26, no. 3 (1983): 149–50; Ronald T. Hyman, “The Prophecy of Joel: The Prophet's Message, Beliefs, and Prophetic Style,” *JBQ* 39, no. 4 (2011): 221–23. This viewpoint is certainly plausible and, if it is correct, it could render Joel irrelevant to the study of DRA. Nevertheless, other scholars argue that Joel 2:1–11 refers to a human army rather than to locusts. So for instance, Andiñach contends that all Joel's references to locusts are metaphorical and that Joel 1–2 refers to a foreign military invasion (see Pablo R. Andiñach, “The Locusts in the Message of Joel,” *VT* 42, no. 4 [1992]: 433–41). Meanwhile, Garrett argues (correctly in my estimation) that Joel 2:1–11 refers to a human army by building typologically on an actual locust plague described in Joel 1. See Duane A. Garrett, “The Structure of Joel,” *JETS* 28, no. 3 (1985): 289–94; also see Daniel C. Timmer, *The Non-Israelite Nations in the Book of the Twelve: Thematic Coherence and the Diachronic-Synchronic Relationship in the Minor Prophets*, *BibInt* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2015), 31–33; Michael B. Shepherd, *A Commentary on the Book of the Twelve: The Minor Prophets*, Kregel Exegetical Library (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2018), 118; Hamilton, *God's Glory*, 239–40; House, *Unity of the Twelve*, 129–30. Since I would argue that Joel 2:1–11 does in fact refer to an actual army, I believe that these verses meet the first criteria of DRA: God has been depicted as influencing responsible agents towards condemnable behavior.

²¹⁹ While Theodore of Mopsuestia rightly understands Joel 2:20 to have the punishment of Israel's invaders in view, he misunderstands the phrase הגדיל לעשות to mean “God will demonstrate the magnitude of his works in punishing them.” Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentary on the Twelve Prophets*, trans. Robert C. Hill, FC (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 115; see also Shepherd, *Book of the Twelve*, 129. The shift from 1S verbs (ארחיק and והדחתיו) to 3S (הגדיל) makes it unlikely that YHWH is the subject of the verb “make great.”

²²⁰ As Timmer notes, “The invading army comes under explicit condemnation in 2:20, where YHWH says he will destroy it because (כי) it ‘has done great things’ or ‘has made itself great’. Even though it is YHWH's army, its instrumental role does not free it of all moral accountability.” Timmer, *Non-Israelite Nations*, 32. For others who understand 2:20 to refer back to the army of 2:1–11, see Duane A. Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, NAC (Nashville: B & H, 1997), 300; Elizabeth Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets I*, NIBC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 146; Andiñach, “The Locusts,” 439–40.

²²¹ Some argue that the phrase הגדיל לעשות (lit. “He made great with respect to his acting”) refers to “the northerner's” arrogance, and that therefore, this army was condemned for its boastful attitude

use of the *hiphil* form of נָדַח in 2:20, since the verb is regularly used in reference to the exile of Israel (cf. Deut 30:1; Jer 8:3; 16:15; 23:2–3, 8; 24:9; 27:10, 15; 29:14, 18; 32:37; 46:28; 50:17; Ezek 4:13; Dan 9:7).²²² Thus, when Joel says that “[YHWH] will drive (והדחתיו) [the northerner] into a dry and desolate land,” he likely implies that God’s army (cf. 2:11) would be subjected to divine retribution for leading Israel into exile.²²³

Furthermore, Joel 4 also suggests that YHWH’s instrument of reproof would be punished for executing its work against Israel,²²⁴ since God here is pictured as gathering the

(see for instance Timmer, *Non-Israelite Nations*, 32). While this is possible, it seems more likely that the phrase signifies the terrible actions taken by this enemy nation. First of all, the usage of the construction tilts in favor of this interpretation. The verb גָּדַל in the *hiphil* is complemented by the use of עָשָׂה with a ל- preposition on only four occasions (cf. Joel 2:20–21; Ps 126:2–3). In three of the four cases, the subject is YHWH and the phrase refers to feats accomplished by God (Joel 2:21; Ps 126:2–3). Thus, all of the other occurrences of the phrase involve descriptions of extraordinary actions rather than arrogance as such. Second, the repetition of the phrase in Joel 2:21 also bolsters my interpretation of 2:20. Both Joel 2:20 and 2:21 contain the phrase הגדיל לעשות, the former in speaking about “the northerner” and the latter in speaking about YHWH. This suggests that the author contrasting the army with the God of Israel. Moreover, the point of the comparison does not have to do with respective attitudes, i.e., the army was arrogant while YHWH was humble. Instead, the contrast has to do with quality of action: both “the northerner” and the Lord performed great feats, but the one accomplished great acts of cruelty while the other would engage in great acts of beneficence. Lastly, a construction similar to Joel 2:20 is found in Eccl 2:4a. Here, someone other than YHWH is the subject of גָּדַל in the *hiphil* with a nominal form of עָשָׂה as the verb’s object (הגדלתי מעשי). In this verse, there is no doubt that the phrase refers to accomplishments, as Eccl 2:4b goes on to describe the construction of houses and vineyards. Thus, at least some reason exists for positing that the phrase הגדיל לעשות refers to the awful things that “the northerner” accomplished against God’s people. Nevertheless, even if one adopts the position that the phrase refers to arrogance, the context as a whole would still suggest that these enemies of YHWH expressed their arrogance precisely by engaging in violence against his people.

²²² Garrett makes this same observation. See Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, 355.

²²³ As Garrett states concerning Joel 2:20, “Joel saw that a reversal would take place in which their enemies would experience the horrors they brought upon Israel.” Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, 355. See also Theodore of Mopsuestia, *The Twelve*, 115.

²²⁴ Garrett rightly notes that the condemnation of the Gentile nations in Joel 4 “makes sense only in a context of the Gentile powers having desecrated Jerusalem in 2:1–11.” Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, 299. His argument suggests that the accusations against the nations in Joel 4 have a bearing on our understanding of the offenses for which the army of Joel 2 was punished. Moreover, as Roberts rightly sees, Joel 4 reflects that strand of tradition whereby (1) God uses a foreign nation to reprove his people, and then (2) God delivers his people by judging those very nations who had been used as instruments of his wrath. See J. J. M. Roberts, “The End of War in the Zion Tradition: The Imperialistic Background of an Old Testament Vision of World Wide Peace,” *HBT* 26, no. 1 (2004): 13–17.

nations in order to punish them for invading and exiling his people (cf. Joel 4:1–13).²²⁵

On a whole then, Joel seems to testify to a form of DRA that bears a striking resemblance to cases found in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.²²⁶

An analogous picture is found in other books among the Twelve.²²⁷ In Micah, God promises to repay his people’s sins by ruining their cities and leading them into exile through the agency of foreign nations (Mic 4:9–10; cf. Mic 1:6, 8–16; 2:3–5; 3:12; 6:9–16).²²⁸ But at the same time, YHWH also assures his people that the very nations who have come against them have been assembled by the Lord in order that they might be judged (Mic 4:9–13).²²⁹ Moreover, through the mention of “their plunder” (בצעם) in 4:13

²²⁵ Achtemeier comments on Joel 4:2 by saying, “All of the prophets preceding Joel considered the exiling of Israel to be punishment for its sin, but verse 2 here also understands Israel’s captivity as a sinful work of the foreign nations.” Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets I*, 153. It is not clear whether Achtemeier sees a tension between Joel and the other prophets at this point. While she is right to observe that the exile is portrayed both as punishment for Israel’s sins and as a sinful work of the nations, I think she does not sufficiently clarify that these perspectives complement one another. Thus, it seems more accurate to say that Joel agrees with his colleagues that God used the nations to punish Israel *and* that the nations would be condemned for their participation in Israel’s exile.

²²⁶ As with Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, Joel seems to describe this foreign army as being subjected to an immediate, active, and non-eternal form of DRA. Moreover, like Isaiah and Jeremiah, Joel does not provide enough information to determine whether God’s influence was retributive or non-retributive.

²²⁷ I would argue that each of the following examples describes immediate, active, non-eternal DRA. In addition, one could make the case that DRA is retributive in both Habakkuk and Micah. With respect to the former, the characterization of Babylon (cf. Hab 1:6–11, 13–17) may be intended to provide the reason why the nation was subjected to reprobating influence. With respect to the latter, it is possible that Mic 5:14 is meant to clarify the motivations behind God’s negative dealings with the nations described in the book. However, it must be acknowledged that in both these cases, the authors stop short of *explicitly* claiming that God’s reprobating influence was intended to be an act of retribution.

²²⁸ Schreiner helpfully observes that the transgressions of Israel and Judah consist of covenant violations. See Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 400–401.

²²⁹ As Smith observes, “[Mic 4:11–13] begins with the present calamity (“now”) brought on by the attack on Jerusalem by many nations (v 11). However, the nations do not know that they are simply doing the will of Yahweh (v 12). This is his plan to destroy them.” Ralph L. Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, WBC (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1984), 41. Similarly, Daniel J. Simundson, *Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah*, AOTC (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 323–24; Shepherd, *Book of the Twelve*, 261–62; Mark J. Boda, “Babylon in the Book of the Twelve,” *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel* 3, no. 2 (2014): 228–29; Roberts, “End of War,” 16–17.

alongside the reference to the Babylonian exile in 4:9–10, Micah seems to imply that God would punish Israel’s enemies precisely for carrying out the exile that he had purposed against his people.²³⁰ The book of Habakkuk paints a similar picture. In response to the prophet’s complaint (Hab 1:2–4),²³¹ YHWH reveals that he is raising up the Chaldeans (Hab 1:5–11) in order to reprove the wicked (Hab 1:12).²³² As a result of God’s decree, the Babylonians would dispossess the nations (Hab 1:5–6), destroy cities (Hab 1:10), and

²³⁰ Similarly, Sweeney concludes that “Micah presents a scenario in which peace among the nations and universal recognition of YHWH will emerge following a period in which a new Davidic king will arise to punish the nations *for their own prior abuse of Israel* [emphasis added].” Since Sweeney also affirms that, in Micah 4–5, Israel suffers both “as YHWH’s victims” and “at the hands of the nations” who “play a role in punishing Israel and destroying Jerusalem,” it seems like his perspective on Mic 4 is compatible with the detection of DRA. Marvin A. Sweeney, “Micah’s Debate with Isaiah,” *JSOT* 93 (2001): 113, 120–22.

²³¹ There is debate regarding the precise identity of the subject of Habakkuk’s first complaint (1:2–4). Some argue that it refers to the wickedness of Babylon (Marvin A. Sweeney, “Structure, Genre, and Intent in the Book of Habakkuk,” in *Reading Prophetic Books: Form, Intertextuality, and Reception in Prophetic and Post-Biblical Literature*, FAT [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014], 295; Michael H. Floyd, “Prophetic Complaints about the Fulfillment of Oracles in Habakkuk 1:2–17 and Jeremiah 15:10–18,” *JBL* 110, no. 3 [1991]: 403). Meanwhile, Vasholz argues that both Hab 1:2–4 and 1:12–17 form a unified complaint against the Assyrians (Robert I. Vasholz, “Habakkuk: Complaints or Complaint?,” *Presb* 18, no. 1 [1992]: 50–52). However, the majority position remains the most persuasive, which is that Hab 1:2–4 reflects the prophet’s grief over the wickedness he sees within Judah. See for instance Richard Whitekettle, “How the Sheep of Judah Became Fish: Habakkuk 1,14 and the Davidic Monarchy,” *Bib* 96, no. 2 (2015): 277; Timmer, *Non-Israelite Nations*, 136; Theodore of Mopsuestia, *The Twelve*, 269; John Calvin, *Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai*, trans. John Owen, 500th anniversary ed., vol. 4 of *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets, Calvin’s Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 15–20; Kenneth L. Barker and Waylon Bailey, *Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, NAC (Nashville: B & H, 1998), 270–74, ProQuest; William Hayes Ward, “Habakkuk,” in *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Obadiah and Joel*, ICC (New York: Scribners, 1911), 3–4; David W. Baker, *Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah*, TOTC (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1988), 44; John Goldingay, “Habakkuk,” in *Minor Prophets II*, NIBC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 54–55; Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 99; Elizabeth Achtemeier, *Nahum–Malachi*, paperback ed., IBC (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012), 34; Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 401; Hamilton, *God’s Glory*, 252. For a survey of scholarly positions on the related issue of the identity of the wicked within Habakkuk, see Oskar Dangel, “Habakkuk in Recent Research,” *CurBR* 9 (2001): 139–44.

²³² As Calvin says, “The Prophet began to show from whom the Jews were to expect the vengeance of God, even from the Chaldeans, who would come, not by their own instinct, but by the hidden impulse of God. God indeed testifies that he should be the author of this war, and that the Chaldeans would fight, as it were, under his auspices.” Calvin, *Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai*, 27. See also Theodore of Mopsuestia, *The Twelve*, 270–71; Baker, *Habakkuk*, 43–45; Barker and Bailey, *Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah*, 275–77; Ward, “Habakkuk,” 4; Goldingay, “Habakkuk,” 57–58; Timmer, *Non-Israelite Nations*, 140–41; Achtemeier, *Nahum–Malachi*, 37–38; Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 407.

take a host of captives through violence (Hab 1:8–9, 14–17).²³³ However, Babylon would also be found guilty of sin (Hab 1:11) and would eventually receive punishment for their crimes.²³⁴ Significantly, the Lord promises that Babylon would be looted specifically because they plundered many nations (Hab 2:7–8) and committed acts of violence (Hab 2:8, 10, 12, 17).²³⁵ In other words, the Chaldeans would be punished for doing what God had raised them up to do.²³⁶ Lastly, the book of Zechariah may express comparable convictions regarding DRA.²³⁷ In continuity with other prophetic books, Zechariah states

²³³ For similar interpretations of Hab 1:8–9 and 1:14, see David Toshio Tsumura, “Polysemy and Parallelism in Hab 1,8–9,” *ZAW* 120 (2008): 198–202; Richard Whitekettle, “Like a Fish and Shrimp Out of Water: Identifying the Dāg and Remeś Animals of Habakkuk 1:14,” *BBR* 24, no. 4 (2014): 500–501.

²³⁴ Calvin maintains that God’s sovereignty over the Babylonians neither clears them of guilt nor impugns the Lord’s character. So he states while commenting on Hab 1:7, “Thus we see that the worst of men are in God’s hand, as Satan is, who is their head; and yet that God is not implicated in their wickedness, as some insane men maintain . . . [Scripture teaches] that the wicked are led here and there by the hidden power of God, and that yet the fault is in them, when they do anything in a deceitful and cruel manner, and that God ever remains just, whatever use he may make of instruments, yea, the very worst.” Calvin, *Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai*, 29.

²³⁵ So Theodore says of Babylon, “Just as you attacked and robbed others of their possessions, so too will your possessions be taken from you by those left behind for your punishment in repayment for your wiping out vast numbers belonging to God and for your ungodly acts against God’s country and city and all its inhabitants (referring to Jerusalem and all in it)” Theodore of Mopsuestia, *The Twelve*, 275. See also Calvin, *Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai*, 97; Barker and Bailey, *Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah*, 308; Timmer, *Non-Israelite Nations*, 141.

²³⁶ Sweeney finds fault with this interpretation of the role of Babylon in Habakkuk. According to Sweeney, while Hab 1:5–11 does present YHWH as having raised up the Chaldeans, it does *not* describe them as the instrument of God’s punitive justice. Indeed, Habakkuk provides no explanation for why God established the Babylonian empire, though the book does predict that the evil nation would eventually crumble on account of its many transgressions (see Sweeney, “Structure, Genre, and Intent,” 295–99). If Sweeney is correct, then the text would not depict God as having influenced the Chaldeans to engage in behavior for which they would eventually be condemned. However, I fail to be persuaded by his reading since (1) he treats 1:5–11 as an intensification of the complaint found in 1:2–4, which seems awkward given the fact that YHWH is presented as the speaker, (2) it is difficult to see how 1:5–11 could function as an adequate answer to Hab 1:2–4 if in fact YHWH fails to explain why he raised up the Chaldeans, (3) the *hiphil* form of יכח often carries the sense “to reprove” or “to punish,” and likely assumes this meaning in 1:12, and (4) Sweeney fails to see that Habakkuk’s perspective on the Chaldeans is in keeping with how other prophets often depict God’s use of the nations.

²³⁷ Although Zechariah may differ from Micah and Habakkuk in at least one respect: it does not reveal whether DRA was retributive or non-retributive.

that those who formerly scattered Judah and Jerusalem would be plundered as repayment for their actions against God’s people (Zech 2:1–4, 12–13).²³⁸ Yet, the book also ascribes these calamities to God’s own doing (Zech 1:1–6; 2:10; 7:10–14),²³⁹ thereby revealing that these foreign oppressors came against Israel by God’s design and were merely instruments of divine recompense. Altogether, these details intimate that (1) YHWH responded to his people’s sins by influencing foreign nations to conquer and scatter them; (2) YHWH found fault with the nations for conquering and scattering his people; and (3) YHWH promised to judge the nations for conquering and scattering his people. In addition, Zechariah alludes to DRA in its concluding chapter.²⁴⁰ In Zechariah 14, YHWH reveals his intention to gather all the nations against Israel with the result that Jerusalem would be ransacked and half its population would be exiled (Zech 14:1–2; cf. 12:3).²⁴¹ Afterwards however, YHWH would fight those same nations on Judah’s behalf (14:3; cf. 12:1–9), striking them down with plagues (14:12) and confusion (14:13), so that the men

²³⁸ Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, “Death or Conversion: The Gentiles in the Concluding Chapters of the Book of Isaiah and the Book of the Twelve,” *JTS* 68, no. 1 (2017): 6, 8; Achtemeier, *Nahum–Malachi*, 115–16, 118–19; Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 192–93; Pamela J. Scalise, “Zechariah,” in *Minor Prophets II*, NIBC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 208, 215; Julia M. O’Brien, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, AOTC (Nashville: Abingdon, 2004), 181, 185; Barry G. Webb, *The Message of Zechariah*, Biblical Resource (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 74–76; Andrew E. Hill, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, TOTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012), 138–40.

²³⁹ John Calvin, *Zechariah and Malachi*, trans. John Owen, 500th anniversary ed., vol. 5 of *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets, Calvin’s Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 64–65; O’Brien, *Nahum–Malachi*, 169, 214; Hill, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, 144, 191; Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 227–29; Scalise, “Zechariah,” 253–54.

²⁴⁰ With regard to the historic referent of Zech 14, ultimately I think Wolters is correct when he says, “Everything in Zechariah 14 has had, and will have, multiple historical fulfillments, perhaps coming to a climax at the consummation of the biblical story. In fact this is true in general of the ‘day of the Lord’, of which this pericope is a description.” Al Wolters, “Zechariah 14 and Biblical Theology: Patristic and Contemporary Case Studies,” in *Out of Egypt: Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig Bartholomew et al., Scripture and Hermeneutics (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 284.

²⁴¹ Hill, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, 258–59; Shepherd, *The Twelve*, 472–73; Calvin, *Zechariah and Malachi*, 407–8.

of Judah might plunder their oppressors in kind (14:14).²⁴² Such a turn of events suggests that these hostile nations would be taken to task for engaging in behaviors inspired by God's influence. Thus, it seems warranted to conclude that Zechariah bears witness to instances of DRA that resemble those found elsewhere in the Twelve.

Observations on DRA in the Latter Prophets

As I hope to have shown, the Latter Prophets repeatedly bear witness to cases in which God influences responsible agents towards wicked behaviors, only to then condemn these actors for engaging in the very behaviors he inspired. Thus, one can safely conclude that this section of the OT provides several examples of DRA. Moreover, the depiction of DRA found within the Latter Prophets resembles the testimony of both the Torah and the Former Prophets. Specifically, like the sections of the OT that precede it, the Latter Prophets attests to the significance and the complexity of DRA.

First of all, this study demonstrates that DRA plays a significant role in the theology of the Latter Prophets. Not only is DRA attested throughout this section of the OT, but it is also depicted as (1) a crucial means by which God works out his plans in history; *and* as (2) a manner by which YHWH reveals his glory. So on the one hand, the authors of the Latter Prophets repeatedly refer to DRA in order to explain the exiles of both the northern and southern kingdoms (Isa 6:9–10; 8:14–16; 10:5ff; 29:9–14; 63:17; 64:4–6; Jer 25:8–14; Ezek 20:25–26). Moreover, these books also predicate Israel's future hopes upon the exercise of DRA in two ways: (1) DRA would be employed against Israel's enemies, thereby ensuring that God's people would be able to enjoy lasting peace (Isa 10:5ff; Jer 25:8–14; Ezek 38–39; Joel 2:1–27; Mic 4:11–13; Hab 1–2; Zech 14); and (2) God would purify his people from impiety by subjecting its wicked elements to DRA

²⁴² Roberts, "End of War," 14–15; Hill, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, 267–68; Shepherd, *The Twelve*, 472–73, 475–76; Calvin, *Zechariah and Malachi*, 408–9.

(Ezek 14:9–11). And on the other hand, several texts within the Latter Prophets present DRA as a vehicle for demonstrating YHWH’s holiness and sovereignty. For starters, arguably the most striking description of DRA in the OT takes place within a theophanic throne room scene intended to underscore YHWH’s absolute rule (Isa 6). Additionally, through DRA, the Lord demonstrates that he has absolute control even over the mightiest kingdoms of the world (Isa 10:5ff; 19:1–14; Jer 25:8–14; Ezek 38–39; Joel 2:1–11; Mic 4:11–13; Zech 2:6; 7:14; 14:2–3). Moreover, Ezek 38–39 and Zech 14 show that God’s holiness and glory will be demonstrated through DRA, while the latter adds that YHWH’s eschatological rule over all the earth will be established by subjecting the Lord’s foes to DRA. Thus, according to the Latter Prophets, YHWH’s demonstrates his glory as the Holy One and the Lord of all by bending the wills of his opponents towards their demise.

My survey leads to a second observation: like the Torah and the Former Prophets, the Latter Prophets portray DRA as a rich, multifaceted concept. Not only do the objects of DRA vary (i.e., Israel, Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, idolaters in general, all nations, etc.), but the descriptions of God’s influence vary both between books and within books. So for instance, the Latter Prophets address the subject of God’s motivation in different ways: DRA is sometimes presented as an act of retribution (ex., Isa 6:9–10; 8:14–16; 19:1–4, 14; 29:9–14; Ezek 14:9–11; 20:25–26),²⁴³ while in at least one text, DRA is depicted as non-retributive (Ezek 38–39).²⁴⁴ Furthermore, these books contain diverse portraits of God’s involvement in DRA. In some instances, DRA is presented as occurring without any mediating agents (Isa 10:5ff; 44:18; 63:17; 64:4–12; Jer 25:8–14;

²⁴³ Perhaps Mic 4:11–13 and Hab 1:5–17 may be added to this list.

²⁴⁴ Moreover, in a number of cases, the biblical authors do not include enough information to determine whether DRA is retributive or non-retributive. See Isa 10:5ff; 44:18; 63:17; 64:4–12; Jer 25:8–14; Joel 2:1–20; Zech 14:2–3, 12–15.

Ezek 20:25–26; 38–39; Joel 2:11–20; Mic 4:11–13; Hab 1:5–11; Zech 14:2–3), while in other cases the Lord is said to act through the mediation of others (Isa 6:9–10; 8:14–16; 29:9–14).²⁴⁵ In addition, though the Latter Prophets overwhelmingly favor presenting DRA as an active work of God, there is at least one example of passive DRA (Isa 8:14–16). Thus, these books do not present DRA in a monolithic fashion; instead, through their diverse depictions, they highlight the conceptual complexity of DRA.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁵ Furthermore, in some examples, both immediate and mediate forms of DRA function in tandem (Isa 19:1–3, 14; Ezek 14:9–11).

²⁴⁶ However, the examples of DRA in the Latter Prophets are uniform in one respect: they all portray non-eternal forms of DRA.

CHAPTER 6
DIVINE REPROBATING ACTIVITY
IN THE WRITINGS

Thus far, I have demonstrated that both the Torah and the Prophets attest to the significance and complexity of DRA. In this chapter, I continue to explore the concept of DRA by proceeding to the OT's final section, the Writings. As my survey demonstrates, the Writings provide further evidence that the canonical portrait of DRA is neither monolithic nor insignificant.

DRA in the Psalter

A few individual psalms¹ in the MT seem to bear witness to DRA.² For example, Psalm 81 may suggest that God responded to Israel's rebelliousness by

¹ Many scholars today argue that the Psalter shows evidence of purposeful, editorial shaping; as such, these scholars posit that each psalm should be read in light of its place within the whole literary work. See for instance Gerald H. Wilson, "The Shape of the Book of Psalms," *Int* 46 (1992): 129–42; Jerome F. D. Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge and the Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, JSOTSup (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 11–19; Nancy L. deClaisse-Walford, *Reading from the Beginning: The Shaping of the Hebrew Psalter* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997), 1–8; David C. Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter: An Eschatological Programme in the Book of Psalms*, JSOTSup (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 297–303. Despite the prominence of this view, not everyone is convinced. For instance, David Willgren contends that the Psalter is an anthology and as such, a psalm's location within the Psalter has little-to-no impact on its meaning. See David Willgren, *The Formation of the "Book" of Psalms: Reconsidering the Transmission and Canonization of Psalmody in Light of Material Culture and the Poetics of Anthologies*, FAT (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 389–92. For the purposes of this study, I approach each psalm as an individual composition; as such, I do not explore the question of how the *Sitz im Buch* of a particular psalm might or might not enrich its meaning. For a helpful introduction to the various scholarly approaches to the Psalter, see William P. Brown, "The Psalms: An Overview," in *Oxford Handbook of the Psalms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1–23.

² The LXX may provide additional examples of DRA. For instance, Ps 43:19 LXX reads, "And our heart did not fall away, and you turned our paths from your way" (καὶ οὐκ ἀπέστη εἰς τὰ ὀπίσω ἡ καρδία ἡμῶν· καὶ ἐξέκλινας τὰς τρίβους ἡμῶν ἀπὸ τῆς ὁδοῦ σου). Meanwhile, the same verse in the MT denies that Israel departed from God's ways: "Our heart was not turned back, nor did our step[s] turn from your way" (לֹא-נָסַג וְהַת אֲשֶׁרֵינוּ מִנִּי אַרְחָךְ). The LXX probably interprets וְהַת as a *hiphil* 2MS, while the MT has the verb pointed as a *qal* 3FS. In any event, this verse provides one example where the LXX may bear

subjecting them to reprobating influence.³ The psalm consists of two main sections: a call to praise YHWH in the festival (vv. 1–5), and YHWH’s exhortative speech (vv. 6–17).⁴ After the psalmist’s call to worship (vv. 1–5) and a brief introductory note (v. 6a), YHWH addresses the nation in order to exhort them towards obedience (vv. 6b–17). The address begins with the Lord reminding his audience of how he acted on Israel’s behalf when they were oppressed in Egypt (Ps 81:7–8).⁵ After liberating them, YHWH gave them his commands, particularly urging them not to walk after foreign gods (Ps 81:9–11). Despite God’s past deliverance (Ps 81:7–8) and the promise of future blessing (Ps 81:11), the wilderness generation refused to submit to YHWH as their king (Ps 81:12). Such rebellion did not go unpunished. As Psalm 81:12–13 states, “But my people did not obey my voice; Israel was unwilling [to obey] me.⁶ So I gave him over [וַאֲשַׁלְחֵהוּ] to the

witness to DRA while the MT does not.

³ Scholars have come to different conclusions regarding how to classify Ps 81. Mowinckel understands Ps 81 to be an enthronement psalm from the New Year festival; moreover, he views it a “complex liturgy” that employs a mixed style. See Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas, Biblical Resource (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 1:121–22, 2:76. Gunkel agrees that the psalm is a mixed type, but he disputes the notion that it is an enthronement psalm. See Hermann Gunkel and Joachim Begrich, *Introduction to Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel*, trans. James D. Nogalski (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1998), 71–72. Westermann classified Ps 81 as a festival psalm that, together with the historical psalms, referred to Israel’s history in order to admonish the community. See Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, trans. Keith R. Crim and Richard N. Soulen (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), 241. Dahood posits that Ps 81 is a “composite liturgy” in which a hymn (Ps 81:2–6a) and an oracle (Ps 81:6b–17) were joined together. See Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms II: 51–100*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1968), 263. Using his own classification system, Brueggemann considers Ps 81 to be an example of a psalm of disorientation because it reveals God’s perspective on the disrupted relationship between he and his people. See Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary*, Augsburg Old Testament Studies (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 88, 92–94.

⁴ Others who see the structure similarly include David Emanuel, “An Unrecognized Voice: Intra-Textual and Intertextual Perspectives on Psalm 81,” *HS* 50 (2009): 88; Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, WBC (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 322; Konrad Schaefer, *Psalms*, Berit Olam (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2001), 198.

⁵ Allan M. Harman, “The Exodus and the Sinai Covenant in the Book of Psalms,” *RTR* 73, no. 1 (2014): 14.

⁶ The MT of Ps 81:12b reads וְיִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא־אָבָה לִי (lit. “And Israel was not willing to me”). In the context, it seems clear that it was obedience that Israel was not willing to render to YHWH. However,

stubbornness of their heart [לָבָם]⁷; they walk in their own counsel.” These verses suggest that God responded to Israel’s post-exodus rebellion by purposefully subjecting them to their own hardened wills⁸; as a result, the nation continuously “walk[ed] in their own counsel”—an expression which clearly refers to a settled disregard for the Lord’s commands.⁹

The psalm concludes with an expression of what might have been had Israel submitted to God’s commands (Ps 81:14–17):¹⁰

Oh, that my people were obedient to me—that Israel were walking in my ways.¹¹ In little time, I would subdue their enemies and I would raise my hand over their foes!¹² Those who hate YHWH will come cringing before him; their time [of

Tanner may also be correct that the verse expresses a lack of desire for YHWH himself. See Nancy deClaissé-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth Laneel Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 639.

⁷ The 3MS object in וַאֲשַׁלְּחֵהוּ should be understood in a collective sense as referring to Israel. In addition, the use of the verb שלח in the *piel* stem may suggest that God did more than passively abandon his people to “the law of cause and effect” (as argued for instance by Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51–100*, Hermeneia [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005], 325); instead, the verb may imply that God took a more active role in furthering Israel’s hard-heartedness (so also Emanuel, “Unrecognized Voice,” 115).

⁸ Hesse rightly states that the expression שרירות לב denotes a persistent state of evil and is similar to the expression “stiff-necked” used elsewhere in the OT. Franz Hesse, *Das Verstockungsproblem im Alten Testament: Eine frömmigkeitsgeschichtliche Untersuchung*, BZAW (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1955), 16.

⁹ Rightly Emanuel, “Unrecognized Voice,” 104.

¹⁰ Cole correctly observes a logical development in YHWH’s speech: “a progression can be seen from the hope that Israel would listen in v. 9 of the second paragraph, to the fact that they did not listen in v. 12 of paragraph three, to the description in vv. 14–17 of what would have occurred if only they had listened.” Robert L. Cole, *The Shape and Message of Book III (Psalms 73–89)*, JSOTSup (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 100.

¹¹ Ps 81:14 expresses a desire on God’s part for Israel to have obeyed his commands. As Calvin rightly argues, Ps 81 seems to assert both that God took away Israel’s ability to obey him (v. 13) and that he sincerely desired the obedience of his people (v. 14). See John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, trans. James Anderson, 500th anniversary ed., *Calvin’s Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 3:320–25.

¹² LeMon argues for a similar translation of Ps 81:15b, partly on the basis of evidence from Egyptian iconography. In LeMon’s estimation, YHWH’s act of raising his hand signifies that he is ready to deal the deathblow to Israel’s enemies provided that Israel obey his commands. See Joel M. LeMon,

humiliation] will be forever.¹³ But he would have made [Israel] eat from the finest wheat; from the Rock, I would have satisfied you with honey.¹⁴

In this section of God's speech, readers learn that Israel's refusal to submit to YHWH's ways has led to defeat at the hands of enemy nations (Ps 81:14–16), as well as to the loss of divine provision (Ps 81:17).¹⁵ Now, God could have dealt swiftly with all Israel's opponents and he could have richly satisfied his people's desires. Why then did God refrain from blessing his people in these ways? Verse 14 reveals that YHWH would have taken such action had Israel rendered obedience to him.¹⁶ Therefore, in light of 81:14, it seems right to conclude that Israel suffered negative consequences because they failed to walk according to YHWH's commands.¹⁷ However, given the Lord's declaration in verse 13 that he "gave [Israel] over to the stubbornness of their heart," the text leaves readers with the impression that God's own reprobating influence played a part in bringing about Israel's distressed situation. In other words, Psalm 81 seems to teach two ideas simultaneously: first, YHWH abandoned Israel to foreign hostility and to economic hardship as a punishment for their continued disobedience (vv. 14–15),¹⁸ and second,

"YHWH's Hand and the Iconography of the Blow in Psalm 81:14–16," *JBL* 132, no. 4 (2013): 870–78.

¹³ Emanuel correctly argues that Ps 81:16b refers to the fate of Israel's enemies/the haters of YHWH. Emanuel, "Unrecognized Voice," 106–7.

¹⁴ Tate rightly notes that the context suggests a conditional idea in v. 17. Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 321.

¹⁵ Cole comes to a similar conclusion partly on the basis of Ps 81's literary location. Cole, *Shape of Book III*, 96–101.

¹⁶ Ps 81 stresses the importance of obedience by its repeated use of the verb שמע. As Goulder notes, "שמע is used four times here to emphasize that the disasters which have befallen Israel have come because they *did not hearken* to God." M. D. Goulder, *The Psalms of Asaph and the Pentateuch*, Studies in the Psalter (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 153.

¹⁷ So Goulder rightly states, "The national defeat, and the peril of worse to come, are indicated by vv. 15–16 . . . [the presence of Israel's enemies] is a clear indication of Yahweh's wrath . . . and of the sin which must have been committed to incur such a punishment." Goulder, *Psalms of Asaph*, 157. See also Calvin, *Psalms*, 3:322–25; Tremper Longman III, *Psalms*, TOTC (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 304.

¹⁸ As Calvin states of v. 15, "Here the Israelites are taught, that all the calamities which had

YHWH had also punished Israel's prior rebellion by rendering them morally incapable of walking in obedience to him (v. 13).¹⁹ Altogether, it seems warranted to conclude that, according to Psalm 81, God punished a generation of Israelites by influencing them towards sin so that they might be justly abandoned to suffer divine vengeance.²⁰ As such, God's actions in this psalm can be appropriately described as a retributive, active, immediate, non-eternal form of DRA.²¹

befallen them were to be imputed to their own sins." Calvin, *Psalms*, 3:325.

¹⁹ As Kraus states, "The reaction of Yahweh [to Israel's disobedience] took this course: he abandoned the people to themselves, to the hardening of their senses, and to their own devices. . . . God punishes by letting the disobedient go their own way." Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, trans. Hilton C. Oswald (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 151. Booij calls this a "judgment of hard-heartedness" and a "judgment of obstinacy." Thijs Booij, "The Background of the Oracle in Psalm 81," *Bib* 65, no. 4 (1984): 466n6, 475. Calvin describes the nature of the judgment described in Ps 81:13 in this way: "By these words, God testifies, that he justly punished his people, when he deprived them of good and wholesome doctrine, and gave them over to a reprobate mind." Calvin, *Psalms*, 3:321.

²⁰ Schaefer takes a somewhat different position, claiming that God's actions in Ps 81:13 were corrective rather than punitive. He appeals to Ps 81:14, which he interprets as suggesting that God's actual desire in giving Israel over to their stubbornness was for the nation to "face their foolishness and convert" so that they might experience God's protection and providence (see Schaefer, *Psalms*, 200–1). However, given the very nature of the action described in v. 13 (i.e., giving Israel over to their own hardheartedness), it seems unlikely that this text describes a corrective measure. Moreover, downplaying God's punitive intent is not the only way of dealing with the tension between v. 13 and v. 14. So for instance, I would argue that in Ps 81:12–15, the psalmist was appealing to the experience of a previous generation as an implicit warning to his contemporaries. In other words, the psalmist was exhorting his audience to obey God's commands in the present by reminding them of both the punishments endured by their disobedient forefathers (which included being subjected to DRA) and of God's willingness to protect and bless an obedient Israel. Thus, I think Broyles more accurately describes the import of the text when he says, "The conclusion of the psalm is open-ended. While their forebears forfeited their opportunity with Yahweh, the congregation now hearing this psalm can still make the right choice." Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms*, *Understanding the Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), sec. 81, ProQuest.

²¹ The retributive nature of DRA in this instance is obvious, as God's actions in v. 13 are clearly a response to the disobedience reported in v. 12. Moreover, given that (1) YHWH's involvement is described with the transitive verb *שָׁלַח* in the *piel* stem, and (2) no mediating agent is posited, it seems best to describe God's agency in Ps 81:13 as active and immediate. Lastly, since there is no indication of eternal punishment involved, God's reprobating influence in Ps 81 should be viewed as non-eternal.

Another psalm that may depict DRA is Psalm 92,²² a hymn meant to be sung on the Sabbath (Ps 92:1).²³ The psalm opens with an indirect call to worship by declaring how good and appropriate it is to praise YHWH for his covenant love and faithfulness (Ps 92:2–4).²⁴ The Lord’s deeds have made the psalmist glad (Ps 92:5)²⁵; his works and his thoughts are great and unfathomable (Ps 92:6). However, brutes and fools do not recognize the majesty of God’s mysterious workings (Ps 92:7).²⁶ In particular, they do not understand the true reason for the existence and prosperity of the wicked²⁷: “When the wicked sprout up like grass and all who commit acts of iniquity blossom, it is so that they might be destroyed forever and ever” (Ps 92:8).²⁸ While dullards might see the presence

²² In terms of its form, Estes rightly observes that “Psalm 92 features an unusual combination of the standard psalmic patterns, with elements of descriptive praise, declarative praise, and wisdom instruction.” Daniel J. Estes, *Psalms 73–150*, NAC (Nashville: B & H, 2019), 190.

²³ Scholars have provided different explanations for why this psalm was understood to be particularly relevant for the Sabbath liturgy. See for instance Nahum M. Sarna, “Psalm for the Sabbath Day (Ps 92),” *JBL* 81, no. 2 (1962): 155–68; Dan Vogel, “A Psalm for Sabbath? A Literary View of Psalm 92,” *JBQ* 28, no. 4 (2000): 211–21.

²⁴ Gunkel refers to Ps 92:2–5 as being part of a “looser form” of the hymnic introduction. Gunkel, *Introduction to Psalms*, 29.

²⁵ Though he relies too heavily on the outmoded concept “corporate personality,” Mowinckel rightly observes that first person singular forms may serve a representative or corporate function (see Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, 1:44–45). Since the psalm was meant to function in Israel’s liturgy (Ps 92:1; cf. Schaefer, *Psalms*, xxv), and since the speaker may be portrayed as a king (Steven J. L. Croft, *The Identity of the Individual in the Psalms*, JSOTSup [Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 1987], 105–6), it seems best to interpret Ps 92’s first-person references as pointing beyond the individual psalmist’s experiences.

²⁶ Vogel rightly notes that “this” (זאת) in Ps 92:7 points backwards and forwards: “the pronoun *this* points in two directions: [it] harks back to the previous verse, indicating that these simpletons cannot grasp anything that is not manifest before them. Yet it also introduces the next verse, where we learn that these individuals see only their proliferation, never suspecting their implicit doom.” Vogel, “Psalm for Sabbath,” 218.

²⁷ Ps 92:8 seems to refer to the continued presence *and* the prosperity of the wicked; there is no need to limit the interpretation of the verse to only one or the other. The use of the verbs “sprout” (פרח) and “bud” (צוץ) are appropriate metaphors for both ideas. Moreover, as other psalms (cf. Ps 10; 37; 49; 73) and other OT texts (cf. Jer 12:1–2; Job 21:7–34; Eccl 7:15) demonstrate, the problem that often vexed the biblical authors was not the mere existence of the wicked, but their prosperity.

²⁸ According to Croft, the wicked here do not refer only to evildoers within Israel; instead,

and success of the wicked as evidence of God’s absence or of the futility of righteous living (cf. Ps 73:11–14), the psalmist recognizes a divine purpose behind these seemingly inexplicable occurrences; the lives and prosperity of the wicked are intended by God to lead to their everlasting destruction (לְהַשְׁמַדֵם עַד־יָעַד).²⁹ This promise of future retribution moves the psalmist to celebrate the eternal greatness of God (Ps 92:9), whose vile enemies are doomed to perish (Ps 92:10). Unlike the evildoers, the righteous will see their cause vindicated by YHWH (Ps 92:11–16).³⁰ While the wicked are like weeds fated for destruction, the righteous are like fruitful trees planted in God’s own house (Ps 92:13–14); they will continue to bear fruit in their old age “so that they might declare the uprightness of YHWH, my Rock, in whom there is no iniquity” (Ps 92:15–16).

In Psalm 92, the notion of DRA seems to be expressed in verse 8: “When the wicked sprout up like grass and all who commit acts of iniquity blossom, it is so that they might be destroyed forever and ever.”³¹ Through the use of the prepositional phrase

“Psalm 92 has a cosmic dimension. The reference to the wicked must be taken on a worldwide scale.”
Croft, *Identity of the Individual*, 45.

²⁹ The JPS translation of v. 8 reflects a similar understanding of the verse: “Though the wicked bloom, they are like grass; though all evildoers blossom, it is only that they may be destroyed forever.” Tate’s translation may also be intended to communicate a similar thought: “When the wicked thrive, they are like grass—and when all the evildoers blossom out, it is to be forever destroyed.” Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 460.

³⁰ While the psalmist is probably recounting his own personal experiences in Ps 92:11–12 (as argued for instance by Nava Cohen, “Psalm 92: Structure and Meaning,” *ZAW* 124, no. 4 [2013]: 604), the liturgical setting suggests that his deliverance has implications for the worshipping community. As others have argued, first-person experiences described in the psalms can be paradigmatic for or representative of the worshipping community. For studies on the “I” in the psalms, see Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, 1:42–80, 2:29; Croft, *Identity of the Individual*, 177–81; Martin Ravndal Hauge, *Between Sheol and Temple: Motif Structure and Function in the I-Psalms*, JSOTSup (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 281–87.

³¹ It is possible to interpret both the initial infinitival phrase בִּפְרֹחַ and the *wayyiqtol* verb וַיִּצְיָצוּ as referring to the past (“when the wicked sprouted up . . . and all those who committed iniquity blossomed”). However, the affinities with wisdom psalms (cf. Pss 37 and 73) suggest that the actions described carry an indefinite or gnomic character (see Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 461–62). Moreover, instead of designating a specific time frame, the psalmist’s choice of verbal forms may reflect literary and poetic concerns. See Adele Berlin, “Grammatical Aspects of Biblical Parallelism,” *HUCA* 50 (1979): 40–41. In any event, I would argue that the text’s witness to DRA would remain evident regardless of how one

לְהַשְׂמֵדֵם, the verse indicates that a purpose underlies both the existence and the prosperity of the wicked.³² Given the emphasis in the preceding verses on God’s works and thoughts (Ps 92:5–7),³³ it seems probable that verse 8b refers to the Lord’s own designs.³⁴ As such, the text suggests that God himself intends for evildoers to live and to find success in the short run. However, far from revealing any indifference or injustice in God, the positive outcomes enjoyed by the wicked are purposed by the Lord to secure their destruction.³⁵

interprets the tenses of the verbs in question.

³² The preposition לְ is regularly used with an infinitive to express purpose. See Christo H. J. van der Merwe, Jackie A. Naudé, and Jan H. Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Richard S. Hess, *Biblical Languages: Hebrew 3* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 155, 287; Ronald J. Williams and John C. Beckman, *Williams’ Hebrew Syntax*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 83; Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 606.

³³ This contextual emphasis on divine agency is problematic for Amzallag’s argument that Ps 92 does not envision God participating in the judgment of the wicked. According to Amzallag, God’s role in the judgment is one of passivity, as “the wicked are expected to fall not by divine intervention but as an unavoidable consequence of their evil nature.” Nissim Amzallag, “Foreign Yahwistic Singers in the Jerusalem Temple? Evidence from Psalm 92,” *SJOT* 31, no. 2 (2017): 230. On the contrary, by extolling God’s works (cf. Ps 92:5–6) and his acts of deliverance (cf. Ps 92:11–12), the psalmist implies that the destruction of the wicked will come about by divine action. In addition, Sarna notes that Ps 92:9 suggests the same thought. As he says, “The Hebrew notion of God arousing or exalting himself is expressive of his activating the quality of retributive justice against his enemies. . . . מְרִים in Ps 92 9 explains the destruction of the wicked, mentioned in vs. 8. It is because God exalts himself to exercise judgment upon his enemies that the latter perish in disorder.” Sarna, “Psalm for the Sabbath Day,” 164–65).

³⁴ In commenting on Ps 92, Schaefer seems to come to similar conclusions: “The foolish cannot understand God’s profound purpose, that the wicked are destined for punishment, while the just flourish and bear fruit even in old age (vv. 7, 9, 12–14). Just as the wicked thrive, their tragic and sudden end has been determined, and this is in sharp contrast to the righteous destined for God’s loving regard.” Schaefer, *Psalms*, 231.

³⁵ Thus, Goldingay is correct to say that Ps 92:8 “declar[es] that the annihilation of the faithless was the very object of their flourishing. They were being given plenty of rope, so that they could hang themselves.” John Goldingay, *Psalms*, vol. 3, BCOTWP (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 57. However, he goes on to mistakenly describe the destruction of the wicked as being a result of a natural process. Contrary to his suggestion, the use of שָׂמַד in the *niphal* stem does not imply that the wicked “go through a process that has naturalness or inevitability built into it” (57). Such an argument seems to rest on a category error in which one mistakenly concludes that the passive voice (which is a grammatical category) refers to divine passivity (which is a theological category). In all likelihood, God is intended to be understood as the implicit divine agent in the passive construction לְהַשְׂמֵדֵם. In fact, taking God to be the implied agent is consistent with Goldingay’s own observations that “[the psalm] has spoken of Yhwh’s acts in vv. 4–5” and that “the psalm implies that Yhwh brings about [the wicked’s] annihilation” (57).

In other words, Psalm 92:8 describes a God who sovereignly orchestrates the lives and successes of the wicked with the intention of leading them to their fully-deserved doom.³⁶

Altogether, it seems warranted to conclude that Psalm 92:8 presents readers with an example of non-retributive,³⁷ eternal DRA.³⁸

³⁶ The psalm does not provide specific details regarding how God works out his reprobating purposes. As such, it cannot be determined whether Ps 92:8 bears witness to active/passive or mediate/immediate DRA.

³⁷ The psalm provides no suggestion that God forms his purpose in response to actions taken independently by the wicked. On the contrary, given that Ps 92:8 assigns the very existence of evil men to the divine counsel, it seems unlikely that the psalmist means to portray God's intentions *vis-à-vis* the wicked as itself being dependent upon any prior human actions.

³⁸ The eternal nature of the destruction envisioned is indicated explicitly in Ps 92:8b: “so that they might be destroyed forever and ever [טָוֹרֵךְ].” Admittedly, the statement may be understood in a more rhetorical fashion, so that it refers only to the certain physical death of the wicked. However, it would seem unwarranted to categorize 92:8 as a non-eternal case of DRA, since the psalmist stresses the durative character of the punishment envisioned. Moreover, I would argue that the psalm's reference to *an* eternal destruction (as opposed to the fully-formed doctrine of eternal punishment found in Jewish and Christian theology) should not be overlooked for at least two reasons. First, Ps 92:8 may have played a role in the canonical development of the concept of eternal punishment. For instance, if Levenson is right when he says (1) Dan 12's testimony to a “double resurrection” demonstrates “rich intertextual connections and dependence” upon other OT texts, and (2) “each of the several elements that appear in Dan 12:1–3 existed, at least germinally, in earlier stages of the religion of Israel,” (Jon D. Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006], 185, 215), then, it is at least possible that Ps 92:8 contributed to the formation of the theology expressed in Dan 12:1–3. Moreover, given the similar lexical choices, it seems plausible that the formulation ὀλεθρον αἰώνιον (“eternal destruction”) in 2 Thess 1:9 may be related to Ps 92:8 (Ps 91:8 LXX: ὅπως ἂν ἐξολεθρευθῶσιν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος). Since the verb ἐξολεθρεύω has no nominal form of its own, the construction ὀλεθρος αἰώνιος would be a natural choice if someone were seeking to express the thought of Ps 92:8b conceptually. Second, at least some scholars argue that there are passages in the OT (including in the Psalter) that testify to post-mortem blessings and judgments. So for instance, Mabie states, “There are a number of texts (especially Davidic psalms) that may be expressing elements of an OT notion of the hereafter and at the very least are consistent with fuller biblical teachings on post-death actualities.” F. J. Mabie, “Destruction,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry and Writings*, ed. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 101. Routledge concurs, noting that there are suggestions of the idea of resurrection and life after death in the OT (see Robin Routledge, *Old Testament Theology: A Thematic Approach* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008], 306–9). Dahood also has famously argued on the basis of Ugaritic parallels that the Psalms attest to the possibility of life eternal (see Dahood, *Psalms 1–50*, 91). Alexander has built on Dahood's initial premise, arguing that at least Pss 49 and 73 present clear testimony to eternal life; see T. Desmond Alexander, “The Psalms and the Afterlife,” *IBS* 9 (1987): 7–14. And, with regards to eternal punishment, Kim argues that the OT bears witness to “a second death” which refers to “YHWH's punishment over the wicked in the world to come” (as examples, he cites Deut 33:6, Isa 65:6, Jer 51:39, Dan 12:2, Ps 49:11, and Ps 73; see Eun-Jung Kim, “Reconsidering Eternal Life in the Old Testament: The Idea of Resurrection Rooted in the Torah” [PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015], 109–14; 136). If these scholars are right, then interpreters should not immediately dismiss the possibility that Ps 92:8 describes a punishment that is

The last example of DRA from the Psalter is found in Psalm 105, which provides a doxological rehearsal of God’s dealings with his people from the time of Abraham until the time of the conquest.³⁹ The opening call to praise YHWH exhorts readers to “make known among the peoples his deeds,” (Ps 105:1), to “tell of all his wonderful works” (Ps 105:2), and to “remember the wonderous works which he did, his signs and the judgments of his mouth” (Ps 105:5).⁴⁰ The psalmist then proceeds to do just what he calls for. Beginning with the time of Israel’s forefathers, the psalm recounts God’s election of Abraham and his seed, his fidelity to the covenant established with the patriarchs, and his protection of the Abrahamic line during their time as wanderers in Canaan (Ps 105:6–15). Then the psalm turns to the time of Joseph, when God summoned a famine over the land and sent him to Egypt as a slave (Ps 105:16). Joseph remained in this destitute state as “the word of YHWH refined him” (Ps 105:19); only then was he released and appointed lord over Egypt in order to rule over the nation’s princes and to instruct their elders (Ps 105:20–22). The psalmist then alludes to Exodus 1:7–14 to introduce the next chapter of God’s providential oversight of Israel’s history.⁴¹ After Israel came to Egypt (Ps 105:23), God made the nation of Israel abound in number and in

eternal in nature.

³⁹ Some scholars have plausibly posited that Ps 105 was written to encourage the exilic community by affirming the eternal validity of the Abrahamic covenant and the promise of the land. See for instance Richard J. Clifford, “Style and Purpose in Psalm 105,” *Bib* 60, no. 3 (1979): 427; Adele Berlin, “Interpreting Torah Traditions in Psalm 105,” in *Jewish Biblical Interpretation and Cultural Exchange*, ed. Natalie B. Dohrmann and David Stern (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 36. Meanwhile, Anderson unconvincingly argues that Ps 105 emphasizes the Abrahamic covenant *in order* to denigrate David and the Davidic covenant. See John E. Anderson, “Remembering the Ancestors: Psalms 105 and 106 as Conclusion to Book IV of the Psalter,” *PRStu* 44, no. 2 (2017): 193–94.

⁴⁰ These opening verses lend credence to Gillingham’s thesis that Ps 105 should be understood as a liturgical composition with a performative character. See Sue Gillingham, “Psalms 105 and 106 and the Participation in History through Liturgy,” *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel* 4 (2015): 462.

⁴¹ Rightly Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms* 3, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 72.

strength (Ps 105:23–24; cf. Exod 1:7). Then, “[YHWH] turned their heart to hate his people, to plot against his servants” (Ps 105:25; cf. Exod 1:8–14). While YHWH inspired the Egyptian hostility that threatened his people, he also raised up Israel’s deliverers: through Moses and Aaron, God accomplished his signs and wonders against the nation of Egypt (Ps 105:26–36). As a result of YHWH’s mighty intervention, the Israelites left the land of their captivity with newfound wealth (Ps 105:37–38); more importantly, they now had YHWH as their protector and their provider (Ps 105:39–41).⁴² The psalmist then points to God’s fidelity to the Abrahamic covenant as the reason for the events of the exodus and YHWH’s provision during Israel’s time in the wilderness (Ps 105:42).⁴³ In fact, it was because of the eternal covenant (cf. Ps 105:8, 10) that God also gave Israel the land of the Canaanites “so that they might keep his statutes and his laws” (Ps 105:43–45).⁴⁴ Evidently, Ps 105 presents Israel’s early history as a testimony to God’s faithfulness, power, and grace; therefore, the psalmist concludes in appropriate fashion by circling back to the call with which he began: “Praise YHWH!” (Ps 105:45c).⁴⁵

⁴² Berlin rightly notes that “throughout its Exodus section, by its selection of referents and its exegetical additions, the psalm stresses God’s care and protection of Israel.” Berlin, “Psalm 105,” 35. See also Judith Gärtner, “The Historical Psalms: A Study of Psalms 78; 105; 106, and 136 as Key Hermeneutical Texts in the Psalter,” *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel* 4 (2015): 385.

⁴³ The importance of the Abrahamic covenant is highlighted by the envelope formed between vv. 8–10 and v. 42. As Gärtner concludes on the basis of this textual feature, “In this way, the walk through history in vv. 12–41 is framed by the covenant remembrance of YHWH and is to be understood from the view of the covenant promise.” Gärtner, “Historical Psalms,” 384.

⁴⁴ I understand בְּעִבּוֹר in v. 45 to be introducing a purpose clause (see Williams and Beckman, *Hebrew Syntax*, 185; Waltke and O’Connor, *IBHS*, 638–39). Together with a number of scholars, I take the “laws and statutes” to refer to the Torah of the Sinai covenant (see for instance Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 3, 74; Goldingay, *Psalms 90–150*, 216–17; Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 312; Robert E. Wallace, *The Narrative Effect of Book IV of the Hebrew Psalter*, StBibLit (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 77–78, 80; Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013], 271). As such, I would posit that v. 45 undermines Choi’s argument that “in Ps 105 the Abrahamic covenant is an alternative to a covenant at Sinai as the source of divine revelation and a marker of ethnic identity.” John H. Choi, *Traditions at Odds: The Reception of the Pentateuch in Biblical and Second Temple Period Literature*, LHBOTS (New York: T & T Clark, 2010), 123.

⁴⁵ Gärtner correctly observes that, together with vv. 1–6, Ps 105:45 forms a “hymnic frame”

In describing the events that led up to Israel’s enslavement, the psalmist says, “He [i.e., YHWH] turned [הפך] their heart [לבם] to hate his people, to plot against his servants” (Ps 105:25). While it is grammatically possible to take לבם to be the subject of the verb הפך (leading to the translation “their heart turned to hate his people”), the lexical and contextual evidence suggests that YHWH should be understood as the implied subject. With respect to the lexical evidence, two considerations regarding the use of הפך are pertinent. First, in all other cases where לב/לבב functions as the subject of the verb הפך, the verb takes the *niphal* stem (cf. Exod 14:5; Hos 11:8; Lam 1:20). Given the psalmist’s choice of the *qal* stem, it seems unlikely that the psalmist intended to say “their heart turned” in verse 25. Second, the only other occurrence of הפך in the *qal* with לב/לבב as the verb’s modifier is in 1 Samuel 10:9, which contains the clause ויהפך־לו אלהים לב אחר (lit. “And God turned another heart for him”). Here, “God” is clearly functioning as the grammatical subject, and “heart” is best understood to be the verb’s object. Given the lexical parallels between 1 Samuel 10:9 and Psalm 105:25 (i.e., the use of הפך in the *qal* with לב/לבב), the former passage adds credibility to the argument that the latter also has לבב functioning as the object with God/YHWH serving as the implicit subject of הפך.⁴⁶

Turning to the contextual evidence, the psalm provides strong indications that the implied subject in verse 25 should be understood to be YHWH. First, Psalm 105:25’s allusion to Exodus 14:4–5 leads to this conclusion.⁴⁷ According to Exodus 14, “the heart

around the composition. Gärtner, “Historical Psalms,” 383.

⁴⁶ The absence of the sign of the accusative does not undermine this reading since הפך in the *qal* stem regularly takes a direct object without the sign of the accusative. See for instance Exod 10:19; Lev 13:10; Josh 7:8; 1 Sam 10:9; 1 Kgs 22:34; 2 Kgs 9:23; Jer 13:23; 31:13; Amos 5:7–8; 6:12; 8:10; Zeph 3:9; Hag 2:22; Pss 30:12; 41:4; 66:6; 78:44; 114:8; Job 12:5; 28:9; Lam 3:3; Neh 13:2; 1 Chr 19:3; 2 Chr 18:33.

⁴⁷ Goldingay is one of the few commentators to notice the connection between Ps 105 and Exod 14 (Goldingay, *Psalms 90–150*, 212). In addition to bolstering my argument for DRA in Ps 105:25, the allusion also calls into question Choi’s claim that Ps 105 does not depend on the text of the Pentateuch (see Choi, *Traditions at Odds*, 124).

of Pharaoh and his servants were turned” (ויהפך לבב פרעה ועבדיו) because of God’s hardening influence (cf. Exod 14:4–5). Psalm 105 borrows language from Exodus 14:5 when it says that Egypt enslaved the Israelites because “he turned [הפך] their heart [לבם] to hate his people, to plot against his servants.”⁴⁸ Given that Exodus 14:4 makes clear that YHWH should be understood as the implied agent behind Pharaoh’s change of heart in 14:5, it seems probable that YHWH should also be understood as the subject of הפך in Psalm 105:25 with לבם functioning as verb’s direct object. Second, the verses immediately preceding and following verse 25 also make it likely that YHWH is the subject of הפך. In neither verse 24 nor 26 is the subject explicitly stated; yet, the context sufficiently indicates that YHWH is meant as the active agent. In verse 24, the subject of the 3S verbs is clearly YHWH since he is the only one that could be responsible for “fructifying” (ויפר) and “strengthening” (ויעצמהו) the nation of Israel.⁴⁹ In verse 26, YHWH must also be the subject of שלח since he is clearly responsible for sending both Moses and Aaron in the Exodus story (cf. Exod 3:1–7:7). Given its placement between verses 24 and 26, it seems probable that the psalmist intended for readers to assume that verse 25 shares the same implicit subject as its neighboring verses.⁵⁰ Third, the structure and emphasis of Psalm 105:25–29 supports this interpretation. As observed by Clifford, verses 25–29 exhibit a chiasmic structure that can be identified based on the clause-initial

⁴⁸ Here, the psalmist takes the passive construction in Exod 14:5 (הפך in the *niphal* stem and לבב as the subject) and turns it into an active construction (הפך in the *qal* stem with לבב as the object). Given the psalm’s clear references to the exodus tradition and the direct pairing of הפך with לב/לבב (which only occurs in four other passages; namely, Exod 14:5, 1 Sam 10:9, Hos 11:8, and Lam 1:20), it seems very likely that there is an intended allusion to Exod 14:4–5. For an exploration of Ps 105’s use of the exodus tradition, see Berlin, “Psalm 105,” 31–35.

⁴⁹ Anderson points out that v. 24 probably alludes to the Abrahamic covenant wherein God promised to make Abraham into a great nation (see Anderson, “Remembering the Ancestors,” 189).

⁵⁰ Krause seems to agree with this assessment when he says of vv. 24–26, “Worth noting in these verses is again the sovereign rule of Yahweh emphasized by the verbal beginnings of sentences.” Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 311.

verbs employed.⁵¹ Thus, this section demonstrates an A (v. 25, הִפֵּךְ), B (v. 26, שָׁלַח), C (v. 27, שָׁמוּ), B' (v. 28, שָׁלַח), A' (v. 29, חִפֵּךְ) pattern. Clifford then concludes that “the chiasm of initial verbs serves to show Yahweh’s total control of Egypt’s attack and of his counter-attack.”⁵² If Clifford is correct (and I believe he is), then YHWH must be identified as the one who “turned their heart” in verse 25 since both the parallel passage in the chiasm (v. 29) and the overall focus on divine agency (as demonstrated by vv. 26, 28, and 29) point in this direction. Lastly, Psalm 105 elsewhere affirms God’s sovereignty over human choices. So for instance, in its summary of the Joseph story, the psalm affirms both that God sent Joseph to Egypt *and* that he was sold as a slave (Ps 105:17; cf. Gen 37:18–28; 45:4–8; 50:19–20).⁵³ Moreover, when Psalm 105 describes Israel’s exodus from Egypt, it implies that God was ultimately responsible for enriching them with gold and silver (Ps 105:37), which is in keeping with the depiction found in Exodus itself (cf. Exod 3:21; 11:1–2; 12:35–36).⁵⁴ Given these characterizations of the interaction between divine and human agency, the psalm’s overall theological perspective seems consistent with the reading of verse 25 being defended here.

If what I have argued regarding verse 25 is correct, then the psalmist here provides his own unique perspective on the events described in Exodus 1. While the latter text presents the Egyptian oppression from a more mundane point of view,⁵⁵ Psalm 105

⁵¹ Clifford, “Psalm 105,” 425.

⁵² See Clifford, “Psalm 105,” 425.

⁵³ As Choi accurately comments, “While the psalm’s treatment of Joseph (vv. 16–23) has few lexical connections with Genesis, it does reflect the latter’s dominant thematic elements. The divine providence over Joseph’s rise and fall echoes Gen 50:20, in which Joseph claims that Yahweh ordained the circumstances of his life.” Choi, *Traditions at Odds*, 122. See also Schaeffer, *Psalms*, 260.

⁵⁴ Coats rightly observes that, according to Exodus, Israel was enabled to leave Egypt with their wealth because of YHWH’s influence upon the Egyptians. George W. Coats, “Despoiling the Egyptians,” *VT* 18, no. 4 (1968): 454.

⁵⁵ Exod 1:8–14 seems to suggest that Israel’s slavery came about because (1) a new Pharaoh came to power who did not know Joseph, and therefore, did not have any particular attachment to Israel;

provides a theological explanation for these same events⁵⁶: Egypt subjugated Israel because God acted upon them in such a way as to change their disposition towards the sons of Jacob to one of hatred (שנא; v. 25).⁵⁷ Moreover, the divine influence also ensured that this new hostile attitude manifested itself in the intention to do Israel actual harm (להתנכל בעבדיו; “so that they plotted against his servants”).⁵⁸ As such, Psalm 105 portrays Egypt’s initial hostilities towards Israel as resulting from divine influence.⁵⁹ In addition, the psalmist also depicts God as having punished Egypt for acting on the hostility that he initially inspired (Ps 105:26–36). The psalmist encourages this reading by turning immediately from a description of Egypt’s divinely-instigated hatred of Israel (v. 25) to a selective account of the plagues narrative (vv. 26–36).⁶⁰ And since the book of Exodus

(2) Israel’s growth raised the possibility of their becoming a military threat to their host nation; and (3) the Israelites were seen as a potential source of manpower that Egypt did not want to lose.

⁵⁶ However, there is no indication that Ps 105 intended to correct or reject the description found in Exod 1. As such, both accounts are best read as complementary descriptions of Israel’s enslavement in Egypt.

⁵⁷ In Calvin’s words, “The Egyptians, though at first kind and courteous hosts to the Israelites, became afterwards cruel enemies; and this also the prophet ascribes to the counsel of God. They were undoubtedly driven to this by a perverse and malignant spirit, by pride and covetousness; but still such a thing did not happen without the providence of God, who in an incomprehensible manner so accomplishes his work in the reprobate, as that he brings forth light even out of darkness.” Calvin, *Psalms*, 4:192.

⁵⁸ As Allan states, “Even the enmity and wily schemes of the Egyptians—and did not postexilic Israel know such treatment all too well?—were Yahweh’s intended means of exercising power on Israel’s behalf.” Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, rev. ed., WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 59.

⁵⁹ Rightly Calvin, *Psalms*, 4:192–94; Goldingay, *Psalms 90–150*, 212; Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, 59; deClaissé-Walford, Jacobson, and Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, 792.

⁶⁰ I agree with those scholars who contend that Ps 105’s account of the plagues depends upon Pentateuchal traditions. Lee argues that the psalmist was aware of the plagues narrative of Exodus, but deviated from it in order to model his account after the creation story in Gen 1. See Archie C. C. Lee, “Genesis I and the Plagues Tradition in Psalm CV,” *VT* 40, no. 3 (1990): 259–63. Meanwhile, Tucker suggests that the psalmist’s focus on the land explains the differences between the psalmist’s account and that of Exodus. See W. Dennis Tucker Tucker Jr., “Revisiting the Plagues in Psalm CV,” *VT* 55, no. 3 (2005): 404–5. A decision between the two proposals is difficult, as both Lee and Tucker make compelling arguments. In fact, it may be the case that both capture aspects of the rationale behind the psalmist’s version of the plagues account.

presents the plagues as God's judgments against Egypt (cf. Exod 6:6; 7:4; 12:12), it is likely that the psalmist understood them in a similar way.⁶¹ In addition, the function of the Abrahamic covenant in Psalm 105 may also lend support to a retributive understanding of the plagues in the psalm. If Anderson is correct that Psalm 105:42 "functions to confirm that the [Abrahamic] covenant exists as the operative rationale for YHWH's deeds both *on behalf of* ancient Israel and *to the detriment of* not only Egypt but all others who sought to inflict any harm upon the covenant people,"⁶² then the plagues may be presented as a fulfillment of God's promise to curse all those who curse Abraham and his seed (cf. Gen 12:3). All told, Psalm 105:25 provides warrant for concluding that it describes a case of non-retributive,⁶³ active,⁶⁴ immediate,⁶⁵ non-eternal DRA.⁶⁶

⁶¹ For others who agree that the psalmist presents the plagues as a punishment on Egypt, see Thijs Booij, "The Role of Darkness in Psalm CV 28," *VT* 39, no. 2 (1989): 212; Streeter S. Stuart, "The Exodus Tradition in Psalm 105 and the Wisdom of Solomon: Notable Similarities," *EvQ* 90, no. 2 (2019): 139; deClaisse-Walford, Jacobson, and Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, 792; Tucker, "Plagues in Psalm CV," 408–9.

⁶² Anderson, "Remembering the Ancestors," 190. For another scholar who sees the Abrahamic covenant as playing a central role in Ps 105, see Gärtner, "Historical Psalms," 383–84.

⁶³ Ps 105 does not provide any suggestion that God "turned" the Egyptians' hearts because they first sinned in some way. Moreover, if I am correct that the hardening of Pharaoh's heart in Exodus is non-retributive (see my discussion in chap. 3, s.v. "DRA in Exodus"), then Ps 105's extensive use of the Exodus materials (including the allusion to Exod 14:4–5) would suggest that the psalmist shares a similar perspective on DRA.

⁶⁴ Calvin rightly rejects the suggestion of the "middle-scheme men" that "this statement, by saying, that his turning their hearts, denotes his permitting this." Calvin, *Psalms* 4:193–94. Ps 105:25 uses a *qal* verb with a direct object (הפך לבם) to describe God's influence on the Egyptians; thus, rather than passively withholding a positive influence, the text portrays YHWH as having actively changed their disposition.

⁶⁵ Ps 105 does not describe the presence of any mediating agents between God and the Egyptians; instead, it portrays God as having directly changed their disposition.

⁶⁶ Since the plagues are posited as God's act of retribution against Egypt, Ps 105 cannot be said to depict the divine punishment as being eternal in duration.

Summary of DRA in the Psalter

While its occurrences in the Psalter are somewhat rare,⁶⁷ the presence of DRA in these three psalms (i.e., MT Pss 81, 92, and 105) provides further evidence of the significance and the complexity of DRA. First, the Psalter testifies to the import of the concept by assigning it crucial theological functions. So on the one hand, Psalms 81 and 105 evidence the importance of the concept by referring to DRA in order to explain crucial periods in Israel's history: the former leverages DRA to provide insight into Israel's years in the wilderness while the latter explains how the nation was first enslaved in Egypt. By describing Israel's history as unfolding on the basis of DRA, these two psalms bring the concept's importance to the fore, especially given the canonical significance of Israel's *Heilsgeschichte*. On the other hand, Psalm 92 displays the importance of DRA by using it to address a weighty theological dilemma. Here, DRA functions as part of the psalmist's solution to the problem of the prosperity of the wicked. As such, the psalmist rests his defense of God's character (in part) upon reprobating activity. One should therefore conclude that each of these psalms affords the concept of DRA an importance that is consonant with the witness of both the Torah and the Prophets. Second, the use of DRA in the Psalter demonstrates the multi-faceted nature of the concept. As I have shown, Psalms 81, 92, and 105 do not provide uniform testimony

⁶⁷ There are a few other psalms that *could* refer to DRA, although in these cases, the texts are much more oblique. For instance, if one understands Ps 118:23 as modifying the entirety of Ps 118:22, then one could argue that even the builders' rejection of the stone (v. 22a) came about "from with YHWH" (v. 23a). A person who reads the passage this way may be inclined to view v. 23 as testifying to DRA. However, I think it is more likely that v. 23 refers only to the unexpected exaltation of the rejected stone in v. 22b; on this reading, the verse would provide no evidence of reprobating influence. In any event, I do not think the text provides enough evidence to include it as an example of DRA in the Psalter. Another potential case of DRA is found in Ps 73:18: "Surely on slippery places you set them; you make them fall to their destruction." Since Ps 73 shares some similarities with Ps 92, one could argue that v. 18 also expresses God's sovereignty over the actions and the fate of the wicked. However, unlike Ps 92:8, Ps 73:18 does not explicitly describe all the doings and successes of the wicked as being under God's reprobating designs. Instead, given the surrounding verses, it seems more likely that Ps 73:18 focuses on the fact that, in the end, the wicked will be judged by God. As such, I think it is difficult to contend with confidence that Ps 73:18 bears witness to DRA.

regarding God's reprobating influence. So for instance, Psalm 81 refers to a clear instance of retributive DRA, while Psalms 92 and 105 seem to attest to DRA of a non-retributive kind. Moreover, whereas Psalms 81 and 105 continue to refer to God's punishment as being non-eternal, Psalm 92 provides the first example of eternal DRA in the OT. As such, the Psalter's testimony continues, and even adds to, the OT's complex descriptions of this form of divine agency.

DRA in the Book of Proverbs

Two instances of DRA may be found in the book of Proverbs. The first of these involves Proverbs 16:4,⁶⁸ which is a passage that stresses YHWH's identity as the sovereign creator.⁶⁹ The verse reads, "YHWH has made everything for his/its answer/purpose [למענהו],⁷⁰ even a wicked person for the day of calamity." Interpreters have disagreed regarding the meaning of the term מענה and the referent of the 3MS pronominal suffix. Regarding the first issue, the word מענה has been taken to mean either "answer" or "purpose."⁷¹ Since every other occurrence of the word in the OT supports the former interpretation (including Prov 16:1), it seems more likely than not that מענה means "answer" in Proverbs 16:4a.⁷² The second problem is more difficult to resolve;

⁶⁸ I will be working with Prov 16:4 in the MT. For an analysis of the text critical issues related to this verse, see Bryan Beekman, "Trails of a Different *Vorlage* and a Free Translator in LXX-Proverbs: A Text-Critical Analysis of Proverbs 16:1–7," *OTE* 30, no. 3 (2017): 577–89.

⁶⁹ As Dell observes, "[Prov 16:4] stresses God's role as maker of all." Katharine J. Dell, *The Book of Proverbs in Social and Theological Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 112.

⁷⁰ I would argue that the ל in the prepositional phrase למענה should be interpreted as indicating purpose (see Williams and Beckman, *Hebrew Syntax*, 110).

⁷¹ Keefer notes that most biblical commentators take the term to mean "answer." On this reading, the text would mean that "all creation aligns with a corresponding response or 'appropriate end.'" Arthur J. Keefer, "The Use of the Book of Proverbs in Systematic Theology," *BTB* 46, no. 1 (2016): 39–40.

⁷² I agree with Perdue when he says that מענה here "conveys the notion of an action that is accompanied by its response or result, or a subject that has its corresponding object." Leo G. Perdue, *Wisdom and Creation: The Theology of Wisdom Literature* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 106.

however, the meaning of Proverbs 16:4a remains basically the same regardless of the position one takes. In other words, whether one takes the 3MS suffix to refer to YHWH or to “everything” (כול), the text would still affirm the principle that God deliberately created all things with the purpose of ensuring that everything receives its due.⁷³ The second half of the verse then applies this principle specifically to the wicked, whom God created “for the day of calamity.”⁷⁴ As such, the verse as a whole intimates that God created the wicked specifically so that they might receive appropriate punishment on the day of judgment.⁷⁵ As Toy accurately comments,

[Prov 16:4b] states the end or destiny for which wicked men are created. The proverb declares, in a simple and direct way, the principle (recognized everywhere in the OT.) of the absoluteness of Yahweh’s government of the world, and it is added that every one of his acts has a definite purpose; since the wicked are punished, it is Yahweh who created them to that end. This predestination to evil (to use the modern expression) is held in the OT., without metaphysical speculation and without embarrassment.⁷⁶

⁷³ As Heim comments regarding v. 4, “The Lord’s creative power has ordained a retributive world order.” Knut Martin Heim, *Like Grapes of Gold Set in Silver: An Interpretation of Proverbial Clusters in Proverbs 10:1–22:16*, BZAW (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2001), 209.

⁷⁴ The phrase וגם־רשע (lit. “and also [the] wicked”) intimates that the action of God described in 16:4a (i.e., the act of creating) applies to the wicked as well (the omission of the verb in 16:4b is an example of gapping; see David L. Petersen and Kent Harold Richards, *Interpreting Hebrew Poetry*, Guides to Biblical Scholarship [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992], 33). Thus, 16:4b suggests that God also created the wicked for a specific purpose: namely, their future judgment. Therefore, Fox is right insofar as he describes 16:4 as indicating that “God makes the evil man so that the ‘evil day’ will have someone to punish.” Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 10–31*, AB (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 611. Similarly, Hayes accurately describes the text’s meaning when she says, “The wicked can be seen as ‘made’ or destined for a day of disaster, which will be the divine answer to their lives.” Hayes, *Proverbs*, sec.16:4.

⁷⁵ Räisänen rightly states of Prov 16:4, “The idea that the existence of sinners can, in the final analysis, be traced back to the sovereign will of Yahweh, is implicitly present. To use anachronistic terminology, this verse presupposes negative predestination.” Heikki Räisänen, *The Idea of Divine Hardening: A Comparative Study of the Notion of Divine Hardening, Leading Astray and Inciting to Evil in the Bible and the Qur’ān*, Publications of the Finnish Exegetical Society 25 (Helsinki, Finland: Kirjapaino Oy Savo, 1972), 66.

⁷⁶ This interpretation is bolstered by the fact that the verses surrounding 16:4 also focus on God’s sovereignty over human affairs. Thus, Toy has reason to describe Prov 16:1–9 with the paragraph title “Divine control of life.” See Crawford H. Toy, *The Book of Proverbs*, ICC (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1899), 319–21. For others who share this perspective on Prov 16:1–9, see Heim, *Like Grapes*, 207; Richard P. Belcher Jr., *Finding Favour in the Sight of God: A Theology of Wisdom Literature*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018), 44; Fox, *Proverbs 10–31*,

In other words, Proverbs 16:4 bears witness to a stark form of DRA. While the text does not describe God’s reprobating agency in meticulous detail,⁷⁷ the use of the verb פָּעַל (“he made”) with YHWH as the subject suggests that God’s agency is envisioned as immediate and active. Moreover, given that God’s influence involves his very act of creating the wicked, it seems more likely than not that Proverbs 16:4 refers to non-retributive DRA.⁷⁸

In addition to Proverbs 16:4, Proverbs 22:14 seems to also attest to DRA. This verse states that “the mouth of foreign women is a deep pit; the one with whom God is angry will fall there.” According to this proverb, God’s anger ultimately determines whether or not a man will succumb to the temptations of an adulteress; as such, the one who commits sexual immorality does so because God’s anger has somehow led them to this action. Moreover, by describing the mouth of the foreign woman as a “deep pit,” the proverb intimates that a fatal penalty awaits the accursed man who is destined to fall for her wiles.⁷⁹ These observations lead to the conclusion that Proverbs 22:14 portrays an

606; Hayes, *Proverbs*, sec.16:1–33; Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 15–31*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 5, 8–9.

⁷⁷ The author does not provide details regarding the judgment envisioned. Thus, one cannot determine whether Prov 16:4 refers to eternal or non-eternal DRA.

⁷⁸ Perdue unduly softens the claims of the text by stating that “this saying does not appear to intimate that Yahweh has created people to be wicked or is responsible for their evil deeds. Rather, he is the creator of all people, some of whom choose to engage in wickedness and then embody those acts in their manner of life.” Perdue, *Wisdom and Creation*, 107. While I agree that Prov 16:4 does not hold God to be morally responsible for men’s evils, it does assert that God creates the wicked with the express intention of punishing them for their wickedness. This does not suggest that the wicked are not responsible for their actions. As Murphy correctly points out, “It is a well-established fact that in the Old Testament view YHWH is the agent or cause of all that happens, even in the mysterious area of human activity. But it is equally clear that human beings cannot evade responsibility for their actions. . . . Both [human freedom and divine determination] are affirmed equally in the Bible, almost without an awareness of a problem.” Roland E. Murphy, *Proverbs*, WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 125. On the issue of God’s sovereignty and human freedom in Proverbs, see also Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 285–86; Hans-Jürgen Hermisson, “Gottes Freiheit – Spielraum des Menschen: Alttestamentliche Aspekte eines biblisch-theologischen Themas,” *ZTK* 82, no. 2 (1985): 147–49.

⁷⁹ Thus, Heim is correct to point out that “verse 14 threatens those who follow the seduction of

instance of DRA. Though little is explicitly said regarding the character of the DRA described in 22:14, the reference to God's anger makes it more likely that the proverb addresses a retributive form of DRA.⁸⁰ As Fox correctly states, verse 14 teaches that "God's curse will make [the cursed man] sin further and then suffer the deadly consequences. . . . When someone deserves punishment, God may make sure that he sins even more, so that his punishment becomes inevitable."⁸¹ Moreover, Garrett is probably right to conclude that the seductress is presented as "the means God uses to punish those whom he has cursed."⁸² If so, then Proverbs 22:14 is best understood as depicting a mediated form of DRA.

While DRA is not mentioned often in the book of Proverbs, the two passages that refer to the concept highlight its importance and its complexity. In Proverbs 16:4, DRA plays a role in the wisdom tradition's answer to the problem of evil.⁸³ Meanwhile, Proverbs 22:14 connects DRA with a crucial theme in the book: namely, the danger of the seductress. Furthermore, Proverbs 16:4 and 22:14 supply differing conceptions of DRA: the former describes a non-retributive, immediate form of reprobating agency, while the latter portrays a retributive, mediated form. Thus, the evidence from the book of Proverbs regarding DRA keeps in step with that of the OT as a whole.

'loose women' with fatal consequences." Heim, *Like Grapes*, 311.

⁸⁰ I agree with Fox that "this man has presumably already sinned." Fox, *Proverbs 10–31*, 702. See also Waltke, *Proverbs 15–31*, 214–15.

⁸¹ Fox, *Proverbs 10–31*, 702.

⁸² Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, NAC (Nashville: B & H, 1993), 189. See also Waltke, *Proverbs 15–31*, 214–15.

⁸³ Rightly, Purdue, *Wisdom and Creation*, 106–7.

DRA in Lamentations

The book of Lamentations testifies to a form of DRA that is familiar from elsewhere in the OT, namely, God's reprobating influence on foreign nations employed as instruments of divine wrath.⁸⁴ As most scholars observe, the book of Lamentations reflects on Judah's experience of the Babylonian conquest in 587/586 BCE.⁸⁵ As Salters rightly notes, each poem within the book describes this event as an act of divine retribution⁸⁶: through the Babylonian invasion, God was finally punishing his people for their many sins.⁸⁷ The book sees two agents involved in Jerusalem's devastation: foreign

⁸⁴ See my discussions on Deut 32; Isa 10, 19; Jer 25; Joel 2; Mic 4; Hab 1–2.

⁸⁵ Provan correctly points out that the use of metaphor and hyperbole in poetry makes it difficult to identify the historical backdrop behind any particular poem; moreover, he is also correct when he says historical reconstruction is not always necessary for interpreting poetry. Nevertheless, Provan is overly skeptical when he concludes, "In the case of Lam 1, then, the specific historical background of the text is unclear." Iain W. Provan, "Reading Texts against an Historical Background: The Case of Lamentations 1," *SJOT* 4, no. 1 (1990): 143. On the contrary, the most probable background for the book of Lamentations is clearly the destruction of Jerusalem in 587/586 BCE. For others who take this position, see Delbert R. Hillers, introduction to *Lamentations*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1972), xv; Johan Renkema, *Lamentations*, Historical Commentary on the Old Testament (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 1998), 54–56; Adele Berlin, *Lamentations*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 1; R. B. Salters, *Lamentations*, ICC (London: T & T Clark, 2010), 8, 26–28; Paul R. House, "Lamentations," in *Song of Songs/Lamentations*, WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 284; F. B. Huey Jr., *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman, 1993), 444; Hetty Lalleman, *Jeremiah and Lamentations*, TOTC (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), 328; Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 593; Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1998), 483; Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 365; Konrad Schmid, *A Historical Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, trans. Peter Altmann (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 197, 419; Miriam J. Bier, "*Perhaps There Is Hope*": *Reading Lamentations as a Polyphony of Pain, Penitence, and Protest*, LHBOTS (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2015), 2; F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, "Tragedy, Tradition, and Theology in the Book of Lamentations," *JSOT* 74 (1997): 31–32; Mark J. Boda, "Lamentations 1: Book Of," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry and Writings*, ed. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 399–400.

⁸⁶ Salters, *Lamentations*, 27.

⁸⁷ While most scholars observe that Lamentations portrays the destruction of Jerusalem as the work of YHWH, they nevertheless disagree regarding whether or not God's actions are presented as being just. Broadly speaking, scholars adopt one of three positions. First, some believe that Lamentations problematizes YHWH's character and actions. These argue that the book depicts God as morally flawed and as having responded disproportionately to the sins of Judah; moreover, they also claim that Lamentations questions or undermines the traditional formulation that Judah's suffering should be understood as resulting from sin. For examples of this approach, see Robert Williamson Jr., "Taking Root in the Rubble: Trauma and Moral Subjectivity in the Book of Lamentations," *JSOT* 40, no. 1 (2015): 10–20; Elizabeth Boase, "Constructing Meaning in the Face of Suffering: Theodicy in Lamentations," *VT* 58

armies (cf. Lam 1:5–10; 2:16; 3:52–53, 59–66; 4:12, 18–20; 5:5, 11–12) and YHWH himself (cf. Lam 1:12–15; 2:1–9, 20–22; 3:1–16, 43; 4:11, 16). However, the poet prioritizes divine agency in at least three ways. First, he explicitly posits that Judah’s assailants acted under divine influence and fulfilled YHWH’s plans by attacking Jerusalem (cf. Lam 1:15, 17b, 21; 2:8, 16–17, 22; 3:37–39).⁸⁸ Second, in some sections, the poet focuses so much attention on YHWH’s role in afflicting his people that divine agency threatens to subsume human agency (cf. Lam 2:1–9, 20–22; 3:1–18, 41–45; 4:1–11).⁸⁹ Lastly, Lamentations explains that all the calamities that befell Jerusalem were an

(2008): 465–68; Beau Harris and Carleen Mandolfo, “The Silent God in Lamentations,” *Int* 67, no. 2 (2013): 136; Dobbs-Allsopp, “Tragedy, Tradition, and Theology,” 36–38. Second, without minimizing the shocking and terrible descriptions of Judah’s sufferings, another group of scholars argues that the book finally presents YHWH as wholly blameless in his actions against his people; moreover, they claim that the poet puts forward God’s character as Israel’s ultimate source of comfort and hope. See for instance Jože Krašovec, “The Source of Hope in the Book of Lamentations,” *VT* 42, no. 2 (1992): 223–24; Renkema, *Lamentations*, 64–69; Claus Westermann, *Lamentations: Issues and Interpretation*, trans. Charles Muenchow (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 224–26; Berlin, *Lamentations*, 17–19; Hillers, introduction, xvi, 28; Salters, *Lamentations*, 27–28; Lalleman, *Jeremiah and Lamentations*, 329–30; House, “Lamentations,” 317–24; Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 366–70; James M. Hamilton Jr., *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 310–13; Huey, *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, 456. Lastly, still others argue that the book refuses to resolve the tension between Judah’s suffering and God’s character; instead, the book is seen as presenting both theodic (i.e., God is justified) and antitheodic (i.e., God is not justified) perspectives without seeking to elevate one over the other. See Miriam J. Bier, “‘We Have Sinned and Rebelled; You Have Not Forgiven’: The Dialogic Interaction between Authoritative and Internally Persuasive Discourse in Lamentations 3,” *BibInt* 22 (2014): 166–67; Bier, *Perhaps There Is Hope*, 217–20. While it would not serve my purposes to engage this discussion in detail, readers may be interested to know that I find the second approach to be convincing.

⁸⁸ Thus Renkema is right when he says, “It is not YHWH’s powerlessness or absence which has led to the downfall of Jacob but his very supremacy over the other nations. It was not the gods of the nations but YHWH himself who commanded the neighbouring nations, as Jacob’s enemies, to be the ruination of his people.” Renkema, *Lamentations*, 178. See also Hillers, *Lamentations*, 27–28, 46; Berlin, *Lamentations*, 58–61, 74; F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion: A Study of the City-Lament Genre in the Hebrew Bible*, BibOr (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1993), 61, 65; Krašovec, “Source of Hope,” 228.

⁸⁹ As Hillers states of Lam 2, “The main point of this chapter is that it was Yahweh himself who destroyed city and people, and the writer seldom strays very far from this idea. . . . The tendency in Israelite thought to ignore secondary causes and think of Yahweh as the cause of all calamity (cf. Amos 3:6) could not appear more unmistakably!” Hillers, *Lamentations*, 43–44.

expression of God's anger (cf. Lam 1:12; 2:1–9; 21–22; 3:43–45; 4:11).⁹⁰ Thus, the violence committed by Judah's enemies is understood to have been a manifestation of divine vengeance. In these ways, the book clarifies that God was at work in and through the hostile actions of Judah's oppressors.⁹¹ And yet, the poet anticipates that these same oppressors would be punished for the atrocities they committed as the agents of God's wrath (Lam 1:21–22; 3:64–66; 4:19–22).⁹² Taken together, these details mean two things: (1) YHWH moved foreign nations to assail Judah as a punishment for its sins,⁹³ and (2) YHWH would justly punish these same nations for assailing his people.⁹⁴ Therefore, Lamentations seems to provide yet another witness to DRA in the OT.⁹⁵

DRA in Chronicles

The book of Chronicles may provide up to two additional examples of the theme under consideration.⁹⁶ Since the first relevant text mirrors a case of DRA that has

⁹⁰ See especially Berlin, *Lamentations*, 67–77.

⁹¹ Thus, Dobbs-Allsopp is correct when he says, "In Lamentations, it is very clear that it is Yahweh who sent the enemy . . . and more to the point, it is Yahweh himself as the divine warrior who has caused the destruction." Dobbs-Allsopp, "Tragedy, Tradition, and Theology," 38.

⁹² Rightly, Hamilton, *God's Glory*, 311; Lalleman, *Jeremiah and Lamentations*, 330; Hillers, *Lamentations*, 28, 74; Berlin, *Lamentations*, 60–61.

⁹³ Contra Stone, who argues that Lam 3:21–42 distances God from the atrocities committed against Judah. See Mark P. Stone, "Vindicating Yahweh: A Close Reading of Lamentations 3.21–42," *JSOT* 43, no. 1 (2018): 92–102.

⁹⁴ Interestingly, it is possible that Lam 3:65 indicates that DRA would also be part of God's punishment on the enemy nations. See House, "Lamentations," 428–29.

⁹⁵ As with other examples of this sort, I think DRA in Lamentations can be described as immediate, active, and non-eternal. The immediacy of God's influence is evident in that no mediating agents are posited between YHWH and the enemy nations; moreover, God is said to have commanded and summoned them (Lam 1:15–17). These same depictions also suggest an active form of divine influence. Lastly, there is no suggestion that the destruction to be meted out against God's instruments would be of an eternal sort.

⁹⁶ Similarly to Samuel and Kings, the "books" of 1 and 2 Chronicles actually comprise a single literary work. See Peter R. Ackroyd, "Chronicles, The Books Of," in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*,

already been discussed in detail (2 Chr 18; cf. 1 Kgs 22),⁹⁷ I focus my attention here on 2 Chronicles 25.

Second Chronicles 25 may refer to DRA in order to explain Amaziah's demise.⁹⁸ After a successful campaign against the Edomites (2 Chr 25:5–12), Amaziah returned to Jerusalem with the idols of Edom and established them as his own gods (2 Chr 25:14).⁹⁹ The king's idolatry infuriated YHWH, who then sent a prophet to reprove the apostate monarch (2 Chr 25:15).¹⁰⁰ The prophet confronted the king by asking, "Why did you seek the gods of the people who did not deliver their people from your hand?"¹⁰¹ Rather than acknowledging the stupidity of his actions, Amaziah rejected the prophet's

ed. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 113.

⁹⁷ For my discussion of 1 Kgs 22, in chap. 4, s.v. "DRA in the Book of Kings."

⁹⁸ The account of Amaziah shares some similarities with the story of Rehoboam told in 1 Kgs 12 and 2 Chr 10; however, unlike with Rehoboam, the story of Amaziah states that God's influence was intended to lead to the latter's destruction (2 Chr 25:16). Moreover, it is not clear from 1 Kgs 12 or 2 Chr 10 that the dissolution of united Israel occurred as a divine punishment for Rehoboam's folly. These distinctions are why I include 2 Chr 25 in my survey of DRA while excluding the texts that treat God's influence upon Rehoboam.

⁹⁹ While scholars have provided reasonable explanations for why Amaziah would turn to the idols of the nation he just defeated (cf. J. A. Thompson, *1, 2 Chronicles*, NAC [Nashville: B & H, 1994], 322–323; Martin J. Selman, *2 Chronicles*, TOTC [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1994], 481–82; Raymond B. Dillard, *2 Chronicles*, WBC [Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987], 201), it is important to observe that the Chronicler intentionally focuses on the irrationality of the king's decision (2 Chr 25:14–15; see Ralph W. Klein, "The Chronicler's Theological Rewriting of the Deuteronomistic History: Amaziah, a Test Case," in *Raising a Faithful Exegete: Essays in Honor of Richard D. Nelson* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2010], 243). Undoubtedly, Amaziah would have had his reasons for adopting the gods of Edom; however, the text itself does not dignify the king's actions by providing them with any logical justification.

¹⁰⁰ This detail challenges Dillard's claim that the Chronicler espoused a "theology of immediate retribution" in which "reward and punishment are not deferred, but rather follow immediately on the heels of the precipitating events." Raymond B. Dillard, "Reward and Punishment in Chronicles: The Theology of Immediate Retribution," *WTJ* 46 (1984): 165. For a more convincing discussion of retribution in Chronicles, see Kelly, *Retribution and Eschatology*, 64–110.

¹⁰¹ While the prophet's speech is formally a question, his rhetorical purpose was to reprove the king and bring him to repentance. As Japhet correctly says, "Speeches of this type are not questions or analyses of the situation; their real purpose is to change the situation." Sara Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and Its Place in Biblical Thought* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 140.

authority (הליועץ למלך נתנוך; “Did we appoint you counselor to the king?”),¹⁰² commanded him to stop speaking (חדל-לך; “Stop it!”), and threatened him with death (למה יכוד; “Why should they [have to] strike you down?”). Surprisingly, the prophet did as Amaziah commanded, but not before making one final declaration: “The prophet stopped and he said, ‘I know that God has counseled (יעץ) to destroy you, because you have done this and have not listened to my counsel (עצתי)’” (2 Chr 25:16b).¹⁰³ Though it is possible that the prophet understood Amaziah’s response as evidence that God had already decreed his destruction,¹⁰⁴ it is more likely that he was announcing God’s judgment upon the king because of his idolatry and refusal to repent.¹⁰⁵ This judgment would not be executed immediately.¹⁰⁶ Instead, the rest of the chapter demonstrates that

¹⁰² Klein considers this to be an example of the majestic plural; see Ralph W. Klein, 2 *Chronicles*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 352.

¹⁰³ As others have noted, the Chronicler uses words related to the root יעץ (“he counseled”) for rhetorical and ironic effect. See H. G. M. Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 330–31; Klein, “Chronicler’s Theological Rewriting,” 244; Kelly, *Retribution and Eschatology*, 101.

¹⁰⁴ The syntax of v. 16b could be understood in one of two ways. On the one hand, the causal כִּי clause could be viewed as modifying the content clause “that God has counseled to destroy you” (כִּי יַעֲזֹב אֱלֹהִים לְהַשְׁחִיתֶךָ). On this reading, the prophet would be claiming that God’s decree to destroy the king was a response to Amaziah’s rejection of the prophetic word. On the other hand, one could take the causal clause to modify the main clause of the sentence (i.e., “I know [God has decreed your destruction] because you have done this”). On this reading, God’s decree is *not* understood as a response to the rejection of the prophetic word; instead, Amaziah’s refusal to repent is taken as evidence that God had *already* decreed his destruction. Ben Zvi is one of the few who adopts the second approach. In fact, he argues that even Amaziah’s idolatry was determined by God’s decree. See Ehud ben Zvi, “A House of Treasures: The Account of Amaziah in 2 Chronicles 25—Observations and Implications,” *SJOT* 22, no. 1 (2008): 73–74. While such a reading is grammatically possible, it does not fit well with the description of God’s reaction to Amaziah’s idolatry which seems to be intended to bring about the king’s repentance (cf. 2 Chr 25:14–15).

¹⁰⁵ So also Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, 330–31; Jacob M. Myers, *2 Chronicles*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1965), 145; Klein, *2 Chronicles*, 365; Sara Japhet, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 867.

¹⁰⁶ Contra Dillard, “Reward and Punishment,” 165.

Amaziah's judgment came in stages,¹⁰⁷ and that God negatively influenced the king in order to realize his destructive decree.

In 2 Chronicles 27:17–28, the author recounts Amaziah's choice to wage war with Israel and he describes the consequences of that decision. The section begins with Amaziah taking counsel (ויועץ) and delivering a military challenge to Joash, the king of Israel (2 Chr 25:17).¹⁰⁸ Through a parable, Joash rebuked Amaziah for his hubris and warned him that a war with Israel would prove disastrous for his side (2 Chr 25:18–19). Once again, Amaziah sinfully refused to listen to wise counsel¹⁰⁹; instead, the king took up arms and embarked on the campaign that would prove to be the beginning of his undoing. Notably, while Amaziah's pride certainly precipitated the war and its consequences, the text also cites a more theological explanation for the king's action: "But Amaziah did not listen [to Joash] because it came about from God so that he might hand them over, because they had sought the gods of Edom" (2 Chr 25:20). This comment alludes back to verses 14–16, thereby indicating that Amaziah's fateful decision

¹⁰⁷ As Klein correctly points out, "That destruction [i.e. the destruction announced in v. 16] comes initially through the invasion of Jehoash, which resulted in Amaziah's capture and the plundering of Jerusalem (vv. 23–24), but ultimately in his assassination (vv. 27–28)." Klein, *2 Chronicles*, 365.

¹⁰⁸ Some suggest that Amaziah may have been motivated to go to war because of the earlier attack on Judah by the Israelite mercenaries (cf. 2 Chr 25:13; see for instance J. G. McConville, *1 and 2 Chronicles* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1984], 216; Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987], 371). While the expression נתראה פנים (lit. "Let us look at each other's faces") does not necessarily refer to an adversarial confrontation, Joash's response to Amaziah's envoy and the use of the same expression in v. 21 indicate that the message was a hostile one. So also Thompson, *1, 2 Chronicles*, 324; Klein, *2 Chronicles*, 360; Dillard, *2 Chronicles*, 201; Eugene H. Merrill, *A Commentary on 1 and 2 Chronicles*, Kregel Exegetical Library (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2015), 467.

¹⁰⁹ As others note, Joash's response is intended to reflect an authoritative perspective. So for instance, Thompson rightly comments that "the Chronicler viewed pride as a grievous sin and can be heard speaking through Jehoash" (see Thompson, *1, 2 Chronicles*, 324). Moreover, Klein points out that "the message from the Israelite king is interpreted as a message from God, much as the message from Pharaoh Neco to Josiah was later described as a word from God (2 Chr 35:20–21)." Klein, "Chronicler's Theological Rewriting," 244. As such, Amaziah's refusal should be understood as a moral infraction. Additionally, his resulting humiliation in battle should also be seen as a punishment for his pride.

was brought about by the will of God as an act of retribution against his (and Judah's) idolatry.¹¹⁰ God then began executing his judgment against Amaziah by leading him to make a sinful decision, for which he would be punished in battle. At the war, Amaziah's army was defeated, he was captured, and Jerusalem was plundered (2 Chr 25:20–24). Moreover, after he was allowed to return to Jerusalem, the king was forced to flee because of a plot against his life (2 Chr 25:27).¹¹¹ Despite his attempt to find refuge in Lachish, Amaziah's pursuers would eventually catch up with him and put him to death. In so doing, Amaziah's killers (unwittingly) executed the divine death sentence that had been decreed years before (cf. 2 Chr 25:16).

The story of Amaziah is a tragedy that highlights the disastrous consequences of disloyalty to YHWH and of pride.¹¹² As the Chronicler describes it, the king's downfall was a function of God's judgment upon his idolatry and his hubris. What

¹¹⁰ Similarly, see M. Patrick Graham, "Aspects of the Structure and Rhetoric of 2 Chronicles 25," in *History and Interpretation: Essays in Honour of John H. Hayes*, JSOTSup (Sheffield, England: JSOT, 1993), 88; Thompson, *1, 2 Chronicles*, 324; Selman, *2 Chronicles*, 483; Jacob M. Myers, *2 Chronicles*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1965), 145; Dillard, *2 Chronicles*, 201; Klein, *2 Chronicles*, 361.

¹¹¹ Dillard suggests, "Perhaps the same military and cultic alliance that had dethroned Athaliah and installed Joash (2 Chr 23) was once again involved to avenge the military humiliation and the spoliation of the temple." Dillard, *2 Chronicles*, 262. Thus, according to Dillard, the conspirators took action against Amaziah in part because of the war with Joash. While the text does not explicitly relate these two events (i.e., the war and the assassination), I believe Dillard is right to connect the dots. In addition, I would argue that the war against Israel should be interpreted as part of the outworking of YHWH's plan to destroy Amaziah for his apostasy. First of all, 2 Chr 25:16 seems to set the stage for all that follows. Here, God announces his intention to destroy Amaziah—an intention that does not come to fruition until v. 27 (so also Klein, *2 Chronicles*, 365). As such, 2 Chr 25:16 invites readers to view the events of vv. 17–24 as having been superintended by God in order to bring about the king's death. Second, v. 27 says that the conspiracy against the king began after he committed apostasy (cf. 25:14). Such a statement then introduces a large chronological and narrational gap between the inception of the plot (cf. 25:14) and its execution (cf. 25:27). How are readers meant to interpret this feature of the text? In my judgment, this gap is best explained by assuming that the plot against the king gained momentum as a result of the war against Israel. After all, it is easy enough to see why Judah's defeat would have weakened Amaziah's political standing, strengthened the position of his opponents, and further fueled the plot against his life.

¹¹² As Schreiner perceptively notes, Amaziah "functions as an example for the nation that has just returned from exile. . . . If they trust in the Lord and refuse to compromise by forging alliances with those contaminated by idolatry, the Lord will be more gracious to them than they could imagine." Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 203.

matters for my purposes is that, according to the text, God punished the king by leading him to make the sinful decision to go to war so that he might be destroyed as a result (2 Chr 25:20; cf. 25:16). In other words, God judged Amaziah through the exercise of retributive, non-eternal DRA.¹¹³

Observations on DRA in the Writings

The foregoing survey demonstrates that the Writings do bear witness to DRA. Moreover, they continue the OT's pattern of presenting DRA as a variegated and theologically substantial concept. On the one hand, different passages within the writings paint different pictures of DRA. Some texts describe reprobating agency as itself a punishment for sin (Ps 81:12–13; Prov 22:14; 2 Chr 18:18–22; 25:16–27) while others do not (ex., Ps 92:8; 105:25; Prov 16:4). In a few passages, God makes use of mediating figures to lead people astray (ex. Prov 22:14; 2 Chr 18:18–22); in others, he takes it upon himself to ensnare the reprobate in sin (Ps 92:8; 105:24–25; Prov 16:4). Moreover, Psalm 92:8 introduces the only OT instance of DRA in which the punishment envisioned is of an eternal nature. On the other hand, the Writings demonstrate the theological freight of DRA by tying it to the problem of theodicy (Ps 92:8; Prov 16:4), and to Israel's salvation history (Ps 81:12–13; 105:24–25; Lam 1:15–17; 2 Chr 18; 25:16–27). In addition, certain passages demonstrate God's absolute supremacy by referring to DRA (Ps 92:8–9; Prov 16:4).

¹¹³ In this case, the retributive nature of DRA is evident by the fact that God's actions are a response to Amaziah's idolatry and refusal to repent (cf. 2 Chr 25:16, 20). Moreover, there is no evidence that the author had eternal judgment in mind; on the contrary, the Chronicler posits both military defeat and physical death as Amaziah's punishments. Therefore, it is best to conclude that 2 Chr 25 provides another example of non-eternal DRA.

DRA in the OT: Summary of Findings

To this point, I have examined the OT's witness to DRA in order to determine the importance and the richness of the concept throughout the first part of the Christian canon. I believe it can be safely concluded that the OT does *not* depict DRA as a monolithic and inconsequential theme; instead, it presents God's reprobating agency as both complex and significant. On the one hand, DRA's complexity is seen in the variety of ways in which it can be described. At times, God's negative influence is presented as an act of recompense for sin (ex., Judg 2:1–5; 9:23–24; 1 Sam 2:25; 2 Sam 17:14; 2 Sam 24:1; 1 Kgs 22:20–23; Isa 6:9–10; 8:14–16; 19:1–14; 29:9–14; Ezek 14:9–11; 20:25–26; Ps 81:12–13; Prov 22:14; 2 Chr 18:14–27; 2 Chr 25:11–28); on other occasions, the biblical authors suggest that DRA is motivated by concerns other than strict retribution (ex., Exod 3–14; Deut 2:30; Josh 11:20; Ezek 38:16–39:20; Ps 92:8; 105:24–25; Prov 16:4). In a few cases, DRA is put into effect as God deliberately withholds something which would have allowed the reprobate to chart a more positive course (ex., Deut 29:3; Judg 2:1–5; Isa 8:14–16); however, it is more often the case that God's reprobating influence involves the Lord taking active steps to affect persons consigned to judgment (ex., Exod 3–14; Isa 6:9–10; 63:7–64:11; Ezek 20:25–26; Lam 1:15–17). Some passages describe YHWH as using mediating agents to lead the reprobate into sin (ex., Judg 2:1–5; 9:23–24; 2 Sam 17:14; 1 Kgs 22:20–23; Isa 6:9–10); others portray God as carrying out his destructive decree more directly (ex., Exod 3–14; Deut 2:30; Josh 11:20; 2 Sam 24:1; Isa 63:7–64:11; Prov 16:4).¹¹⁴ While the OT predominantly portrays the judgment of DRA as having to do with mortal death, military defeat, or national exile, at least one passage may conceive of YHWH's reprobating influence as having eternal consequences (Ps 92:8). On the other hand, the significance of the theme is demonstrated by its prevalence across different genres and sections of OT. Its importance is also attested by

¹¹⁴ Some cases combine both immediate and mediate elements; cf. Isa 19:1–14; Ezek 14:9–11.

the uses for which the theme is employed. Among other things, the biblical authors refer to DRA to explain the exodus (Exod 3–14), the conquest of the land (Deut 2:30; Josh 11:20), Israel’s apostasy in the land (Deut 29:3; Judg 2:1–5; Ps 81:13), the fall of individual kings (2 Sam 17:14; 1 Kgs 22; 2 Chr 25:20), the destruction of Israel/Judah (Deut 29:3; Judg 2:1–5; Isa 6:9–13; Lam 1:15–17; 2:1–9), the punishment of Assyria/Babylon and the future salvation of Israel (Isa 10:5–39; Jer 25:8–14; Ezek 14:9–11; 38–39), the root of idolatry (Isa 44:18), and the reason for the existence of the wicked (Ps 92:8; Prov 16:4). Moreover, different OT authors understand DRA to be a means by which God demonstrates his character, sovereignty, and glory (cf. Exod 3–14; Isa 6:1–9; 10:5–34; Ezek 38–39; Zech 14; Ps 92:6–9; Prov 16:4). All told, it seems hard to deny that DRA is a rich concept that plays an important role in the theology of the OT.

CHAPTER 7
DIVINE REPROBATING ACTIVITY
IN THE SYNOPTICS AND ACTS

Thus far, I have determined that DRA functions as a multifaceted and significant concept in the OT. While these findings are meaningful on their own, a biblical theology of DRA must take into account the testimony of the NT. For this reason, beginning with the Synoptic Gospels and Acts, I now turn to the NT to examine its own witness to DRA.

DRA in the Gospel of Matthew

DRA in Matthew 11:25–27

The first instance of DRA in Matthew¹ is found in Jesus' prayer to the Father in Matthew 11:25–27.²

¹ In what follows, I approach each of the Synoptic Gospels as unified texts, and focus on interpreting relevant passages with reference to the final form of the book. Additionally, I do not intend to explore the composition history of any particular gospel, nor do I intend for any of my exegetical conclusions to rest primarily on source-critical, form-critical, redaction-critical, or composition-critical theories (though hypotheses drawn from these methods may play a secondary role). In these ways, my investigation of the Synoptics shares some affinities with certain streams within narrative criticism. For descriptions and examples of narrative criticism, see Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 2nd ed., rev. and enlarged ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 1–42; Jeannine K. Brown, *The Gospels as Stories: A Narrative Approach to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020), 3–19; Iain Provan, *The Reformation and the Right Reading of Scripture* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2017), 549–75; Mark Allan Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism?*, Guides to Biblical Scholarship (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 6–10, 19–21; Terence L. Donaldson, “The Vindicated Son: A Narrative Approach to Matthean Christology,” in *Contours of Christology in the New Testament*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker, McMaster NTS (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 100–121; David M. Rhoads, “Narrative Criticism and the Gospel of Mark,” *JAAR* 50, no. 3 (1982): 411–26.

² I am concerned with interpreting Matt 11:25–27 within its Matthean context; thus, I do not explore what the saying might have meant in other hypothetical contexts. For an example of a study that seeks to interpret the passage in relation to Q, see Adelbert Denaux, “The Q-Logion Mt 11,27 / Lk 10,22 and the Gospel of John,” in *John and the Synoptics*, ed. Adelbert Denaux, BETL (Leuven, Belgium:

The prayer comes on the heels of two sweeping condemnations.³ First, Jesus rebukes his Jewish contemporaries for rejecting both John the Baptist and himself (Matt 11:16–19).⁴ Then, Jesus renders a word of judgment against various Galilean cities for their refusal to repent despite witnessing Jesus’ miracles (Matt 11:20–24).⁵ Thus, according to Jesus, his audiences would suffer divine judgment because they failed to understand and respond appropriately to his teaching and his deeds.⁶ Moreover, Jesus makes it clear that the Jews had only themselves to blame for their coming judgment: by stating that cities as wicked as Tyre, Sidon, Sodom, and Gomorrah would have responded more favorably to his ministry,⁷ he stressed Israel’s culpability for their unbelief.⁸ Nevertheless, Jesus goes on to

Leuven University Press, 1992), 167–76.

³ For others who see Matt 11:16–24 as relevant for the interpretation of vv. 25–27, see Celia Deutsch, *Hidden Wisdom and the Easy Yoke: Wisdom, Torah and Discipleship in Matthew 11.25–30*, JSNTSup (Sheffield, England: JSOT, 1987), 22, 26; Samuele Bacchiocchi, “Matthew 11:28–30: Jesus’ Rest and the Sabbath,” *AUSS* 22, no. 3 (1984): 290; A. M. Hunter, “Crux Criticorum—Matt. XI. 25–30—A Re-Appraisal,” *NTS* 8, no. 3 (1962): 243; Frances Taylor Gench, *Wisdom in the Christology of Matthew* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1997), 106; Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 316.

⁴ Davies and Allison correctly note that it is Jesus’ generation that is compared with children: “the contemporaries of John and Jesus are like disagreeable children who complain that others will not act according to their desires and expectations.” W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, vol. 2, ICC (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 262.

⁵ As Harrington notes, “The theological assumption of Matt 11:20–24 is that Jesus’ miracles were not intended merely as displays but rather demanded the response of repentance in the face of the coming kingdom of God. Those who fail to make that connection are threatened with eschatological punishment.” Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1991), 165.

⁶ Reiser is correct to point out that Jesus’ teaching in Matt 11:20–24 is “based on Jesus’ claim that the acceptance or rejection of his message would decide the eschatological destiny of each individual, and of the nation itself.” Marius Reiser, *Jesus and Judgment: The Eschatological Proclamation in Its Jewish Context*, trans. Linda M. Maloney (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 226.

⁷ Blomberg posits that Tyre and Sidon represent “paradigmatic enemies of Israel,” while Sodom and Gomorrah “typify the wickedness of Canaan before Israel conquered it.” See Craig L. Blomberg, “Matthew,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 38.

⁸ As Hagner writes, “The cities of Galilee were especially privileged. A great light had shone

suggest that God himself had a hand in securing the condemnation of those Israelites who refused to believe⁹:

At that time Jesus answered and said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you hid these things from the wise and intelligent, and disclosed them to children. Yes, Father, because such was pleasing in your sight. All things were delivered to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, nor does anyone know the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son wills to reveal [Him].” (Matt 11:25–27)¹⁰

In his prayer, Jesus attributes the acts of both concealing and revealing to the Father.¹¹ In other words, God is here said to disclose certain “things” to some, while keeping these same “things” from others (cf. Matt 13:13–15).¹² But what is it that the

in their midst (cf. 4:15–16), yet they refused to acknowledge that light. They accepted neither the message of the kingdom nor the messenger of the kingdom. They are accordingly more culpable than those who, though very wicked, had less clear evidence of the will of God.” Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 315.

⁹ As Gench rightly suggests, Matt 11:25–30 explains why it is that the vast majority of Jesus’ contemporaries rejected him. Moreover, she correctly notes that “[Jesus] invokes the will of his Father in explanation of Israel’s rejection. Israel does not believe because God has determined that revelation be withheld.” Gench, *Wisdom*, 107, 109–10. Also see Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 137; Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC (Nashville: B & H, 1992), 167, ProQuest; R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 333, ProQuest.

¹⁰ The Christological portrait painted by Matt 11:25–27 (along with vv. 28–30) has been the subject of some discussion. Davies and Allison have argued that these verses (v. 27 in particular) highlight a comparison between Jesus and Moses, so as to present the former as “the perfect wise man and prophet” who “knows and reveals God, his Father, thereby fulfilling the calling of Israel while at the same time bringing to pass the prophecies of eschatological knowledge.” Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8–18*, 282–87; Dale C. Allison Jr., “Two Notes on a Key Text: Matthew 11:25–30,” *JTS* 39, no. 2 (1988): 477–85. Others have argued that Matt 11:25–30 as a whole presents Jesus as Wisdom incarnate (see especially Deutsch, *Hidden Wisdom*, 139, 141–43). Sharbaugh argues that both Mosaic Typology and Wisdom Christology are reflected, thus demonstrating the compatibility of wisdom theology and salvation history (see Patricia Sharbaugh, “The New Moses and the Wisdom of God: A Convergence of Themes in Matthew 11:25–30,” *Hor* 40, no. 2 [2013]: 215–17). Still others recognize an allusion to wisdom themes while still rejecting the presence of a fully-orbed Wisdom Christology. See Gench, *Wisdom*, 122–23; Simon J. Gathercole, *The Preexistent Son: Recovering the Christologies of Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 209.

¹¹ According to Wilkens, the themes of concealment and revelation continue to be the focal points of Matt 12:1–13:58. See Wilhelm Wilkens, “Die Komposition des Matthäus-Evangeliums,” *NTS* 31, no. 1 (1985): 28, 36.

¹² Far from celebrating the former and lamenting the latter, Jesus praises the Father for both actions (v. 25). Rightly Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 318; Harrington, *Matthew*, 167; D. A. Carson, *Matthew: Chapters 1 through 12*, vol. 1 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 275; Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8–18*, 273–74; John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the*

Father reveals to some and conceals from others? And does this “concealing” work lead individuals towards sin and condemnation? The two questions are interrelated and both must be answered if it is to be shown that Matthew 11:25–27 bears witness to DRA.

With regards to the first question, the context surrounding verse 25 indicates that the things revealed (or concealed) are not trivial facts; instead, these concern the revelation of Jesus’ true identity.¹³ There are at least two reasons to believe this to be the case. First of all, the preceding verses suggest that “these things” include a proper understanding of Jesus’ (as well as perhaps John’s) ministry and message.¹⁴ As noted earlier, Matthew 11:16–24 revolves around Jesus’ condemnation of his generation for their failure to respond rightly to John and to himself (11:16–24). With this as the background, it seems reasonable to conclude that *ταῦτα* refers to the significance of Jesus’ words and deeds,¹⁵ which remained opaque to the majority of the Jews during Jesus’ lifetime. Second, Jesus’ statement in verse 27 indicates that God’s revelation or concealment of “these things” involves the revelation or concealment of Jesus’ identity as God’s Son. The verse does this by claiming that the Father alone is in the position to

Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, trans. William Pringle, 500th anniversary ed., *Calvin’s Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 2:36–37; Bacchiocchi, “Jesus’ Rest,” 291; Gench, *Wisdom*, 116; Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 130.

¹³ Along with the theme of Israel’s repudiation of Jesus, Kingsbury observes that the matter of Jesus’ identity “surfaces as the second motif of importance in [Matt] 11:2–16:20.” Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 72.

¹⁴ Some restrict the meaning of “these things” to “the revelation conveyed by Jesus’ speech and actions,” thereby leaving out the witness of John (see for instance Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8–18*, 277; Gench, *Wisdom*, 111). While I agree that Jesus’ ministry and person are primarily in view, I think it is also possible that 11:7–19 suggests that the witness of John is also included within “these things” (so also Osborne, *Matthew*, 439).

¹⁵ Similarly, Deutsch, *Hidden Wisdom*, 28–29; Harrington, *Matthew*, 167; Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 318; Osborne, *Matthew*, 439; Hunter, “A Re-appraisal,” 243; Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8–18*, 277; Gench, *Wisdom*, 111; Matthias Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles in the Gospel of Matthew*, trans. Kathleen Ess, Baylor–Mohr Siebeck Studies in Early Christianity (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), 218n261; David L. Turner, *Matthew*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 303.

disclose the identity of the Son: “no one knows the Son except the Father” (v. 27b).¹⁶ Since Jesus bases his prerogative to reveal the Father on his exclusive knowledge of the Father (v. 27c),¹⁷ the assertion of the Father’s exclusive knowledge of the Son would seem to imply his own authority to reveal the Son. Such an authority seems to be precisely the subject of verse 25. Thus, while verse 27 is mainly about Jesus’ relation to the Father and his own role as the mediator of divine revelation, the verse also sheds light on verse 25 by hinting at what it is that the Father chooses to reveal or conceal: namely, the identity of the Son.¹⁸ Altogether then, the context surrounding Matthew 11:25 suggests that what God reveals to some and hides from others includes the meaning of Jesus’ ministry and the knowledge of his identity.¹⁹ If this is correct, then the second question demands an affirmative answer: God’s “concealing” work does in fact lead some towards sin and condemnation.²⁰ By masking Jesus’ identity, God exercises an influence

¹⁶ The question of the relationship between Matt 11:27 and Johannine theology goes beyond the scope of this section. For explorations of this issue, see Denaux, “Q-Logion,” 176–88; Maurits Sabbe, “Can Mt 11,27 and Lk 10,22 Be Called a Johannine Logion?,” in *Logia: Les Paroles de Jesus – The Sayings of Jesus*, ed. Joël Delobel, BETL (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 1982), 363–71.

¹⁷ Gathercole is right to include “the power of election to salvation” within the “all things” the Son receives from the Father. Moreover, he is right to see this as evidence of high Christology within Matthew. Gathercole, *The Preexistent Son*, 56–57, 277–80. See also Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 130, 193; Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 316–18, 320; Carson, *Matthew 1–12*, 275; Osborne, *Matthew*, 440–41; Robert Horton Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew’s Gospel with Special Reference to the Messianic Hope*, NovTSup (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1967), 214; John P. Meier, *Matthew*, New Testament Message (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1980), 127; Gench, *Wisdom*, 113. Meanwhile, Bacchiocchi also argues successfully that v. 27 serves as an “initial unveiling” of Christ’s messianic self-understanding (see Bacchiocchi, “Jesus’ Rest,” 292–95).

¹⁸ This reading also suggests that Matthew acknowledges a parallelism between the Father and the Son in their revelatory activities. Just as the Father discloses the identity of the Son to whomever He wills (v. 25), so also the Son discloses the identity of the Father to whomever He wills (v. 27).

¹⁹ Cf. Matt 16:15–17. Moreover, Konradt rightly notes that a proper understanding of the nature of Jesus’ messianic ministry would lead to the recognition of Jesus’ identity as the Messiah. See Konradt, *Israel, Church, and Gentiles*, 218n261.

²⁰ Meier correctly intimates that nothing less than salvation is at stake in v. 25 when he says, “The Father, in his mysterious plan, has hidden his *saving revelation* (‘these things’) [emphasis added] from the ‘wise and understanding.’” Meier, *Matthew*, 126.

that secures the rejection of Jesus (cf. 11:16–24),²¹ and the refusal of his invitation to discipleship (cf. 11:28–30).²² Since (1) Matthew 11:16–24 presents the rejection of Jesus to be sinful, and since (2) the Gospel of Matthew repeatedly suggests that a person’s fate depends upon their response to Jesus,²³ God’s concealment of the identity of the Son effectively leads some people towards sin and condemnation. Therefore, it seems warranted to conclude that Matthew 11:25–27 portrays DRA.²⁴

While Matthew 11:25–27 describes an example of DRA, the text does not immediately clarify who is being subjected to reprobating influence. According to Matthew 11:25, the Father conceals saving truths “from the wise and intelligent” (ἀπὸ σοφῶν καὶ συνετῶν). But who does Matthew intend to identify with this descriptor? Some scholars posit that the phrase σοφῶν καὶ συνετῶν refers to Israel insofar as it rejects Jesus.²⁵ This argument makes sense in the context since Matthew 11:25–27 elucidates the

²¹ Gench rightly argues that Matt 11:25–27 provides an explanation for the rejection experienced by Jesus in 11:16–24. See Gench, *Wisdom*, 107, 109–10.

²² The necessity of rightly grasping Jesus’ identity is emphasized by vv. 28–30, which makes the experience of eschatological rest contingent upon accepting Jesus and his call to discipleship (for helpful discussions on the meaning of rest in Matt 11:28–30, see Bacchiocchi, “Jesus’ Rest,” 295–308; Talbot, “Rest, Eschatology and Sabbath,” 68). Moreover, the allusion to Jer 6:16 in v. 29 suggests that those who rejected Jesus’ call would be liable to divine judgment. For those who recognize this allusion, see Carson, *Matthew 1–12*, 278; Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8–18*, 291; Osborne, *Matthew*, 444; Cerfaux, “Les sources,” 339; Gundry, *Use of the Old Testament*, 136; Michael Knowles, *Jeremiah in Matthew’s Gospel: The Rejected-Prophet Motif in Matthaean Redaction*, JSNTSup (Sheffield, England: JSOT, 1993), 214–17; Maarten J. J. Menken, *Matthew’s Bible: The Old Testament Text of the Evangelist*, BETL (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 2004), 267–69; Talbot, “Rest, Eschatology and Sabbath,” 58; Hunter, “A Re-appraisal,” 248; Gench, *Wisdom*, 103; Meier, *Matthew*, 128. Altogether, vv. 25–30 implies that some individuals would not experience the rest offered by Jesus and would instead be condemned because God would conceal from them the truth about Jesus’ identity, thereby preventing them from accepting the yoke of Christ’s discipleship.

²³ Cf. Matt 8:5–13; 9:2; 10:32–33; 11:6, 28–30; 16:15–17; 19:27–30; 21:33–43.

²⁴ The wording of Matt 11:25 recalls a passage in Isaiah (Isa 29:14 LXX) which also describes God’s reprobating agency (rightly Benjamin W. Bacon, “Jesus the Son of God,” *HTR* 2, no. 3 [1909]: 282; Blomberg, “Matthew,” 38; Osborne, *Matthew*, 439). This allusion is further evidence that Matthew understands God’s work of “concealment” to be a form of DRA.

²⁵ See Carson, *Matthew 1–12*, 275; Harrington, *Matthew*, 167; Osborne, *Matthew*, 439;

crowds sinful rejection of John and Jesus (cf. Matt 11:16–24).²⁶ However, other factors suggest that Matthew was thinking of Israel’s religious leaders in particular.²⁷ First, at face value, the descriptor “wise and intelligent” suggests that the religious elite are in view since it is unlikely that common folk would be so described. Second, by using the phrase σοφῶν καὶ συνετῶν together with the verb ἔκρυψας, the evangelist may allude to Isaiah 29:14,²⁸ which is the only verse in the LXX that combines the three roots σοφός, συνετός, and κρύπτω.²⁹ Since Isaiah 29:9–14 refers to YHWH stunting the understanding of Israel’s religious leaders (i.e., prophets, seers, and wise men) in order to mislead the nation, the allusion to this text in Matthew 11:25 suggests that the verse should be understood similarly. Finally, the subsequent chapter supports the view that the “wise and intelligent” refers to the religious leaders since Matthew proceeds from Matthew 11:25–30 to recount the conflicts between Jesus and the Pharisees over the Sabbath (cf. 12:1–8, 9–14). These three observations make it more likely than not that Matthew has in mind

Menken, *Matthew’s Bible*, 99–100; Gench, *Wisdom*, 110–11; France, *Matthew*, 333.

²⁶ Contra Konradt, *Israel, Church, and Gentiles*, 218–19.

²⁷ Bacchiocchi describes those rejected here as “the custodians of Israel’s wisdom.” Bacchiocchi, “Jesus’ Rest,” 291. For others who also conclude that the phrase “wise and intelligent” has Israel’s religious leaders in view, see Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8–18*, 275; Paul S. Minear, “Two Secrets, Two Disclosures,” *HBT* 29 (2007): 76; Meier, *Matthew*, 126; Hunter, “A Re-appraisal,” 243; W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, *Matthew*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1971), 144; Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 318; Konradt, *Israel, Church, and Gentiles*, 218; Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew*, trans. Thomas P. Scheck, FC (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 136. For a study of Matthew’s characterization of Israel’s religious leaders, see Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 17–24.

²⁸ See Bacon, “Jesus the Son of God,” 282; Osborne, *Matthew*, 439; Blomberg, “Matthew,” 38; Menken, *Matthew’s Bible*, 100; Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, 144. Davies and Allison are open to the suggestion of an allusion, though they do not come to a firm conclusion on the matter (see Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8–18*, 275).

²⁹ Isa 29:14b in the LXX reads: καὶ ἀπολώ τὴν σοφίαν τῶν σοφῶν καὶ τὴν σύνεσιν τῶν συνετῶν κρύψω.

the religious leaders of the nation when he (perhaps sarcastically) uses the phrase “wise and intelligent.”³⁰

While I agree with those who understand the σοφοί καὶ συνετοί to be Israel’s religious teachers, critics of this position are right to observe that the context preceding Matthew 11:25 suggests that the crowds and the Galilean cities have been kept from grasping the true significance of Jesus’ person and work.³¹ In fact, it is the condemnation of the broader Israelite community in Matthew 11:16–24 that leads directly to the discussion of God’s concealing/revealing activity in verses 25–27. Given this context, how would God’s reprobating work against “the wise and intelligent” explain the crowd’s refusal to trust in Jesus?³² Perhaps the allusion to Isaiah 29:9–14 provides a solution. As I previously argued, Isaiah 29:9–14 refers to an act of DRA where YHWH renders Israel’s religious leaders (i.e., the prophets, seers, and wise men) incapable of discerning the truth so that they might be the means by which he leads the nation towards judgment. Bearing this in mind, it may be the case that the act of divine concealment in Matthew 11:25 serves a similar function. In other words, Matthew 11:25 may describe God’s concealing work against the religious leaders to be the means by which he would influence the

³⁰ Deutsch argues that the text is ambiguous regarding the identity of the “wise and intelligent,” so that both the religious leaders and unbelieving Israel as a whole are the proper referents (see Deutsch, *Hidden Wisdom*, 30–31). While this is possible, I think it is better to say that God’s influence on the “wise and intelligent” (i.e., the scribes and Pharisees) was divinely intended to have a reprobating effect on the rest of Israel as well.

³¹ Rightly Gench, *Wisdom*, 110; Carson, *Matthew 1–12*, 275; Harrington, *Matthew*, 167; Osborne, *Matthew*, 439; Menken, *Matthew’s Bible*, 99–100.

³² As I noted earlier, I view Matt 11:25–27 to be intended as an explanation for the crowds’ response to Jesus described in 11:16–24 (see especially Gench, *Wisdom*, 110–11; Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 316).

majority of the Jews to reject Christ.³³ Such an interpretation seems to do justice to both the context leading up to 11:25–30 as well as to the likely meaning of σοφοί καὶ συνετοί.³⁴

Of course, none of this is meant to suggest that Matthew denies or even downplays the reality of human responsibility. As stated earlier, Jesus condemned his generation for refusing to respond appropriately to his ministry (cf. 11:16–24). Moreover, Jesus follows up his prayer with a genuine invitation for his audience to come to him (vv. 28–30). Thus, in keeping with the OT precedent, Matthew affirms both that God is sovereign over human choices and that humans make meaningful decisions for which they are held accountable.³⁵

To summarize the argument thus far, Matthew 11:25–27 presents a case of DRA in which God conceals the truth about Jesus from Israel’s religious leaders so that they might lead the majority of the Jewish nation to reject Christ. How should one then describe the character of DRA in this case? The text seems to allow for at least three tentative conclusions.³⁶ First, if the preceding interpretation has been sound, Matthew

³³ This is not to say that God’s negative influence on the broader Israelite community was only exercised through the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees. As my discussion on Matt 13:10–15 shows, Jesus’ own teaching also functioned as a means by which God would dull the perception of the crowds.

³⁴ In addition, this approach to v. 25 also makes sense given Matthew’s description of the negative effects of the teaching of Israel’s religious leaders. So for instance, Matthew describes the scribes and Pharisees as traditionalists who hand down the teachings of men instead of upholding the commands of God (Matt 15:3–7), as “blind guides” who lead their blind students down into a pit (Matt 15:14), as teachers who bar access into the Kingdom of heaven (Matt 23:13), and as missionaries who disciple people to become sons of hell (Matt 23:15). During the passion narrative, it is the religious leaders who “persuaded” (ἐπεισαν) the Israelite crowds to reject Jesus and call for his execution (Matt 27:20). Moreover, the last mention of the religious leaders has them instructing soldiers to deceive the nation of Israel so that they might disbelieve the account of Jesus’ resurrection (Matt 28:11–15). Clearly Matthew views Israel’s religious elites as having had a powerful, negative influence upon the Jewish nation. For a similar analysis of Matthew’s depiction of the religious leaders’ teaching, see Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 20–21.

³⁵ So also Carson, *Matthew 1–12*, 275; Osborne, *Matthew*, 445; Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 318; Gench, *Wisdom*, 110.

³⁶ I do not think Matt 11:25 provides enough information to determine whether the divine concealment is presented as an active or passive form of DRA.

11:25–27 should be seen as evidencing both an immediate and a mediated form of DRA.³⁷ In this case, God prevents the scribes and Pharisees from coming to the knowledge of the truth (thereby consigning them to judgment; cf. Matt 23:33), so that their ministry might become the means by which God exercises his negative influence upon the nation (cf. Matt 23:15). Second, given that (1) the preceding context focuses on the final judgment (“the day of judgment”; cf. Matt 11:22, 24),³⁸ (2) Matthew elsewhere teaches that the final judgment will result in a punishment of eternal duration for the unrepentant (Matt 25:31–46³⁹; cf. Matt 3:10–12; 5:22, 29, 30; 7:19; 8:12; 10:28; 12:33; 13:40, 42, 50; 23:33),⁴⁰ and that (3) Matthew 11:23 mentions a judgment that involves a descent into “Hades” (ἕως ἄδου καταβήσῃ),⁴¹ it seems more likely than not that Matthew

³⁷ Other examples of immediate/mediate DRA include Isa 19:1–14; 29:9–14; and Ezek 14:9–11.

³⁸ Rightly Reiser, *Jesus and Judgment*, 228; Anders Runesson, *Divine Wrath and Salvation in Matthew: The Narrative World of the First Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016), 51; Meghan Henning, *Educating Early Christians through the Rhetoric of Hell: “Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth” as Paideia in Matthew and the Early Church*, WUNT (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 155, 170–71.

³⁹ For a discussion regarding the influence Matt 25:31–46 exercised on Christian thinking about hell, see Herbert Vorgrimler, *Geschichte der Hölle* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1993), 16–17.

⁴⁰ Many scholars agree that Matthew envisions a post-mortem punishment of eternal duration for the wicked. In fact, Henning goes so far as to state that “Matthew’s treatment of ‘hell’ is the most developed and extensive in the New Testament.” Henning, *Rhetoric of Hell*, 112, 150. For others who take Matthew to teach the doctrine of eternal, conscious punishment, see Heikki Räisänen, “Resurrection for Punishment? The Fate of the Unrighteous in Early Christianity and in ‘New Testament Theology,’” in *Resurrection of the Dead: Biblical Traditions in Dialogue*, BETL (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2012), 369–70; Jonathan Lusthaus, “A History of Hell: The Jewish Origins of the Idea of Gehenna in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark,” *Journal for the Academic Study of Religion* 21, no. 2 (2008): 178–79, 182–83; Hans Scharen, “Gehenna in the Synoptics,” *BibSac* 149 (1992): 336; Peter M. Head, “The Duration of Divine Judgment in the New Testament,” in *Eschatology in the Bible and Theology: Evangelical Essays at the Dawn of a New Millennium*, ed. Kent E. Brower and Mark W. Elliott (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 225; Paul R. Williamson, *Death and the Afterlife: Biblical Perspectives on Ultimate Questions*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018), 148–51, 160; George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 196; Aaron B. Bird, “Evaluating the Newest Evangelical Answer for the Dark Doctrine of Hell” (PhD diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2012), 176–90.

⁴¹ Henning correctly argues that “Hades” is part of the vocabulary Matthew uses to create “a vision of eternal punishment that employs the disparate ‘visual vocabularies’ of a broad audience.” Thus, along with “Gehenna,” readers should understand “Hades” to “refer to eschatological punishment or the

11:25 has eternal consequences in view. Lastly, the fact that revelation is granted to “children” (νήπιοι) may suggest that a child-like attitude (cf. Matt 18:2–4; 19:13–14) is what is required in order for one to be blessed with saving knowledge. If this is the case, it is possible that the reason why the “wise and intelligent” are barred from such knowledge is because of a deficiency in their moral disposition. On this basis, one could argue that a retributive view of DRA makes better sense of the passage.⁴² While I think this reading is probably correct, it must also be admitted that Matthew 11:25–27 does not elaborate upon God’s motivations in granting revelation to some and withholding it from others.⁴³ As such, those who posit a retributive form of DRA in Matthew 11:25 should do so somewhat cautiously.⁴⁴

DRA in Matthew 13:10–17

A second example of DRA in Matthew seems to be evidenced in Jesus’ explanation for his use of parables (Matt 13:10–17).⁴⁵ This passage is situated within

place of damnation.” Henning, *Rhetoric of Hell*, 153–56.

⁴² For others who take a similar position, see Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8–18*, 275–76; Carson, *Matthew 1–12*, 275; Osborne, *Matthew*, 440; Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew*, rev. and expanded ed., vol. 1, *The Christbook, Matthew 1–12* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 530; Turner, *Matthew*, 303; France, *Matthew*, 333; Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 124.

⁴³ The only statement made regarding God’s motivation is found in v. 26: “Yes, Father, because such was pleasing in your sight” (ναὶ ὁ πατήρ, ὅτι οὕτως εὐδοκία ἐγένετο ἔμπροσθέν σου). While the statement makes clear that God conceals and reveals because it pleases him to do so, the verse does not disclose the basis upon which God decides from whom the truth will be concealed and to whom the truth will be revealed.

⁴⁴ Calvin serves as an example of one who does not adopt a retributive reading of Matt 11:25. As he states, “I do acknowledge, that all unbelievers swell with a wicked confidence in themselves But I consider that Christ here includes all who are eminent for abilities and learning, without charging them with any fault; as, on the other hand, he does not represent it to be an excellence in any one that he is a *little* child. True, humble persons have Christ for their master, and the first lesson of faith is, Let no man presume on his wisdom. But Christ does not speak here as to voluntary childhood. He magnifies the grace of the Father on this ground, that he does not disdain to descend even to the lowest and most abominable, that he may raise up the poor out of filth.” Calvin, *Harmony of the Evangelists*, 2:38.

⁴⁵ The Gospel of Matthew provides no reason to distinguish Jesus’ goals from those of God; on the contrary, according to the Evangelist, “Jesus stands forth as the supreme agent of God who

Jesus' third major discourse,⁴⁶ one that is focused on "the kingdom of heaven and its reception in the world."⁴⁷ Matthew 13:1–2 provide a transition from the preceding section by noting a change of setting, as Jesus journeys to the sea of Galilee and the crowds follow him in order to hear him teach. Matthew 13:3–9 then begins with the parable of the sower, which describes the different kinds of responses generated by the preaching of the Word of God.⁴⁸ Jesus' focus then shifts away from the crowds to his disciples as they ask him about his reason for teaching the broader public in parables (Matt 13:10–23).⁴⁹ Given their own trouble comprehending their Lord's message (cf. Matt 13:36), they may have assumed that Jesus' audience would have understood him better had he taught in a more straightforward manner.⁵⁰ If so, Jesus' initial answer would have upended their assumptions regarding their Lord's goals: rather than meaning for his teaching to be

authoritatively espouses God's evaluative point of view." Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 161. Thus, readers are right to assume that Jesus' reasons for teaching in parables reflect God's own purposes. This explains why Matt 13:10–17 provides evidence of *divine* reprobating activity, since Jesus is God's Son who always does the will of the Father.

⁴⁶ Matthew includes five major discourses given by Jesus; these occur in Matt 5–7, 10, 13, 18, 23–25. For an argument in favor of including chap. 23 within the fifth discourse, see Jason Hood, "Matthew 23–25: The Extent of Jesus' Fifth Discourse," *JBL* 128, no. 3 (2009): 527–43.

⁴⁷ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8–18*, 374. Matera rightly observes that Matt 13 "is the centerpiece of Jesus' exposition of the kingdom." Matera, *New Testament Theology*, 29.

⁴⁸ Harrington posits that the issue behind all the parables in Matt 13 was "the mystery of the rejection and acceptance of Jesus' word of the kingdom." Harrington, *Matthew*, 197–98. Moreover, he intimates that the problem probably reflected Matthew's own historical situation as well, wherein he had to explain why so many Jews continued to reject Christ.

⁴⁹ Marguerat correctly notes that *αὐτοῖς* in Matt 13:10 refers to the *ἄγλοι πολλοί* in 13:2; see Marguerat, *Le Jugement*, 416. Moreover, Cousland correctly points out that Matthew's use of pronouns in vv. 10–17 function to distinguish the crowds from the disciples (see J. R. C. Cousland, *The Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew*, NovTSup [Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2002], 252).

⁵⁰ Robert Stein correctly notes that both the disciples' response and the history of interpretation suggests that the parables were "far from self-evident illustrations." Robert H. Stein, *The Method and Message of Jesus' Teachings* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 41. See also Konradt, *Israel, Church, and Gentiles*, 246; Calvin, *Harmony of the Evangelists*, 2:101; Francois P. Viljoen, "Why Jesus Spoke in Parables," *IDS* 53, no. 1 (2019): 4.

universally understood, Matthew 13:11–17 indicates that Jesus *intended* to teach in such a way as to have a negative epistemological impact on those who had not been granted the privilege of knowing the secrets of the kingdom.⁵¹

In Matthew 13:10–17, Jesus answers the disciples' question in three stages.⁵² In the first stage, Jesus explains the rationale for the parables by referring to what he desired to effect through them⁵³:

And [Jesus] replied and said to [to the disciples], “[I speak to them in parables] because it has been granted to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven,⁵⁴ but it has not been granted to them. For whoever has—to him it will be given and he will abound! But whoever does not have—even what he has will be taken from him.”⁵⁵ (Matt 13:11–12)

⁵¹ As Nel states, “Jesus thus does not speak to the uncomprehending crowds in parables to lead them to understanding, but rather to withhold knowledge from them in order to complete the hardening of their hearts.” Marius Nel, “The Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven According to Matthew 13:10–17,” *Neot* 43, no. 2 (2009): 278. Konradt makes a similar observation, claiming that the parables were intended to “ratify” the crowds’ incomprehension; however, he seems to confuse the historical crowds with “the crowd” as a literary character within Matthew when he goes on to argue that Matt 13:10–17 does not intend to preclude the possibility that some within the crowd might respond positively to Jesus’ message (see Konradt, *Israel, Church, and Gentiles*, 246–47, 252–53).

⁵² Carson also recognizes a tripartite structure in Matt 13:10–17 (see Carson, *Matthew 13–28*, 306).

⁵³ Contra Evans, who unconvincingly asserts that Jesus’ statements in Matt 13:11–12 were not intended as an answer to the question the disciples asked in v. 10. Craig A. Evans, *To See and Not Perceive: Isaiah 6.9–10 in Early Jewish and Christian Interpretation*, JSOTSup 64 (Sheffield, England: JSOT, 1989), 108.

⁵⁴ Nel rightly notes that the background to Matthew’s reference to “mysteries” is found in Jewish rather than Greco-Roman sources (see Nel, “Mysteries of the Kingdom,” 280–81). So also Douglas S. McComiskey, “Exile and the Purpose of Jesus’ Parables (Mark 4:10–12; Matt 13:10–17; Luke 8:9–10),” *JETS* 51, no. 1 (2008): 79; Carson, *Matthew 13–28*, 307; Lucien Cerfaux, “La connaissance des secrets du Royaume d’après Matt. XIII. 11 et parallèles,” *NTS* 2, no. 4 (1956): 244; Marguerat, *Le Jugement*, 417.

⁵⁵ Matt 13:12b does not state what it is that the crowds have that will be taken from them. According to van Elderen, the crowd does possess the mysteries, i.e., the OT teaching about the kingdom, but they do not have knowledge regarding the meaning of those mysteries. See Bastiaan van Elderen, “The Purpose of Parables According to Matthew 13:10–17,” in *New Dimensions in New Testament Study*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker and Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 183–86. While van Elderen’s explanation is possible, I think Konradt is probably correct when he says that v. 12b refers to the crowd’s rudimentary understanding of Jesus’ identity, which has sparked curiosity without leading to commitment. As Konradt says, “The state of simply being interested cannot be a permanent condition. Either interest solidifies into entry into discipleship or the one who is only interested ultimately returns to

According to verses 11–12, Jesus states that the parables were directed towards two ends: (1) they were to secure a division between those graced with knowledge of the kingdom and those to whom that knowledge was to be concealed,⁵⁶ and (2) they were to promote understanding in the former while rendering the latter less capable of comprehension.⁵⁷ Thus, according to Matthew, Jesus intentionally taught so as to garner a mixed response. For the disciples, Jesus taught them so as to add to their knowledge by providing the parables with explanations (cf. Matt 13:18–20, 36–43; 15:15–20) or by teaching them more directly (cf. Matt 5:1–7:27; 10:5–42; 16:21–28; 17:22–23; 18:1–35; 20:17–19;

the state he was in before hearing the *λόγος τῆς βασιλείας*. Speaking in parables, according to 13:11–12, serves this separation, in that it widens the gap between those who understand and those who do not.” Konradt, *Israel, Church, and Gentiles*, 248–49).

⁵⁶ So Nel correctly says, “The parables function as an insider language that reinforced the clear boundary between those to whom the parables were explained in private, and outsiders (the crowd) to whom they had deliberately not been explained.” Nel, “Mysteries of the Kingdom,” 283; see also Konradt, *Israel, Church, and Gentiles*, 246–49; Marguerat, *Le Jugement*, 417–18; Jonathan T. Pennington, “Matthew 13 and the Function of the Parables in the First Gospel” 13, no. 3 (2009): 17; Viljoen, “Why Jesus Spoke in Parables,” 2–4; Cerfaux, “La connaissance,” 246–47; Harrington, *Matthew*, 197–98; Meier, *Matthew*, 144; Blomberg, *Matthew*, 186–87; Calvin, *Harmony of the Evangelists*, 2:102–3; Cousland, *The Crowds*, 253; van Elderen, “Purpose of Parables,” 190; France, *Matthew*, 372.

⁵⁷ These goals undermine McComiskey’s argument that in Matt 13:10–17 (and in Mark 4:10–12 and Luke 8:9–10), the distinction Jesus draws is “not between those who are in the kingdom and those who are not, because there would certainly be those in the crowd who were true followers of Jesus. Rather, the distinction is between a group of individuals who are indeed in the kingdom (the disciples) and a mixed group representative of the broader exiled Jewish community (the crowd).” McComiskey, “The Purpose of Jesus’ Parables,” 81. On the contrary, Matthew’s use of pronouns in 13:10–17 clearly indicates that he maintains a distinction between disciples and non-disciples throughout the passage. Thus, as Cousland rightly notes, both the form and the content of Matt 13:10–17 “is designed to create a sharp disjunction between the crowds and the disciples.” Cousland, *The Crowds*, 252–56. McComiskey here seems to stumble over the distinction between the “crowd” as a literary character and the physical, historical crowds during Jesus’ time. While the two are clearly connected, they are not identical. In other words, as a literary character, Matthew portrays the “crowd” as those who would respond negatively to Jesus in accordance with God’s own designs. The reason Matthew chooses to characterize the “crowd” this way is because the historical crowds during Jesus’ time did in large measure reject Jesus. Yet, Matthew’s negative characterization of the “crowd” does not mean that he believed every single Jew apart from the twelve rejected Jesus’ message. Instead, the “crowd” in Matthew functions as a literary shorthand to refer precisely to those historical Jews who heard Jesus’ teaching and did ultimately reject him. Thus, Matt 13:10–17 gives readers no indication that some within the “crowd” would hear the parables, repent, and thereby become disciples. In fact, the plain meaning of Jesus’ words indicate that he intended to prevent the “crowd” from becoming disciples by speaking to them in parables so as to negatively impact their understanding of kingdom realities.

26:1–2, 26–29).⁵⁸ For those outside the circle of disciples,⁵⁹ all Jesus’ teachings would come through parables so that their understanding might be hindered.⁶⁰ This then raises a more puzzling question: why would Jesus want to prevent some from coming to know the mysteries of the kingdom? It is this question that Jesus addresses in the second stage of his response:

I speak to them in parables for this reason: because “although seeing, they do not see, and although hearing, they do not hear nor understand;”⁶¹ that is,⁶² in them, the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled which says, “You will surely hear and you will never understand, and despite seeing, you will see and not perceive. For the heart of this people was made dull, and with difficulty did they hear with their ears, and they

⁵⁸ Cerfaux helpfully notes that the gift of revelation is related to divine election; see Cerfaux, “La connaissance,” 243.

⁵⁹ Evans makes too much of the difference between Matthew (13:11) and Mark (4:11) with respect to how they speak of the non-disciples. While Mark refers to them as “those outside” (τοῖς ἔξω), Matthew simply uses the pronoun “them” (ἐκείνοις). Evans claims that this reflects a desire on Matthew’s part to “narrow the gap between believers and unbelievers” and to “tone down the distinction” as “a matter of diplomacy.” Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 109. Such a reading of Matt 13:11 is very difficult given the rather undiplomatic statements that follow in Matt 13:12–15. Moreover, while Matthew may not have explicitly referred to the crowds as “outsiders,” he provides a distinction between disciples and non-disciples that is just as stark as the one presented in Mark 4:11–12.

⁶⁰ So also Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 106; Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 376; Carson, *Matthew 13–28*, 307; Turner, *Matthew*, 339; Calvin, *Harmony of the Evangelists*, 2:102–3. Evans fails to persuade when he says that “the parables do not promote obduracy, they only make it easier to remain obdurate, and so to ‘lose what one already has.’” Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 110. On the one hand, it seems counterintuitive to claim that “mak[ing] it easier to remain obdurate” differs meaningfully from “promot[ing] obduracy.” And on the other hand, the fact that the parables lead non-disciples to “lose what [they] already [have]” suggests that they do more than merely leave uninclined listeners in the same state in which they were.

⁶¹ I have opted to place Matt 10:13b in quotation marks in order to highlight the allusion to Isa 6:9–10. As Nel rightly notes, Matt 10:13b is an “intertextual recontextualisation of Isa 6:9–10 in the form of a synonymous parallelism.” Nel, “Mysteries of the Kingdom,” 273; see also Blomberg, “Matthew,” 46; Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 107; Marguerat, *Le Jugement*, 419–20; Harrington, *Matthew*, 195–96; Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 373; Turner, *Matthew*, 339; Cousland, *The Crowds*, 255. As I argue below, Jesus characterizes the non-disciples as those who typologically fulfill the role of hardened Israel; as such, v. 13 serves to introduce the argument that the parables were the means by which the Scriptures would be fulfilled.

⁶² Given the repetition of the allusion to Isa 6:9–10 in vv. 13 and 14–15, I suggest that the καί in v. 14 be taken in an explicative sense (see BDAG 1.c); this then suggests that vv. 14–15 function to clarify the meaning of v. 13 as opposed to supplying an additional reason why Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables. See Harrington, *Matthew*, 196.

shut their eyes, lest they see with [their] eyes and hear with [their] ears and understand with [their] heart and turn back so that I might heal them.” (Matt 13:13–15)⁶³

According to Jesus, the reason he sought to bring about a mixed response to his teaching was because he desired that the Scriptures be fulfilled.⁶⁴ In other words, by communicating in parables, Jesus ensured that the non-disciples would misunderstand and reject his teaching so that the Scriptures might be fulfilled in the crowds as they followed after the pattern established by ancient Israel, which was likewise blind to the prophetic word during Isaiah’s ministry (cf. Isa 6:9–10).⁶⁵ Then in the last stage of his answer, Jesus contrasts the effects of the parables on the crowds with the blessing granted to the disciples.⁶⁶ Unlike the blinded outsiders, Christ’s disciples had been graced with revelations into the kingdom that even surpassed what had been granted to the prophets and righteous men of old (Matt 13:16–17; cf. Matt 11:25–27).⁶⁷ Altogether, Jesus’ answer

⁶³ In Matt 13:15–17, Jesus’ quotation of Isa 6 follows the LXX almost exactly. Rightly Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 107.

⁶⁴ R. T. France captures the importance of this theme in Matthew when he says, “the one word that best characterizes Matthew’s theological perspective is ‘fulfillment.’” R. T. France, “Matthew, Mark, and Luke,” in *A Theology of the New Testament*, ed. Donald A. Hagner, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 219. See also Frank Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament: A Canonical and Synthetic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 85–89; Peter Stuhlmacher, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Daniel P. Bailey (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 595–96.

⁶⁵ According to McComiskey, Jesus’ use of Isa 6:9–10 is not based on typological or analogical parallels between his audience and Isaiah’s audience; instead, Jesus read Isa 6 in a straightforward manner as the text speaks of an exile that would last until the coming of the Messiah (McComiskey, “Purpose of Jesus’ Parables,” 67, 77, 82, 85; see also Blomberg, “Matthew,” 47). However, it is not altogether clear that Isa 6:13 should be read messianically. Moreover, it seems rather awkward to argue that the exile (and therefore the hardening of Israel) would only last until the coming of the Messiah (cf. McComiskey, “Purpose of Jesus’ Parables,” 67) when Jesus in fact claims that his Jewish audiences were hardened to (and by) his teaching. In addition, Matthew’s ending (Matt 28:11–15) and the NT as a whole (see especially Rom 9–11) shows no evidence that the hardening of Israel ended with Christ’s death and resurrection. Thus, rather than seeing Jesus’ use of Isa 6:9–10 as a literal reading, Jesus should be understood to have seen his ministry as the typological fulfillment of the pattern set by Israel’s response to Isaiah (and to the OT prophets as a whole; similarly, Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 374).

⁶⁶ Though it is not explicit, Matt 13:16 should be understood as referring to a blessing that comes from God (so also Nel, “Mysteries of the Kingdom,” 272).

⁶⁷ It would subvert Matthew’s argument to take Matt 13:16–17 as indicating that the disciples merited these revelations through their ability to see and to hear. On the contrary, v. 17 clearly specifies

in Matthew 10:11–17 indicates that he taught in parables in order to enlighten his disciples to the mysteries of the kingdom while simultaneously rendering the non-disciples incapable of understanding his message so that the Scriptures might be typologically fulfilled in them.

Despite arguments to the contrary,⁶⁸ Matthew likely portrays Jesus' teaching ministry as a reprobating influence upon those outside the circle of the disciples.⁶⁹ At least three lines of argumentation lend support to this contention. First, Matthew 13:11–12 clearly indicates that what befalls the crowds happens in accordance with God's purpose.⁷⁰ Jesus taught in parables because God desired to withhold from the crowds the privilege of understanding kingdom mysteries.⁷¹ Moreover, he also intended to remove

that this revelation is granted to the disciples as a blessing from God (cf. Matt 16:15–17). As Davies and Allison eloquently state, "The normal state of humanity is ignorance of God's eschatological secrets. . . . If therefore some have come to know that truth, it can only be because of God's gracious dealings with them." Davies and Allison *Matthew 8–18*, 389. See also Calvin, *Harmony of the Evangelists*, 2:103–4.

⁶⁸ See Blomberg, "Matthew," 48; McComiskey, "Purpose of the Parables," 81–84; Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 113; van Elderen, "Purpose of Parables," 189.

⁶⁹ Contra McComiskey, who makes the unconvincing argument that Jesus' parables were intended to lead to the continuation of Israel's corporate exile while simultaneously influencing the receptive among the outsiders to repent and experience salvation on an individual level. McComiskey presents no evidence that Matthew makes a categorical distinction between corporate and individual salvation. Moreover, he also incorrectly posits that the disciples are not envisioned within the parable of the sower (cf. Matt 13:3–9); as a result, he wrongly concludes that the good soil could refer to members of the crowd who respond correctly to the parables. See McComiskey, "Purpose of the Parables," 81–84.

⁷⁰ Even if Konradt were correct to say that the hardness of heart described in Matt 13:13–14 (cf. Isa 6:9–10 LXX) was not intended by God (Konradt, *Israel, Church, and Gentiles*, 252), vv. 11–12 clearly describe the crowd's misunderstanding as being due to the Lord's sovereign will. However, contra Konradt, France rightly points out that the point of vv. 10–17 as a whole is that the crowd's failure to believe is the purpose of God. Moreover, France is correct that, though Isa 6:9–10 LXX does dull the sharp edges of the MT version, "it is hard even in that version to avoid the conclusion that this is the way God has planned it." France, *Matthew*, 371.

⁷¹ God's desire to withhold these truths from the crowds may also provide insight into why Jesus tells his disciples not to reveal his true identity until after the resurrection (Matt 16:13–20; 17:1–9), and why he only discusses his impending death with the disciples (Matt 16:21; 17:10–12, 22–23; 20:17–19; 26:1–2, 17–29). In fact, Stein suggests that Jesus' use of the title "son of man" also functioned as a "parable": "the term . . . concealed from those outside and was itself understood only by his followers, to whom Jesus explained everything privately." Stein, *Method and Message*, 147.

from them whatever understanding they might have already had. These divine actions go well beyond leaving non-disciples to their own devices and as such, they intimate a negative divine influence. Second, the relationship of the passage to its immediate context also leads to the conclusion that the parables were intended to lead the crowds towards judgment. Given the prominence of the separation theme within the immediate context (i.e., Matt 13), it seems likely that the crowds correspond to the unfruitful soils (Matt 13:3–9),⁷² the weeds planted by the opponent (Matt 13:24–30), and the bad fish (Matt 13:47–50) described in Jesus’ parables.⁷³ Therefore, by preventing the crowds from understanding the mysteries of the kingdom, Jesus was making it impossible for them to respond rightly to the “word of the kingdom” (Matt 13:19; cf. Matt 4:17), which in effect ensured that they would be those gathered and thrown into the furnace of fire (Matt 13:49–50). Lastly, the broader Matthean context supports this interpretation of Matthew 13:10–17 through its characterization of the “crowd(s)” (ὄχλος, ὄχλοι) as those “destined to think the things of men” as opposed to the things of God.⁷⁴ Though they at times show some understanding of Jesus’ identity, the crowds are always distinguished from the

⁷² See also Viljoen, “Why Jesus Spoke in Parables,” 2, 6; Konradt, *Israel, Church, and Gentiles*, 245, 254; France, *Matthew*, 371. Though speaking about the parable of the sower in Mark’s Gospel, Sweat makes the suggestion that the outsiders are represented specifically by the soil that falls along the path. See Laura C. Sweat, *The Theological Role of Paradox in the Gospel of Mark*, LNTS (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2013), 75.

⁷³ Rightly Pennington, “Matthew 13,” 17–18; contra Minear, who suggests that the crowds are represented through the good and bad soils, the edible and inedible fish, and the wheat and the weeds. See Paul S. Minear, “The Disciples and the Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew,” *ATHR* 3 (1974): 35.

⁷⁴ Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 35. Scholars disagree regarding the characterization of the crowd/s in Matthew; for a sampling of views, see Cousland, *The Crowds*, 301–4; Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 24–25; Warren Carter, “The Crowds in Matthew’s Gospel,” *CBQ* 55 (1993): 54–64; Anthony J. Saldarini, “Boundaries and Polemics in the Gospel of Matthew,” *BibInt* 3, no. 3 (1995): 244–47; Minear, “The Crowds and The Disciples,” 28–44. While I agree with those who argue that Matthew’s presentation of the crowds demonstrates some ambiguity, I would contend that the concluding descriptions in Matt 26–27 are finally determinative of their characterization. Moreover, I would also note that the term “crowd(s)” does not refer to every historical Israelite during Jesus’ day; obviously, the disciples were themselves Israelites and were not part of the crowds. The designation “crowd(s)” is a shorthand reference to those unbelieving Israelites during the days of Christ who were not a part of the religious elite.

disciples and are never said to put their faith in him.⁷⁵ Additionally, in Matthew 11, the Evangelist discloses God's decision to withhold kingdom truths from the crowds through the negative influence of their religious leaders (Matt 11:16–27).⁷⁶ It is unsurprising then that, despite their initial excitement at Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem (Matt 21:1–11),⁷⁷ the crowds reveal their spiritual blindness when they are persuaded by the religious leaders to call for Christ to be put to death (Matt 27:15–26).⁷⁸ Thus, the Gospel as a whole characterizes the crowds as those who, by divine design (cf. Matt 11:25–27), fail to comprehend the nature of God's kingdom and Jesus' identity; such a description then coheres nicely with the reading of Matthew 13:10–17 being defended here.

While there are good reasons for detecting DRA in Matthew 13:10–17, it is more difficult to ascertain the character of God's reprobating influence in these verses. First, there is the question of whether or not the parables are a retributive form of DRA. On the basis of the $\delta\tau\iota$ clause in Matthew 13:13b, several scholars conclude that Jesus taught in parables (at least in part) in order to effect retribution against the unbelieving.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Carter rightly points out that Matthew depicts the crowd as sometimes recognizing Jesus' special role in God's plan without ever attributing to them the faith of the disciples. Carter, "Crowds," 64. See also Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 24–25.

⁷⁶ Kingsbury rightly posits that Jesus' denunciation of "this generation" in Matt 11:16–19 refers to the Israelite crowds (cf. Matt 11:7; see Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 4). See my discussion of Matt 11:25–27 above.

⁷⁷ Kingsbury contends that the crowds fail to recognize Jesus' true identity even as they celebrate his arrival in Jerusalem. Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 80–81.

⁷⁸ The religious leaders' influence upon the crowds during the passion narrative is consistent with the reading of Matt 11:25–27 defended above.

⁷⁹ See for instance Viljoen, "Why Jesus Spoke in Parables," 5; Marguerat, *Le Jugement*, 420; Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8–18*, 392; Meier, *Matthew*, 144–45; Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 373; Heikki Räisänen, *The Idea of Divine Hardening: A Comparative Study of the Notion of Divine Hardening, Leading Astray and Inciting to Evil in the Bible and the Qur'ān*, Publications of the Finnish Exegetical Society 25 (Helsinki, Finland: Kirjapaino Oy Savo, 1972), 90. Carson charts his own course as he argues that a predestinarian emphasis is present in vv. 11–12 while a retributive emphasis can be found in vv. 13–15 (Carson, *Matthew 13–28*, 309). While I certainly agree that the gospel writers saw no conflict between divine election/reprobation and human responsibility, I do not think vv. 11–15 reflect the bifurcation Carson proposes. Instead, I believe Harrington comes closer to the mark when he states that vv. 10–17

For instance, Nel argues that the causal conjunction $\delta\tau\iota$ indicates that “for Matthew the effect of Jesus’ parables depends on the disposition of the hearer, in that like begets like—knowledge is rewarded with knowledge, ignorance with ignorance.”⁸⁰ While this reading is possible, it may not be the most accurate way of understanding Jesus’ (and Matthew’s) argument. The repeated references to Isaiah 6:9–10 in both verse 13 and 14–15 may suggest that Jesus was grounding the negative side of his ministry in the necessity that Scripture be fulfilled rather than in notion that the non-disciples were to be punished for their unbelief.⁸¹ In other words, Jesus seems to have chosen to teach in such a way as to have a reprobating influence on the crowds because Isaiah 6:9–10 prophetically disclosed that such was to be the case. This reading of Matthew 13:13b makes good sense in light of the fact that, in Matthew 13:14–15, Jesus quotes fully the text to which he had just alluded (Isa 6:9–10), while pointing out that “the prophecy of Isaiah [was] being fulfilled in them [i.e., the crowds]” (Matt 13:14).⁸² Such an interpretation would also bridge the gap that scholars detect between Mark’s and Matthew’s use of Isaiah 6:9–10.⁸³ These observations lead me to suggest that Matthew 13:10–17 presents Jesus’ use of

explain Israel’s rejection of Jesus in terms of God’s will while the interpretation of the parable of the sower in vv. 18–23 explains it in terms of human responsibility. Harrington, *Matthew*, 200–202.

⁸⁰ Nel, “Mysteries of the Kingdom,” 278; similarly, see Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8–18*, 391.

⁸¹ Of course, theologically speaking, both ideas may be true at once: Jesus may have been motivated by a desire to fulfill the Scriptures while God was also repaying the crowds for their spiritual dullness. However, the current question has to do with what Matthew intended to disclose as the motivating factor behind DRA in this instance. While a case can be made that the $\delta\tau\iota$ clause demonstrates retribution as being that motivating factor, I think the evidence overall favors the view that Matthew sees the fulfillment of Scripture as itself being the reason why Jesus taught in such a way so as to negatively impact some.

⁸² As Harrington rightly observes, “The quotation [of Isa 6:9–10 in Matt 13:14–15] clarifies the allusion in Matt 13:13.” Harrington, *Matthew*, 196.

⁸³ Some scholars argue that Matthew softens or rejects Mark’s more “predestinarian” use of Isa 6:9–10. See for instance Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 95–99, 107–13; Viljoen, “Why Jesus Spoke in Parables,” 4–5; Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 375.

parables as a non-retributive form of DRA.⁸⁴ Second, it seems more likely than not that Matthew 13:10–17 refers to an eternal form of DRA. While Matthew 13:10–17 does not explicitly describe a judgment scene,⁸⁵ the parables in its surrounding context do. These surrounding parables relay that in the coming judgment, the non-disciples (i.e., the unfruitful soils, “the weeds,” “sons of the evil one,” the inedible fish) would be thrown out of the Kingdom (cf. 13:41) and “into the furnace of fire,” where there would be “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (cf. 13:42, 50).⁸⁶ Given Matthew’s overall theology of judgment, it is reasonable to conclude that this imagery is intended to depict eternal punishment.⁸⁷ Since these surrounding parables deal with the fate of the non-disciples and since both these parables and their explanation (i.e., Matt 13:10–17) are concerned with the theme of the separation of disciples from non-disciples,⁸⁸ it seems reasonable to conclude that Matthew 13:10–17 was intended to be read in light of these judgment scenes. If this is the case, then the parables’ depictions of the judgment of the non-disciples would suggest that Matthew 13:10–17 presents an eternal form of DRA. Third, there seem to be both passive and active elements to God’s reprobating influence in Matthew 13. With respect to the former, God withholds from the crowds that which he gives to the disciples: namely, the knowledge of kingdom-mysteries (Matt 13:11). With

⁸⁴ Calvin also takes a non-retributive view, though he argues the point from a more theological perspective. See Calvin, *Harmony of the Evangelists*, 2:106–7.

⁸⁵ Contra Marguerat, who sees Matt 13:11–12 as referring to the final judgment (Marguerat, *Le Jugement*, 418).

⁸⁶ I agree with Stuhlmacher when he argues that the parables of the wheat (13:24–30) and the net (13:47–50) refer to the eschatological judgment of the world [i.e., disciples vs. non-disciples] rather than to the present composition of the church. See Stuhlmacher, *Biblical Theology*, 608.

⁸⁷ Henning rightly argues that “the furnace of fire” and “weeping and gnashing of teeth” are images used by Matthew to convey the notion of eternal punishment. See Henning, *Rhetoric of Hell*, 153–54. For views on the theology of judgment in Matthew, see my n40 above.

⁸⁸ Rightly Pennington, “Matthew 13,” 17–18.

respect to the latter, Matthew 13:12 seems to depict God actively sabotaging the crowds' understanding since ἀρθήσεται ("it will be taken", v. 12) is most likely a divine passive (and perhaps ἐπαχύνθη in v. 15 as well).⁸⁹ Moreover, Matthew asserts that Jesus was actively sent by God on his mission (Matt 10:14; 15:24; 21:37), which undoubtedly included his blinding ministry towards the crowds (Matt 13:13–15). Lastly, though Matthew's high Christology complicates matters,⁹⁰ it is best to describe DRA as mediated in Matthew 13 since the Evangelist depicts Jesus and God as two distinct persons.⁹¹

DRA in Matthew 23:29–36

The last example of DRA in the First Gospel comes in the midst of Jesus' condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees (Matt 23).⁹² At the climax of his public castigation of Israel's religious leaders for their moral, doctrinal, and ministerial failings,⁹³ Jesus accuses them of sharing the murderous mindset that their forefathers harbored towards God's messengers (Matt 23:29–36).⁹⁴ Initially, such a charge might

⁸⁹ Since revelation in Matthew is clearly a divine prerogative (cf. Matt 11:25–27), it seems clear that δέδοται, δοθήσεται, and περισσευθήσεται in vv. 11–12 should be read as divine passives. This context then suggests that ἀρθήσεται should be understood similarly.

⁹⁰ I agree with those who argue that the Synoptic Gospels present Jesus as having been fully divine while also being a person distinct from God the Father. See for instance Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 188–95; Gathercole, *The Preexistent Son*, 46–79; Matera, *New Testament Theology*, 41–42.

⁹¹ Moreover, Jesus' explanation for the parable of the sower may hint at "the evil one's" mediating involvement as well (Matt 13:19; cf. Mark 4:15). See also Sweat, *Role of Paradox*, 75.

⁹² As Haenchen puts it, "Jesu Antlitz, wie es der Evangelist hier zeigt, ist nicht seinen Gläubigen zugewandt, sondern seinen und ihren Gegnern, und nicht in verzeihender Liebe, sondern in richtendem Zorn." Ernst Haenchen, "Matthäus 23," *ZTK* 48, no. 1 (1951): 39. For a defense of Matt 23 against the charge of anti-semitism, see Ian K. Duffield, "Difficult Texts: Matthew 23," *Theology* 123, no. 1 (2020): 16–19.

⁹³ Duffield helpfully observes that "Jesus offers a threefold prophetic critique of religious professionals (cf. v. 2) by exposing what they do (vv. 1–12): they do not practise what they preach (v. 3b); they place 'heavy burdens' on people without providing assistance (v. 4); and they act only to impress others, to boost their social status (vv. 5–7)." Duffield, "Matthew 23," 17.

⁹⁴ John Byron, "Abel's Blood and the Ongoing Cry for Vengeance," *CBQ* 73 (2011): 751.

appear misplaced: the scribes and Pharisees built monuments for the prophets and righteous men of old (Matt 23:29). Moreover, they distanced themselves from their ancestors by claiming that, had they lived in previous generations, they would not have put any of God's prophets to death (Matt 23:30). However, Jesus argues that Israel's religious instructors shared more in common with their ancestors than they would like to admit.⁹⁵ In fact, the scribes and Pharisees would finish the bloody work that their forefathers had begun (Matt 23:31–32).⁹⁶ To prove the point, Jesus was going to send to them “prophets and wise men and scribes,”⁹⁷ some of whom they would kill and crucify, others of whom they would beat and persecute from city to city (Matt 23:34). Jesus would send servants of God to be slaughtered and abused by Israel's religious elite “so that all the righteous blood poured out upon the earth, from the blood of Abel the righteous until the blood of Zechariah son of Barachiah (whom you murdered between the temple and the altar),⁹⁸ might come upon you [i.e., the scribes and Pharisees]!” (Matt 23:35). The sending of these figures amounts to an act of DRA since (1) according to Matthew, Jesus' is the agent of God's kingdom who always acts in keeping with the divine will⁹⁹; (2) Jesus sends God's servants to the scribes and Pharisees in order to

⁹⁵ So also Carson, *Matthew 13–28*, 483; Konradt, *Israel, Church, and Gentiles*, 228.

⁹⁶ I agree with those scholars who view the imperative in v. 32 as being ironic (see Esler, “Intergroup Conflict,” 54; Turner, *Matthew*, 557–58); the rhetorical point is to assert that the scribes and Pharisees will indeed continue the murderous legacy of their forefathers, most especially by putting Jesus to death.

⁹⁷ Readers should not miss the Christological implications of Matt 23:34; the fact that Jesus identifies himself as the one who sends the prophets, wise men, and scribes, suggests that he here testifies to his own divine status. Rightly Gathercole, *The Preexistent Son*, 71–72.

⁹⁸ As Byron states, “Here the figures of Abel and Zechariah stand as bookends to biblical history [literarily considered].” Byron, “Abel's Blood,” 751. For a different perspective, see Edmon L. Gallagher, “The Blood from Abel to Zechariah in the History of Interpretation,” *NTS* 60 (2014): 138.

⁹⁹ As Müller points out regarding Matthew's Christological perspective, “It is God's will that is carried out in Jesus' life and deed.” Mogens Müller, “The Theological Interpretation of the Figure of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew: Some Principal Features in Matthean Christology,” *NTS* 45 (1999): 173.

provoke them to sin by acting on their bloodlust and by giving vent to their hatred towards God's representatives; and (3) by sending the prophets, wise men, and scribes, Jesus intends to lead Israel's religious leaders to commit murder and acts of cruelty *so that* they might be held liable for shedding the blood of the Lord's righteous servants.¹⁰⁰ All told, readers have good reason for detecting DRA in Matthew 23:29–36.

On the basis of the details of the text, readers can come to three conclusions regarding the character of DRA in Matthew 23:29–36. First of all, these verses probably describe a retributive form of DRA. Jesus' entire speech in Matthew 23 functions as a condemnation of the sins of Israel's religious leaders.¹⁰¹ Moreover, it is clear from verses 29–33 that Jesus was in the middle of chastising the scribes and Pharisees for their hypocrisy in claiming to honor the prophets while harboring the same murderous attitudes as their forefathers. In light of this scenario, verses 34–36 seem to describe the future sending of God's representatives as a punitive response to the hypocrisy of Israel's leaders.¹⁰² Second, since God's negative influence is here exercised through the prophets,

¹⁰⁰ So Calvin describes God's intent in sending his representatives to the scribes and Pharisees by saying, "The purpose of God was different from what they supposed, namely, to render them more inexcusable, and to bring their wicked malice to the highest pitch." And again, "While God foresees that this will be the result, he purposely sends his prophets to them, that he may involve the reprobate in severer condemnation, as is more fully explained in Isaiah, (vi. 10.)" Calvin, *Harmony of the Evangelists*, 3:100–101. Similarly, Gathercole, *The Preexistent Son*, 71; 216; France, *Matthew*, 595; Blomberg, *Matthew*, 302.

¹⁰¹ Haenchen argues that the speech of Matt 23 should not be traced to the historical Jesus. In addition to the speech's anti-semitic character, he claims that the criticism of the Pharisees found in Matt 23 is not consistent with Jesus' own criticisms of the Pharisees: the former claims that the Pharisees failed to live up to their ideals, while the latter finds fault with the Pharisaical ideals themselves. Thus, Haenchen posits that those who fail to distinguish the perspective of Matt 23 from Jesus' own are in danger of misunderstanding Jesus' teaching about God. See Haenchen, "Matthäus 23," 59–61. However, Haenchen seems to operate under a false dichotomy; there is no reason why Jesus could not criticize his opponents for both having a false view of God and for failing to live up to the standards that they sought to impose on others. Moreover, Haenchen fails to see the connections between Matt 23 and Matt 5 (see Hood, "Matthew 23–25," 540–42), which indicate that Jesus' criticisms of the Pharisees are already hinted at within the Sermon on the Mount. For a theological reading of Matt 5 and Matt 23 in relation to one another, see Céline Rohmer, "Le bonheur selon Matthieu: Perspectives (Mt 5) et contre-perspectives (Mt 23)," *RTL* 50 (2019): 365–81.

¹⁰² As Carson states, "Because of the Jewish leaders' wicked reception of God's messengers, more messengers will 'therefore' be sent; and they will be treated the same way. This will fill up the full

wise men, and scribes that are sent to the Jewish leaders, the text testifies to a mediated form of DRA. Lastly, the reference to the judgment of hell in verse 33 suggests that eternal DRA is in view.

DRA in the Gospel of Mark

The only explicit example of DRA found in the Gospel of Mark occurs in Mark 4:10–12,¹⁰³ a passage which parallels Matthew 13:10–17 and Luke 8:9–10.¹⁰⁴ While the text of Mark 4 differs from both parallels in interesting ways, the three passages do not seem significantly different with respect to their testimony to DRA.¹⁰⁵

Much like Matthew 13:1–9, Mark 4:1–9 begins with a scene by the lake where Jesus teaches the crowds the parable of the sower.¹⁰⁶ Then Mark describes how “when

measure of iniquity, and judgment will fall.” Carson, *Matthew 13–28*, 484.

¹⁰³ Laura Sweat calls this text “one of the most theologically challenging and problematic texts in the Gospel of Mark, if not in the whole NT.” Sweat, *Role of Paradox*, 29. The main reason scholars are troubled by the passage seems to be that they find the plain meaning of the text theologically objectionable. So for instance, R. T. France says, “The content of these verses is apparently quite simple: a limited group, apart from the crowd, ask Jesus about parables, and he explains that while they are privileged to understand the secret of the kingdom of God, others have everything in parables, in order that they will not share that saving understanding.” R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 193. And yet, despite the text’s “simplicity,” France goes on to say that “few have been content to believe that Jesus really meant to say just that, and there are sufficient ambiguities or obscurities in the wording to allow wide scope for scholarly ingenuity to discover a more acceptable intent” (193). While there are ambiguities in the text, I question whether they should be viewed as invitations to “discover a more acceptable intent” than the one suggested by a literal (as opposed to literalistic) reading of the text.

¹⁰⁴ For a comparison of the three passages with a focus on Mark 4:10–12, see Edward F. Siegman, “Teaching in Parables (Mk 4:10–12; Lk 8:9–10; Mt 13:10–15),” *CBQ* 23, no. 2 (1961): 161–81. See also Viljoen, “Why Jesus Spoke in Parables,” 1–7.

¹⁰⁵ Contra Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 110; Mark L. Strauss, *Mark*, Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 184.

¹⁰⁶ Sweat makes an intriguing suggestion regarding the parable of the sower. She claims that the parable attests to God’s paradoxical activity in that the sower carelessly sows seed in inhospitable soils. In light of vv. 11–12, Sweat then contends that the parable itself presents God as one who directs the word to those whom he intends to harden (see Sweat, *Role of Paradox*, 86). While her suggestion is possible, Sweat may also be overreading certain details in the parable. In any event, since I am focused on more explicit cases of DRA, I will attend mainly to vv. 10–12 while noting possible connections to the parable of

they were alone,¹⁰⁷ those around [Jesus] together with the Twelve began asking him about the parables.”¹⁰⁸ The nature of the disciples’ question is more ambiguous in Mark 4:10 than in Matthew 13:10 (or Luke 8:9); however, Jesus’ answer suggests that the disciples were asking about more (though perhaps not less) than simply the meaning of the parable that they had just heard. In any event, Mark reports that Jesus addressed the disciples’ question with an explanation regarding his reason for preaching in parables¹⁰⁹: “and he said to them, ‘To you the mystery of the kingdom of God has been given. But to those on

the sower when they are relevant.

¹⁰⁷ Stein is probably correct to note that Mark 4 should not be read as a chronological presentation of events; as such, the scene in vv. 10–12 should not necessarily be understood as following on the heels of the events described in vv. 1–9. See Robert H. Stein, *Mark*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 206.

¹⁰⁸ As others note, the designation “the ones around him” (οἱ περὶ αὐτόν) suggests the presence of a group that included others apart from the Twelve; so also John R. Donahue and Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier, 2002), 139; Strauss, *Mark*, 183. Some argue that the use of περὶ αὐτόν in Mark 3:31–35 suggests that the group in 4:10 consists of all who do the will of God (cf. Mark 3:34–35; see also France, *Gospel of Mark*, 194–95; Mary Ann Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel: Mark’s World in Literary-Historical Perspective* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989], 160). However, it seems more likely that the phrase simply designates other disciples in addition to the Twelve to whom Jesus issued private instruction. Within the Gospel of Mark, the phrase οἱ περὶ αὐτόν only occurs in Mark 3:32, 34, and 4:10; this limited usage makes it unlikely that the phrase is used in a technical sense. Moreover, if the phrase were taken to refer to a specific group of disciples characterized by their obedience, Mark 4:10 would have to be understood as having *excluded* the apostles from this group (“those around him *with the Twelve*,” οἱ περὶ αὐτόν σὺν τοῖς δώδεκα). The existence of such an elite group of disciples is improbable since Mark does not make any other mention of them.

¹⁰⁹ Taylor suggests that Mark misrepresented or misunderstood Jesus’ true reason for teaching in parables. According to Taylor, Mark related the saying in vv. 11–12 to the parables “in consequence of his belief that Jesus used parables to conceal His meaning from ‘those without’, whereas in fact, His purpose was to elucidate His message by prompting reflection.” Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes, and Indexes*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 255, 257–58. He then suggests that Mark took a genuine saying of Jesus and misapplied it to the parables, perhaps because he mistook ἐν παραβολαῖς as meaning “in riddles” (258). While I agree with Taylor’s understanding of Mark’s perspective, I do not see any textual evidence behind the conjecture that Mark 4:10–12 departs from Jesus’ own teaching regarding the function of the parables. After all, Taylor himself acknowledges that material from Q also describes Jesus celebrating God’s concealment of the Kingdom from his broader audience (cf. Matt 11:25–27; Luke 10:21–22) and God’s revelation of the Kingdom to the disciples (cf. Matt 13:16–17; Luke 10:23–24). While the Q-sayings do not speak about the parables in particular, they attest that Jesus did not intend to be understood by all; such a background makes it reasonable for Jesus to have taught in a way that promoted his purpose.

the outside [ἐκείνοις δὲ τοῖς ἔξω], all things are in parables” (Mark 4:11).¹¹⁰ In a manner similar to Matthew, Mark contrasts the disciples with “those on the outside,”¹¹¹ suggesting that Jesus intended for his ministry to have a different impact on the two groups. First, the disciples are said to have been given the privilege of “the mystery of the Kingdom of God.”¹¹² Though Mark is less explicit than Matthew, the context suggests that what is being given is an understanding of the nature of the Kingdom.¹¹³ Next, the

¹¹⁰ The identity of “those on the outside” has been a matter of discussion. Mark 4:11 should probably be read in light of the parable of the sower, such that “the ones around him with the Twelve” correspond to the good soil while “those on the outside” correspond to the bad soils (Stein, *Mark*, 207). Moreover, France is probably correct when he says that ἐκείνοις τοῖς ἔξω “appear to be the same as the crowd on the lakeshore with whom the scene began” and when he rejects the argument that “those on the outside” refers exclusively to the scribes. He also rightly notes that “the distinction between insiders and outsiders is clear in principle, but the general tone of these verses does not encourage us to attempt specific identifications.” France, *Gospel of Mark*, 185, 197–98.

¹¹¹ Sweat claims that the theme of the incomprehension of the disciples shows that the boundary between insiders and outsiders is porous in Mark (see Sweat, *Role of Paradox*, 50–51, 69). However, given that the outsiders are prevented from repenting and being forgiven (v. 12), it is more likely that Mark sees a firm division between the two groups. Moreover, though Mark does portray the disciples as displaying “hardness of heart” (cf. Mark 6:52; 8:17–18), in their case, their obtuseness is *contrary* to Jesus’ desires and expectations. Thus, Mark 4:11 may anticipate that God’s revelatory purpose would ultimately overcome the disciples’ hardness of heart (with Judas being a special case since his betrayal would fulfill the Scriptures; cf. Mark 14:21). This would then comport with Jesus’ determination to reveal to the disciples the realities of the kingdom. So for instance, despite the disciples’ lack of insight, Jesus persists in answering their questions (Mark 4:10–12; 7:17–23; 9:9–12, 28–29; 10:10–12, 26–27; 13:3ff), in correcting them (Mark 8:14–21; 9:33–41; 10:13–15, 41–45), and in announcing to them his coming death and resurrection (Mark 8:31; 9:9–13, 30–32; 10:32–32; 14:3–9, 22–25). Moreover, after predicting their abandonment, Jesus promises that he will meet the disciples again in Galilee after the resurrection (Mark 14:28). And as the book closes, a “young man” (νεανίσκος) announces to the women that the risen Christ intends to fulfill that promise (Mark 16:7). Thus, “Mark’s final word on the disciples is one not of disloyalty but of promise. . . . The reason the reader is ultimately to think of the disciples as reconciled followers of Jesus and not as rank apostates has to do with the way he or she is invited to view Jesus’ promise to the disciples as determining their relationship to him following the resurrection.” Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Conflict in Mark: Jesus, Authorities, Disciples* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 13–14; cf. 112–15.

¹¹² As others have pointed out, δέδοται should be understood as a divine passive. See for instance Strauss, *Mark*, 184; Siegman, “Teaching in Parables,” 171–72; Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 140; Stein, *Mark*, 207; Gudrun Guttenberger, *Die Gottesvorstellung im Markusevangelium*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 107. Sweat sees the use of the passive as evidencing a paradoxical description of God’s agency (Sweat, *Role of Paradox*, 32–33); however, in this instance, she seems to overread the significance of the passive voice.

¹¹³ Strauss posits that the mystery refers to “the secret . . . that the power and presence of the

passage shifts attention to “those on the outside” who do not enjoy the same revelatory privilege granted to the disciples.¹¹⁴ Given the contrast being developed,¹¹⁵ the revelation of the mystery of the Kingdom must be understood as somehow antithetical to Jesus’ parabolic ministry. In other words, the reason “all things are in parables” for “those on the outside” must be that the parables served to prevent them from grasping the meaning of the Kingdom of God because the mystery of the kingdom had not been granted to them.¹¹⁶

This interpretation of Mark 4:11 is bolstered by two purpose clauses that follow in verse 12.¹¹⁷ In the first, Jesus asserts that the parables were divinely intended to have a negative effect on the outsiders’ comprehension of Kingdom-realities¹¹⁸: “to those on the outside, all things are in parables *so that* [ἵνα], ‘despite seeing, they might see and not see, and, despite hearing, they might hear and not understand’” (Mark 4:12a).

kingdom of God are breaking into human history through the words and deeds of Jesus the Messiah.” Strauss, *Mark*, 184. For similar interpretations, see Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 140; Stein, *Mark*, 209; Taylor, *St. Mark*, 255; Brendan Byrne, *A Costly Freedom: A Theological Reading of Mark’s Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2008), 82; Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 249.

¹¹⁴ As Kingsbury states, “The contrast Jesus makes in these words between ‘disciples’ and ‘outsiders’ could not be starker: on the one hand, God imparts to the disciples enlightenment and understanding concerning the secret of his end-time rule; on the other hand, outsiders stand before this secret as before a riddle.” Kingsbury, *Conflict in Mark*, 94.

¹¹⁵ The conjunction δέ in v. 11 must be understood as contrastive; see also France, *Gospel of Mark*, 197.

¹¹⁶ Some have connected this aspect of the parables to the secrecy motif in the Gospel of Mark; see for instance W. R. Telford, *Mark*, NTG (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 130; R. Alan Culpepper, *Mark*, SHBC (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2007), 139; Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 100; Räisänen, *Idea of Divine Hardening*, 89.

¹¹⁷ Both the ἵνα and the μήποτε clauses should be understood as indicating purpose; so also Stein, *Mark*, 211; Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 98; Taylor, *St. Mark*, 257; Räisänen, *Idea of Divine Hardening*, 88–89.

¹¹⁸ Sweat rightly posits that Mark’s inclusion of the ἵνα “places the responsibility on God for the blindness and deafness.” Sweat, *Role of Paradox*, 66. See also Collins, *Mark*, 249n55.

Although many have claimed otherwise,¹¹⁹ it seems difficult to avoid the conclusion that the passage describes the parables as the means by which God would produce in some the spiritual dullness described in Isaiah 6.¹²⁰ Furthermore, the second purpose clause states that this dullness was intended to secure the condemnation of the non-disciples: “lest they turn [μήποτε ἐπιστρέψωσιν] and be forgiven [καὶ ἀφεθῆ] αὐτοῖς)” (Mark 4:12b). Once more, the plain language of the text suggests that Jesus taught “those on the outside” in parables because he intended to prevent them from repenting and experiencing the forgiveness of their sins.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ For a helpful overview of positions that deny that the ἵνα introduces a purpose clause, see Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 92–95.

¹²⁰ Most scholars recognize that Mark alludes to Isa 6:9–10 and that the Markan text bears similarities to the version in the Targum (see for instance Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 91–92; Siegman, “Teaching in Parables,” 171; Taylor, *St. Mark*, 256; Sweat, *Role of Paradox*, 66). While the allusion demonstrates that Jesus’ parabolic teaching fulfilled Scripture, I agree with France when he says that “this is not ‘fulfilment’ in the sense of a prediction coming true, but rather a typological correspondence between two phases in the ongoing history of God’s appeals to his people.” France, *Gospel of Mark*, 199.

¹²¹ For similar interpretations, see Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 96–99; Strauss, *Mark*, 185; Taylor, *St. Mark*, 257; Räisänen, *Idea of Divine Hardening*, 88–89; Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story*, 57; Byrne, *A Costly Freedom*, 82–83; Collins, *Mark*, 249n55. Mann denies this reading of Mark 4:10–12 for two reasons. First, he claims that the interpretation defended here does not comport with how the parables actually functioned within the Gospel. As he states, “The difficulty with this view ... is that Mark does not invariably think of parables as instruments of obfuscation. On the contrary, the parable of the tenant winegrowers (12:1–12), described as such in 12:1, was certainly understood, and Mark implies that Jesus meant it to be understood” (Mann, *Mark*, 147). Second, he argues that Jesus could not have imparted “hidden interpretations” to the disciples since Mark repeatedly describes their obduracy (see Mann, *Mark*, 147–48). However, on closer inspection, neither of these arguments is very compelling. First of all, Mark 4:10–12 need not suggest that the parables were incomprehensible *in every way* to “those on the outside”; instead, these verses suggest that Jesus would teach outsiders exclusively in parables so that they might not understand and accept the mystery of the Kingdom. Thus, Mann’s first argument fails to persuade because none of his examples depict the crowds or the opponents comprehending and accepting the truth about the kingdom and its relation to Jesus. Second, the possibility also exists that Jesus’ parables were not *always* intended to have a concealing effect (this possibility was suggested to me by Tom Schreiner). And lastly, Mann conflates Jesus’ purpose with the disciples’ response. In other words, he seems to posit that Jesus could not have intended to provide the disciples with “hidden interpretations” because they frequently misunderstood his teaching. But why not conclude instead that the disciples were failing to respond in accordance with Jesus’ intent? Moreover, Mann overlooks the possibility that the Gospel anticipates that the disciples’ lack of perception would be eventually overcome by God’s revelatory purpose.

On a whole, Mark 4:10–12 provides strong evidence that the parables were an expression of DRA.¹²² Moreover, Mark characterizes this form of DRA similarly to Matthew.¹²³ First, Mark describes DRA in this instance as being non-retributive. Though others have posited that human self-determination grounds the exclusion and the hardening described in Mark 4,¹²⁴ such a position is difficult to maintain on the basis of the textual evidence.¹²⁵ For starters, Mark 4 does not describe any sins that “those on the outside” may have committed to merit exclusion.¹²⁶ Moreover, if in fact “those on the

¹²² Donahue and Harrington rightly note that Mark’s original audience would probably not be as disturbed by vv. 10–12 as modern-day readers. As they state, “while shocking to modern ears, a literal reading of Mark 4:10–12 as promising revelation to an elect few, along with the predetermined rejection by outsiders, would be familiar to many of Mark’s readers” (*Mark*, 145). For others who seem to read Mark 4:10–12 as evidencing some form of DRA, see Telford, *Mark*, 130–31; Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 98–99; Taylor, *St. Mark*, 257; Räisänen, *Idea of Divine Hardening*, 89; Sweat, *Role of Paradox*, 89; Byrne, *A Costly Freedom*, 82–84; Collins, *Mark*, 249n55; Rikk E. Watts, “Mark,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 154–55.

¹²³ I would argue that the difference between Matthew 13:10–17 and Mark 4:10–12 is one of emphasis: the First Evangelist stresses that Jesus intended to fulfill the Scriptures through his use of the parables, while Mark highlights the fact of divine hardening.

¹²⁴ See for instance Strauss, *Mark*, 185–86; Watts, “Mark,” 154–55; Klyne Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 160–63; Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel*, 160–61; David M. Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 57.

¹²⁵ This is not to deny the affirmation of human responsibility in Mark 4:10–12; as Sweat correctly points out, the Gospel of Mark paradoxically affirms both divine and human agency (Sweat, *Role of Paradox*, 33–39). However, rather than seeing the two as perfectly balanced (which seems to be Sweat’s position), I understand Mark 4:10–12 to prioritize the former without denying the latter.

¹²⁶ Scholars have tried to demonstrate the sinfulness of “those on the outside” on the basis of at least three textual arguments. First, some posit that parallels between Mark 3:31–35 and 4:10–12 imply that “those on the outside” are those who have already rejected God’s will (see Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel*, 160; Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 157). However, such a reading would lead to the conclusion that Mark viewed Jesus’ own family as “outsiders”; such a negative characterization, especially in light of v. 12’s claim that “outsiders” would be unable to repent, is highly unlikely given (for example) James’ leadership in the early church (cf. Acts 15:13–21; 1 Cor 15:7; Gal 1:19; 2:9). Furthermore, while Mark 4:10–12 does repeat a few words and phrases from 3:31–35, it is not clear that readers are meant to attribute special importance to these repeated terms. So for instance, while both Mark 3:31–35 and 4:10 use the word ἐξω, the former seems to use it as a simple adverb designating location. Furthermore, the Gospel as a whole does not use the word ἐξω in a marked way: the word first occurs in reference to Jesus’ location (Mark 1:45), while all the occurrences after chap. 4 have a regular locative sense (cf. Mark 5:10; 8:23; 11:4, 19; 12:8; 14:68). Thus, it is hard to argue that Mark 3:31–35 introduces a special significance to the term which is

outside” correspond to the “large crowd” (vv. 1–2), and represent the Jewish public in the Gospel as a whole,¹²⁷ then readers have not been prepared to view this group negatively. On the contrary, Mark’s description of the public-at-large (which must be distinguished from the Jewish leaders) prior to chapter 4 has been somewhat positive¹²⁸: their main trait to this point has been their interest in Jesus’ teaching and ministry (cf. Mark 2:4, 12, 13; 3:9–10, 20). As such, readers are not primed to view the ὄχλος πλειστός as a group that had already merited divine judgment by their actions or lack of faith. Furthermore, if “those on the outside” were excluded from saving revelation because of prior unbelief, then why were the disciples granted the “mystery of the Kingdom” when they too were prone to unbelief (cf. Mark 4:40; 8:33; 9:17, 23)? Moreover, why was Peter not rejected given his Satanic opposition to Jesus (Mark 8:33) and his foretold apostasy (Mark 14:27–31, 66–72)? These different features in the Gospel suggest that Mark does not intend to

then picked up in 4:10. Second, some have argued the parables have a reprobating influence only upon those who have already chosen to be bad soil (see for instance Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel*, 159; Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 161). Though such a reading is possible, I think it is unlikely for at least two reasons. First, the text does not make clear that Mark 4:3–9 relates to 4:10–12 in this way. While the parable of the sower and the explanation of the parables do mutually illumine one another, the text does not state that the poor responses described in the former provide the reason for the negative influence described in the latter. In fact, given the decisive importance of divine revelation and concealment in v. 11–12, it seems more likely that the opposite is the case: the parable depicts *that* Jesus’ teaching will elicit different responses, while the explanation reveals *why* Jesus’ teaching will elicit different responses. In other words, the reason why certain people reject Jesus’ teaching and prove themselves to be bad soil is because God has decreed to withhold the mystery of the kingdom from them. Second, if the text prioritizes human agency, it is hard to account for the appeal to divine revelation and concealment in v. 11–12. In other words, if Jesus intended to ground the negative effect of the parables upon human initiative, why does he distinguish between insiders and outsiders on the basis of the gift of the mystery of the kingdom rather than on the basis of people’s responses to his teaching? Lastly, some argue that Mark 4:10–12 should be read in light of the rejection of Jesus in Mark 3:1–6 and 3:22–30; as such, the “outsiders” are those who see Jesus as a Satanic figure (see Watts, “Mark,” 154; Guttenberger, *Die Gottesvorstellung*, 107–8). This approach falters because it requires readers to either (1) conflate the Jewish leaders with the crowds, or (2) assume that “those on the outside” refer to Israel’s leaders rather than the crowds on the seashore. The first option does not comport with Mark’s characterization of the two groups, while the second seems unlikely given the absence of religious leaders among Jesus’ audience in chap. 4.

¹²⁷ See Kingsbury, *Conflict in Mark*, 23.

¹²⁸ As Kingsbury points out, “Until Jesus’ arrest, Mark generally invites the reader to adopt an attitude of sympathy and approval toward the crowd.” Kingsbury, *Conflict in Mark*, 21.

depict Jesus' use of the parables to have been an act of retribution. Second, Mark depicts God's negative influence as being mediated through Jesus' teaching.¹²⁹ Third, given Mark's broader perspective on judgment,¹³⁰ it is more likely than not that Mark 4:10–12 should be read as an instance of eternal reprobating agency. Finally, like Matthew, Mark also presents a passive and an active element in God's negative influence.¹³¹

DRA in the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts

The Gospel of Luke¹³² presents three cases of DRA,¹³³ each of which corresponds to passages found in the other Synoptic Gospels.¹³⁴ Though Luke's versions of these texts differ from their parallels in interesting ways, the third Gospel's depictions

¹²⁹ Rightly Collins, *Mark*, 249n55. Moreover, whether or not Sweat is correct in identifying “those on the outside” with the seed that falls beside the path (cf. Mark 4:4; see Sweat, *Role of Paradox*, 75), the parable of the sower may suggest that Satan also functions as another mediating agent (cf. Mark 4:15).

¹³⁰ While the Gospel of Mark does not focus as much attention on eternal punishment as the first Gospel, it too bears witness to the notion of hell (Mark 9:42–48). So also Henning, *Rhetoric of Hell*, 112–17.

¹³¹ On the one hand, the contrast in v. 11 suggests that God denies “those on the outside” the mystery of the Kingdom (passive DRA); on the other hand, Mark presents Jesus as having been sent by God to accomplish all his purposes, including the blinding of the crowds (active DRA).

¹³² I treat Luke and Acts together because I assume that the two share an author, and I agree with those scholars who argue that the two were intended to be read together. See for instance Matera, *New Testament Theology*, 52–59; Alan J. Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus: Luke's Account of God's Unfolding Plan*, *New Studies in Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011), 21–22; David Paul Moessner, *Luke the Historian of Israel's Legacy, Theologian of Israel's "Christ": A New Reading of the "Gospel Acts" of Luke*, *Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016), 198–99.

¹³³ The occurrences of DRA within Luke-Acts correspond to the emphasis on divine sovereignty found within the books. For explorations of this theme within Luke-Acts, see Matera, *New Testament Theology*, 56–57; Thompson, *Acts of the Risen Lord*, 29–38; Siegfried Schulz, “Gottes Vorsehung bei Lukas,” *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 54 (1963): 105–8.

¹³⁴ To avoid the tedium of covering much of the same ground, the instances of DRA in Luke's Gospel will be treated more briefly.

of DRA seem consistent with those of Matthew and Mark.¹³⁵ So for instance, although Luke's version of Jesus' explanation for his use of parables is abbreviated (Luke 8:9–10; cf. Matt 13:10–17; Mark 4:10–12),¹³⁶ the third Gospel also seems to describe the parables as a form of non-retributive, mediated, passive/active, and eternal DRA.¹³⁷ And while Luke places Jesus' prayer of praise to God for his acts of revelation and concealment in a different literary context than Matthew does (cf. Matt 11:25–27; Luke 10:21–22),¹³⁸ both

¹³⁵ In addition to the three examples to be discussed, one could argue that Luke 19:42 provides a fourth instance of DRA; however, there is not enough contextual evidence to demonstrate that ἐκρύβη (“it was hidden”) should be read as a divine passive.

¹³⁶ Fitzmyer calls Luke 8:9–10 a “redactional abridgment” of Mark 4:11–12. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (1–9)*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1981), 706. Perhaps the clearest difference between Luke and Mark is that the former omits the clause “lest they turn and be forgiven” [μήποτε ἐπιστρέψωσιν καὶ ἀφεθῆ ἀυτοῖς]. On the basis of this omission, some scholars contend that Luke did not believe the parables were intended to prevent Jesus' audiences from repenting and receiving forgiveness (see Fitzmyer, *Luke 1–9*, 709; Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 117; Räisänen, *Idea of Divine Hardening*, 91). In addition, some appeal to Luke's version of the parable of the sower to argue that the third Gospel sees Satan to be responsible for preventing belief (cf. Luke 8:12; see Räisänen, *Idea of Divine Hardening*, 91). While reading Luke 8:9–10 along these lines is possible, it is not the most compelling interpretation of the passage (so also David W. Pao and Eckhard J. Schnabel, “Luke,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007], 307). First of all, it is entirely plausible that Luke left out the μήποτε clause because the contrast between the disciples and “the rest” [τοῖς λοιποῖς] along with the allusion to Isa 6:9–10 sufficiently clarified the parables' reprobating function. Second, if Luke did not view the parables as having a negative influence on “the rest,” then it is difficult to explain the function of the ἵνα clause (“so that despite seeing, they might not see, and despite hearing, they might not understand”). Lastly, the other Synoptic writers also see Satan (cf. Mark 4:15) or “the evil one” (Matt 13:19) playing a role in keeping “the rest” from coming to saving faith; however, this does not stop them from also claiming that God was at work to dull the minds of the non-disciples through Jesus' parabolic teaching. Similarly, Luke should also be understood to explain the unbelief of Jesus' audiences as both due to Satanic influence and DRA.

¹³⁷ Many of the arguments made in relation to Matt 13:10–17 and Mark 4:10–12 are likewise applicable to Luke 8:9–10. On the concept of eternal punishment in Luke, see Henning, *Rhetoric of Hell*, 122–26.

¹³⁸ While Matthew places the saying immediately after his denunciation of Galilean cities (cf. Matt 11:20–24), Luke sets it at the end of a section focused on the commission of Jesus' disciples (cf. Luke 10:1–24). This literary setting impacts the meaning of ταῦτα in Luke 10:21: while both Matthew and Luke agree that Jesus' identity would be concealed from some (cf. Matt 11:27; Luke 10:22), Luke includes the meaning of the disciples' successful mission (cf. Luke 10:17–20) as being among “these things” which would be hidden from the “wise and intelligent.” For a similar interpretation of ταῦτα in Luke 10:21, see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (10–24)*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 872–73. Such a change does not represent a departure from DRA however since those who failed to recognize the disciples' ambassadorial role would be held liable for rejecting both the Son and the Father (cf. Luke

passages agree that the Father hides saving realities from the “wise and intelligent,”¹³⁹ therefore ensuring their condemnation.¹⁴⁰ Lastly, Luke also reports that, as retribution for their opposition to God’s messengers (cf. Luke 11:47–48),¹⁴¹ God would secure the condemnation of Israel and its religious elites¹⁴² by sending them prophets and apostles whom they would in turn abuse and murder (Luke 11:49–51; cf. Matt 23:29–36).¹⁴³ Thus,

10:16), and would therefore be condemned (cf. Luke 10:13–15).

¹³⁹ I would argue that the “wise and intelligent” in Luke 10:21 refers to Israel’s religious leaders, just as the phrase does in Matt 11:25–27 (see my discussion above). While Luke’s does not focus as much attention on the ways in which Israel’s religious leaders misled the nation, the theme is not absent from his Gospel (cf. Luke 11:45–52). As such, Luke probably agrees with Matthew that by subjecting the “wise and intelligent” (i.e., Israel’s religious elites) to DRA, the Lord also negatively influenced the broader community.

¹⁴⁰ As Fitzmyer correctly observes, “Jesus’ praise of the Father acknowledges that he has actually hidden ‘these things’ from the wise. It ascribes to God an activity similar to the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart.” Fitzmyer, *Luke 10–24*, 873. In my judgment, Luke seems to agree with Matthew that Jesus’ prayer reflects mediate/immediate, eternal DRA. Moreover, as in Matt 11:25, it is possible to take Luke’s reference to the “wise and intelligent” as an indictment of the religious leaders’ pride, which would then suggest the presence of a retributive form of DRA.

¹⁴¹ That Matthew and Luke portray Jesus’ condemnation of Israel’s leaders within different settings may suggest that Jesus delivered similar chastisements against Israel’s scribes and Pharisees on different occasions. So also Gregory S. Thellman, “The Incorporation of Jesus and His Emissaries in a Tripartite Canonical Framework (Luke 11:45–53),” *Kairos* 11, no. 1 (2017): 15n21.

¹⁴² According to Luke, though Jesus directs his tirade specifically towards “the lawyers” [τοῖς νομικοῖς] (rightly Fitzmyer, *Luke 10–24*, 949; contra I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC [Exeter, England: Paternoster, 1978], 500), he broadens the scope of condemnation so that the generation as a whole would also be held responsible for the deaths of God’s representatives (“so that the blood of all the prophets which had been shed from the foundation of the world might be sought from this generation”). Given that the lawyers are also said to have taken away the knowledge of God’s kingdom (cf. Luke 11:52), perhaps Jesus envisions the God’s negative influence upon Israel’s leaders to have also had a reprobating effect on the Israelite nation in general. Such a suggestion is admittedly speculative however, as Luke does not clearly describe how the violence of “the lawyers” leads to the condemnation of the entire generation.

¹⁴³ Whereas Matthew has Jesus as God’s sending agent, the Lukan version has “the wisdom of God” sending the prophets and apostles (cf. Matt 23:34; Luke 11:49). While some argue that the latter refers to Jesus himself (see for instance Thellman, “Incorporation of Jesus,” 20), it may simply be a personification of the divine attribute in light of Jewish wisdom traditions (see Pao and Schnabel, “Luke,” 325). Regardless of how one interprets “the wisdom of God” (for a survey of views, see Marshall, *Luke*, 502–3), both Matthew and Luke posit God sending his representatives to be the means by which Israel’s religious leaders would be spurred to acts of violence and murder so that they might be condemned.

the Gospel of Luke includes similar descriptions of reprobating agency as those found in Matthew and in Mark.

Luke's second volume provides at least one additional example of God's reprobating activity.¹⁴⁴ Luke presents Stephen as having alluded to the concept in his speech in Acts 7.¹⁴⁵ In his speech, Stephen provides a selective overview of Israel's past as part of his argument that, by rejecting Jesus and his representatives, the Jews of his time were repeating the pattern of hardheartedness that had also characterized their forefathers.¹⁴⁶ In verses 17–43, Stephen observes that Israel had repeatedly rejected

¹⁴⁴ Although Paul appeals to Isa 6:9–10 (LXX) in his speech to the Jews in Rome (cf. Acts 28:23–28), he does so without explicitly highlighting God's involvement in leading Israel into sin (so also Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 121); instead, the apostle stresses the responsibility of those Jews who refused to believe his message. Paul's focus on human responsibility in Acts 28:25–27 is evident in that (1) unlike Jesus (cf. Matt 13:10–17; Mark 4:10–12; Luke 8:9–10), the apostle does not here say that his ministry was meant to bring about the fulfillment of Isa 6:9–10, and (2) unlike John (cf. John 12:39–40), Paul here does not claim that Israel's hardening was God's doing. These observations lead me to conclude that Acts 28:25–27 probably does not refer to DRA. While one could then argue that the use of Isa 6 in Acts 28 suggests that DRA is absent in Luke 8:9–10, it is more likely that Luke 8:9–10 and Acts 28:23–28 demonstrate that Isa 6:9–10 was used in different ways depending on an author's (or speaker's) rhetorical purposes. In Luke 8:9–10, Jesus alludes to Isa 6 in order to contrast God's grace towards the disciples with the fate of non-disciples. Here, Jesus reminds his disciples that they have been graced with revelations concerning the kingdom that have been withheld from "the rest." In order to further highlight their privileged position, Jesus alludes to Isa 6 to demonstrate God's reprobating purpose with regard to the non-disciples: Jesus taught "the rest" in parables "so that" Isa 6:9–10 might be fulfilled in them (cf. Luke 8:10). On the other hand, in Acts 28:23–28, Paul is denouncing the unbelief of those with whom he had been arguing "from morning until evening." Since the apostle's purpose was to condemn the unbelieving Jews (while perhaps also suggesting that the rejection confirmed the Scriptures), Paul appeals to Isa 6:9–10 in such a way as to stress the Israelites' culpability in failing to heed Isaiah's message. The differing functions of Isa 6:9–10 then implies that the passage could be used to stress either divine sovereignty or human responsibility depending on the needs of the situation. In addition, these uses of Isa 6:9–10 provide further evidence that the biblical authors viewed DRA as being consistent with human responsibility.

¹⁴⁵ My focus is on DRA within Stephen's speech as it is represented in the text of Acts; as such, questions regarding the possible sources that may lie behind the final form of Acts 7:2–53 go beyond the scope of my interests. For an investigation of the latter, see Charles H. H. Scobie, "The Use of Source Material in the Speeches of Acts III and VII," *NTS* 25, no. 4 (1979): 399–421.

¹⁴⁶ Similarly, see John J. Kilgallen, "The Function of Stephen's Speech (Acts 7,2–53)," *Bib* 70, no. 2 (1989): 175; Michal Beth Dinkler, "The Politics of Stephen's Storytelling: Narrative Rhetoric and Reflexivity in Acts 7:2–53," *ZNW* 111, no. 1 (2020): 60–61; Gert J. Steyn, "Trajectories of Scripture Transmission: The Case of Amos 5:25–27 in Acts 7:42–43," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 69, no. 1 (2013): 8; Dulcinea Boesenberg, "Retelling Moses's Killing of the Egyptian: Acts 7 in Its Jewish Context," *BTB* 48, no. 3 (2018): 152; Brian Peterson, "Stephen's Speech as a Modified Prophetic *RĪB* Formula," *JETS* 57, no. 2 (2014): 362–65; Frank J. Matera, "Responsibility for the Death of Jesus

Moses, the one whom God raised up to be their ruler and their redeemer, from the time they were being oppressed in Egypt (Acts 7:17–28) until after God had made a covenant with the nation at Sinai (Acts 7:37–41). Quoting Amos 5:25–27 (LXX),¹⁴⁷ Stephen asserts that God responded to his people’s rebelliousness towards Moses and their subsequent idolatry by influencing them towards other forms of idolatrous worship that would result in their exile:

And God turned and gave them over to worship the host of heaven,¹⁴⁸ just as is written in the book of the prophets, “Did you offer beasts and sacrifices to me for

According to the Acts of the Apostles,” *JSNT* 39 (1990): 84; Thompson, *Acts of the Risen Lord*, 167–68; James D. G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 90; Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 362–63; Moessner, *Luke the Historian*, 248–50; Steve Smith, *The Fate of the Jerusalem Temple in Luke-Acts: An Intertextual Approach to Jesus’ Laments over Jerusalem and Stephen’s Speech*, LNTS (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2017), 142; James M. Hamilton Jr., *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 429.

¹⁴⁷ Most scholars agree that Luke quotes Amos 5:25–27 from the LXX while also departing from his base text at a few points (for an overview of the differences, see Gert J. Steyn, “Notes on the Vorlage of the Amos Quotations in Acts,” in *Die Apostelgeschichte und die hellenistische Geschichtsschreibung*, ed. Cilliers Breytenbach and Jens Schröter, AGJU [Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2004], 65–70). However, scholars account for these discrepancies in differing ways. Sandt contends that Luke reworked the Amos quotation in light of Deut 4:15–28. In particular, the addition of “to worship them” (προσκυνεῖν αὐτοῖς) in Acts 7:43, which is not found in Amos 5:26 LXX, reflects the language of Deut 4:19 LXX, while the replacement of “beyond Damascus” (ἐπέκεινα Δαμασκού) with “beyond Babylon” (ἐπέκεινα Βαβυλωνῶνος) is due to the reference to exile found in Deut 4:28. Huub van de Sandt, “Why Is Amos 5,25–27 Quoted in Acts 7,42f?,” *Zeitschrift Für Die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft Und Die Kunde Der Älteren Kirche* 82 (1991): 77, 86. Meanwhile, Marshall does not see Deut 4 as having a significant influence on Acts 7:42–43; instead, he argues that the insertion of προσκυνεῖν αὐτοῖς was simply meant to clarify the sense of Amos and that the latter’s prophecy was made to include Babylon on the basis of historical hindsight. Marshall, “Acts,” 565–66. Steyn offers a third possibility, which is that Luke’s version is to be explained as an implicit rejection of the Qumran community’s use of Amos 5:25–27 and as a reinterpretation of the prophecy in light of the Exodus narrative. Steyn, “Trajectories of Scripture Transmission,” 8. Though the matter is not crucial for my purposes, I believe it is possible that Luke’s/Stephen’s reading of Deut 4 could have played a role in the form of the citation of Amos 5:25–27.

¹⁴⁸ The verb ἔστρεψεν (“and he turned”) may be understood in one of two ways (see Mikeal C. Parsons and Martin M. Culy, *Acts: A Handbook on the Greek Text* [Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2003], 138). First, it may be interpreted as a transitive verb which, together with παρέδωκεν, takes αὐτοὺς as its object. On this reading, Luke used both ἔστρεψεν and παρέδωκεν to refer to God’s reprobating activity against Israel. Second, ἔστρεψεν could be reflexive and could refer to God’s change of attitude or disposition towards Israel. While I lean towards the latter position, both explanations are consistent with my overall argument regarding DRA in Acts 7:42–43.

forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel?¹⁴⁹ On the contrary,¹⁵⁰ you raised up the tent of Molech and the star of the God Rephan, whose images you fashioned in order to worship them. So I will cause you to dwell beyond Babylon.” (Acts 7:42–43)

In my judgment, Acts 7:42–43 meets the definition of DRA: God is here depicted as having exercised a form of divine agency intended to efficaciously influence responsible creatures towards behavior that merited divine condemnation so that they might in fact experience judgment. In this case, God is said to have punished the wilderness generation by influencing them towards condemnable acts of creature-worship (Acts 7:42).¹⁵¹ Moreover, on account of the idolatry to which Israel had been consigned, God further punished his people by exiling them from the land (Acts 7:43). In addition,

¹⁴⁹ Jantsch contends that Luke appeals to Amos 5:25–27 in order to re-narrate Israel’s history as one in which they were never commanded to offer God sacrifices. According to Jantsch, Luke contradicts the history of Israel as recorded in the OT by claiming that the true worship of YHWH was originally without sacrifice because such worship was consistent with God’s self-sufficiency. See Torsten Jantsch, “The God of Glory: Explicit References to God in Discourses in the Acts of the Apostles (7:2–53; 14:15–18; 17:22–31),” *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 4, no. 2 (2018): 212–15. Though Jantsch is correct to observe that Paul stresses God’s self-sufficiency in his speeches in Lystra (Acts 14:14–18) and in Athens (Acts 17:22–31), his reading of Stephen’s speech is less convincing. Given the literary setting, it seems unlikely that Luke would have Stephen provide an obvious misreading of Israel’s history when he has just been accused of denigrating the Mosaic Law. Moreover, while one could read Amos 5:25–27 (MT and LXX) as stating that Israel offered no sacrifices in the wilderness, the text probably claims that Israel did not offer their sacrifices *to YHWH*. In other words, while the nation did offer sacrifices, they offered them to their idols instead of to their covenant Lord. Thus, when Stephen appeals to Amos 5:25–27, he does so in order to prove that the Israelites had always been unfaithful to God. For similar readings of Luke’s use of Amos 5:25–27, see Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 299–300; Schnabel, *Acts*, 382; Smith, *Fate of the Jerusalem Temple*, 167 (though Smith questions whether Amos 5:25–27 should actually be interpreted in this way).

¹⁵⁰ My translation here is attempting to represent the *καὶ* in v. 43 as being adversative. For this use of *καὶ*, see Herbert Weir Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, ed. Gordon M. Messing (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920), 650–51.

¹⁵¹ As Kilgallen observes, “God, in turn, rejects these people, specifically setting them to worship false gods (vv. 42–43) to such a degree that they deserve nothing less than the Babylonian exile for their sin (v. 43).” Kilgallen, “Stephen’s Speech,” 176.

the text characterizes God’s negative influence as retributive,¹⁵² immediate,¹⁵⁴ non-eternal,¹⁵⁵ and possibly active as well.¹⁵⁶

Summary of DRA in the Synoptics and Acts

The preceding discussion demonstrates that the Synoptic Gospels and the book of Acts attest to the presence of DRA. Moreover, much like the OT, these NT books portray the theme in ways that highlight its significance. First of all, Matthew, Mark, and Luke each claim that DRA functioned to prevent people from coming to a proper understanding of Christ’s identity and teaching (cf. Matt 11:25–27; 13:10–17; Mark 4:10–12; Luke 8:9–10; 10:21–22). Such a claim regarding God’s agency is highly provocative, given the gospel’s emphasis on the central importance of one’s response to Jesus. Second, these biblical books also refer to DRA as a means by which God’s praiseworthy character is demonstrated (cf. Matt 11:25–27; Luke 10:21–22); in particular, the Synoptic writers view God’s negative influence as demonstrating his sovereignty (cf.

¹⁵² Calvin puts the matter eloquently when he says, “Idolatry surely is very fertile, that of one feigned god there should by and by come an hundred, that a thousand superstitions should flow from one. But this so great madness of men springeth hence, because God revengeth himself by delivering them to Satan.” John Calvin, *Commentary upon the Acts of the Apostles*, trans. Henry Beveridge, vol. 1, *Calvin’s Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 204. For others who see God’s reprobating influence as retributive in Acts 7, see Sandt, “Amos 5,25–27 in Acts 7,42f,” 71; Kilgallen, “Stephen’s Speech,” 176; F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of the Acts*, rev. ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 143; John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 201; Calvin, *Acts*, 293–95; Craig S. Keener, *Acts*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 1408; Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 283–84; Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, English ed., Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 55; Schnabel, *Acts*, 381–82; Ling Cheng, *The Characterisation of God in Acts: The Indirect Portrayal of an Invisible Character*, Paternoster Biblical Monographs (Milton Keynes, England: Paternoster, 2011), 160–61;

¹⁵⁴ Luke/Stephen give no indication that God’s influence on Israel was mediated by a third party.

¹⁵⁵ According to v. 43, the punishment God had in view was exile “beyond Babylon.”

¹⁵⁶ According to Barclay and Nida, the reference to God “giv[ing] them over” (παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς) implies that “God not merely passively deserts such people, but that he actively hands them over to the result of their sins.” Barclay M. Newman and Eugene A. Nida, *A Handbook on the Acts of the Apostles*, UBS Handbook (New York: United Bible Societies, 1972), 160.

Matt 11:25–27; Luke 10:21–22), grace, (cf. Matt 11:25–27; Matt 13:10–17; Mark 4:10–12; Luke 8:9–10; 10:21–22), and justice (cf. Matt 23:29–36; Luke 11:49–50; Acts 7:41–43). Third, in all four of these books, DRA is presented as the means by which the Scriptures were fulfilled (cf. Matt 13:10–17; Mark 4:10–12; Luke 8:9–10; Acts 7:42–43). By connecting the fulfillment of the Scriptures to DRA, these biblical authors suggest that another characteristic of God (namely God’s faithfulness) was exhibited through his negative influence on Israel. Fourth, by grounding Israel’s rejection of Jesus in God’s reprobating activity (cf. Matt 11:25–27; 13:10–17; Mark 4:10–12; Luke 8:9–10; 10:21–22), the Synoptic writers depict the death of Jesus as being due to God’s reprobating influence.¹⁵⁷ Thus, according to the Synoptics, DRA is crucial to the outworking of salvation history which climaxed in Christ’s death and his subsequent resurrection.¹⁵⁸ Lastly, Acts 7:42–43 suggests that Israel’s entire history of rebelliousness is to be

¹⁵⁷ The Synoptic writers each state that the death of Christ came about necessarily (cf. Matt 16:21; 26:53–54; Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22; 13:33; 17:25; 24:7, 26–27). Moreover, Luke emphasizes that those who put Jesus to death inadvertently acted according to the divine will (cf. Acts 2:22–23; 4:27–28). Given that Matthew, Mark, and Luke each claim that Christ was rejected by the Jews because of God’s reprobating influence, it seems logical to conclude that they understood DRA to have played a role in bringing about the divinely appointed death of Christ. Thus, what Moessner says of Luke’s perspective may also be extended to the other Synoptic writers: “the words and deeds of ‘all that Jesus began to do and teach’ become the events that spark such devoted misunderstanding, on the one hand, or hostile reception, on the other, which ironically contrive together to enact the *providentially-intended* rejection of [Jesus][emphasis added].” Moessner, *Luke the Historian*, 152–53.

¹⁵⁸ In addition to providing an explanation for why Jesus was rejected and put to death, Matthew’s appeal to DRA may also hint at his explanation for the emergence of the mission to the Gentiles. Throughout Matthew’s gospel, the first evangelist hints that Jesus’ mission would be universal in scope (i.e., Jesus as the son of Abraham in Matt 1:1; the mention of the Gentile women in the genealogy of Jesus; the visit of the Magi in 2:1–12; Jesus’ response to the faith of the centurion in Matt 8:10–12, etc.); yet he also reports that Jesus first prioritized proclaiming the gospel to Israel (cf. Matt 10:5–6; 15:24). Matthew then suggests that the kingdom of God would be “taken” from the nation of Israel and given to the Gentiles because the former rejected God’s Messiah (cf. Matt 21:43; 22:1–14; so also Müller, “Theological Interpretation of Jesus in Matthew,” 168–69; Thielman, *New Testament Theology*, 100–102; Matera, *New Testament Theology*, 43–45). Given that Matthew appeals to DRA as the reason why the majority of the Jews did not receive Jesus, it then seems to follow that reprobating agency finds a place within the First Gospel’s explanation for the salvation-historical shift from Jesus’ particular ministry towards Israel to the universal (i.e., including both Israel and the Gentiles) mission of the disciples (cf. Matt 28:18–20).

explained in part through recourse to DRA. These observations therefore suggest that DRA plays more than a marginal role in the theology of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Acts.

In addition to portraying its importance, the Synoptics and Acts also present evidence of the complexity of DRA. So for instance, though each of the examples from the Synoptic Gospels attests to eternal DRA, Acts 7:42–43 presents DRA in relation to Israel’s exile. Moreover, both retributive (cf. Matt 11:25–27; 23:29–36; Luke 10:21–22; 11:49–50; Acts 7:42–43) and non-retributive (cf. Matt 13:10–17; Mark 4:10–12; Luke 8:9–10) forms of reprobating influence are represented in these NT books. Furthermore, these writers attest to mediated (cf. Matt 13:10–17; 23:29–36; Mark 4:10–12; Luke 8:9–10; 11:49–50), immediate (cf. Acts 7:42–43), and even mixed (cf. Matt 11:25–27; Luke 10:21–22) forms of DRA. Significantly, differing presentations of DRA are found not only *across* the works of the Evangelists, but *within* the works of both Matthew and Luke. This then suggests that these variations are not due to theological differences between the Gospel writers; instead, Matthew, Mark, and Luke together bear witness to the multifaceted nature of the concept of DRA.

CHAPTER 8

DIVINE REPROBATING ACTIVITY IN THE LETTERS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

In this chapter, I continue my exploration of the subject of DRA by turning to the letters of the NT. The subject of God's reprobating influence is broached in the Pauline letters and in 1 Peter. Furthermore, the evidence from these epistles supports my contention that DRA is a significant and multifaceted biblical theme.

DRA in the Pauline Epistles

DRA in Romans

The book of Romans contains some of the most well-known examples of texts attesting DRA. The book's witness to God's reprobating agency is found most clearly in Romans 1:18–32 and 9–11. As I hope to demonstrate, DRA's treatment in this letter shows that the concept is crucial to understanding the apostle's perspective regarding topics such as Israel's past, present, and future, sinful humanity's situation before God, and the Lord's sovereignty in salvation and in damnation. Moreover, even within Romans, Paul uses the concept in ways that showcase its flexibility, thus highlighting once more the importance of treating each instance of DRA as an individual case.

Romans 1:18–32. In Romans 1:18–32, Paul begins to explain why the good news of the righteousness of God for salvation (cf. Rom 1:16–17) is even necessary¹: namely, humanity presently stands under God’s wrath because, despite receiving the knowledge of God through divine self-revelation, they have refused to acknowledge and to worship God (Rom 1:18–23).² But how has God’s wrath been expressed?³ According to verses 24–32, God’s wrath has taken the form of DRA.⁴

In the span of nine verses (vv. 24–32), Paul repeats three times that, as an act of retribution,⁵ God has expressed his wrath by handing humanity over to the enslaving

¹ Scholars continue to debate the function of Rom 1:18–32 within the argument of the first three chapters of Paul’s letter. For a recent overview of approaches to Rom 1–3, see Marcus A. Mininger, *Uncovering the Theme of Revelation in Romans 1:16–3:26*, WUNT (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 1–34. Space does not allow for a detailed discussion of the issue. Needless to say, I continue to agree with those interpreters who argue that vv. 18–32 function to introduce an extended section (Rom 1:18–3:20) that paints the backdrop for the gospel that Paul proclaims. As Seifrid rightly states, “[Paul’s] opening announcement of the gospel as ‘the power of God for salvation’ is not comprehensible apart from his subsequent diagnosis of the human condition.” Mark A. Seifrid, “Unrighteous by Faith: Apostolic Proclamation in Romans 1:18–3:20,” in *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, vol. 2, *The Paradoxes of Paul* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 105. For similar perspectives, see Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, 2nd ed., BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 84; Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 2nd ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 102–3; Jonathan A. Linebaugh, “Announcing the Human: Rethinking the Relationship between Wisdom of Solomon 13–15 and Romans 1.18–2.11,” *NTS* 57 (2011): 225; David G. Peterson, *Commentary on Romans*, Biblical Theology for Christian Proclamation (Nashville: B & H, 2017), 109–10; William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1911), 40; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 269–70; C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans: Romans 1–8*, vol. 1, ICC (London: T & T Clark, 1975), 108. In addition, while I agree that Rom 1:18–32 focuses on the sinfulness of the pagan world, I do not think Paul intends to exclude Jews altogether from the indictment. And so in Rom 2:1–3, Paul asserts that “the one who judges” (a designation which probably refers to the Jews; so also Francis Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 2nd ed. [London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2015], 375; Alec J. Lucas, “Unearthing an Intra-Jewish Interpretative Debate? Romans 1:18–2:4; Wisdom of Solomon 11–19; and Psalms 105(104)–107(106),” *Annali Di Storia Dell’esegesi* 27, no. 2 [2010]: 76–77) is guilty of practicing the same vices described in 1:18–32. Moreover, as Barclay observes, “A close reading of 1:18–32 suggests that there are echoes here of a biblical rebuke of Israelite idolatry.” John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 463. Thus, though Paul concentrates on the guilt of Gentiles in Rom 1:18–32, he is also addressing the human situation in general; then, in chap. 2, the apostle demonstrates that, despite their denunciations of pagan behavior, the Jews were equally complicit in humanity’s rebellion against God. For similar perspectives, see Linebaugh, “Announcing the Human,” 233; Schreiner, *Romans*, 88; Moo, *Romans*, 107–9; Watson, *Hermeneutics of Faith*, 375–77; Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 462–64; Peterson, *Romans*, 112; Cranfield, *Romans 1–8*, 105–6; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, WBC (Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 56; G. K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 206.

power of degrading and dishonorable passions (cf. Rom 1:24, 26, 28).⁶ So in verse 24, Paul claims that, as a response to humanity's refusal to acknowledge, glorify, and give

² Levison argues that Rom 1:18–25 borrows from the narrative of the Greek Life of Adam and Eve (whether through a written copy or through oral exposure) so as to present humanity taking part in two exchanges: (1) the glory of God is exchanged for the dominion of death, and (2) man's rule over animals is exchanged for subservience to animals. See John R. Levison, "Adam and Eve in Romans 1.18–25 and the Greek Life of Adam and Eve," *NTS* 50 (2004): 525–33. If Levison is correct, then it would seem that God's wrath against humanity should be understood to refer to man's subjugation to death and to the animal kingdom. However, I am not persuaded that Levison has demonstrated his case. Several of the alleged similarities between Rom 1:18–25 and Greek Life of Adam and Eve are superficial. For example, while Eve does speak deceitfully to Adam (21:1–6), her activity differs from the "suppression of truth" that Paul describes in Rom 1:18–25. Similarly, there seems to be a meaningful difference between Paul's reproof of idol worship in vv. 23–25 and the claim being made in Greek Life of Adam and Eve that wild animals may now attack human beings because of Eve's sin (cf. 10–12). Lastly, unlike Greek Life of Adam and Eve, Paul is not speaking of the exchange of God's glory as a punishment; instead, Paul is using the notion of exchange to emphasize the heinous nature of man's idolatry. For these reasons, I doubt that Rom 1:18–25 depends upon or borrows from Greek Life of Adam and Eve.

³ Wright is unconvincing when he argues that the wrath of God in 1:18 refers to the future day of judgment which Paul now claims will be mediated through Christ. See N. T. Wright, *Christian Origins and the Question of God*, vol. 4, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 767. On the contrary, the present tense verb (*ἀποκαλύπτεται*) as well as the references to God's reprobating influence in the aorist tense (*παρέδωκεν*; cf. vv. 24, 26, 28) strongly suggest that God's wrath is already being exercised against humanity (so also Schreiner, *Romans*, 92). Thus, Käsemann expounds upon Rom 1:18 more accurately when he states, "For Jew and Gentile, world history already stands in the storm clouds of final judgment. Like primitive Christian prophecy before him, Paul with the eschatological law of retribution proclaims the fact that God's retributive action is already at work on all human sin." See Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 43.

⁴ Though he unconvincingly argues that 1:18–32 is an indictment of ancient Israel, Meadors is correct when he says of 1:18 that "the wrath of God (ἡ ὀργή) is revealed from heaven through God's act of giving idolatrous humankind over to a state of depravity." Edward P. Meadors, "Idolatry and the Hardening of the Heart in Romans 1–2," *Proceedings* 21 (2001): 17, 23–24. Also see Seyoon Kim, "Paul's Common Paraenesis (1 Thess 4–5; Phil. 2–4; and Rom. 12–13): The Correspondence between Romans 1:18–32 and 12:1–2, and the Unity of Romans 12–13," *TynBul* 62, no. 1 (2011): 120–22.

⁵ So Gignac describes the Lord's actions in Rom 1:18–32 as "an action-reaction revenge, in which God reestablishes his wounded honor with a kind of swap: since humanity *exchanged* God for idols, God will *deliver* humanity into dishonor." Alain Gignac, "The Enunciative Device of Romans 1:18–4:25: A Succession of Discourses Attempting to Express the Multiple Dimensions of God's Justice," *CBQ* 77 (2015): 490.

⁶ Gaventa is correct to note the significance of Paul's use of *παράδιδωμι* in these verses, and she is right to deny that the progression described in these verses is a natural process (contra Wright, *Paul and Faithfulness of God*, 1122). However, I am less persuaded by her argument that Rom 1:18–32 already alludes to a conflict between God and certain anti-god powers to whom he surrenders mankind. See Beverly Roberts Gaventa, "God Handed Them Over: Reading Romans 1:18–32 Apocalyptically," *Australian Biblical Review* 53 (2005): 43–50. While Paul does portray sin as an active agent elsewhere (cf. Rom 7:8–11), Rom 1:18–32 seems to be focused on the human sinfulness to which men have been

thanks to the one true God (Rom 1:19–23),⁷ the Lord “handed them over (παρέδωκεν) in the desires of their hearts to uncleanness.”⁸ Here, Paul argues that God has exercised influence over human desires (ἐν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις καρδιῶν)⁹ so as to place humanity under the power of “uncleanness” (εἰς ἀκαθαρσία) as a punishment for their refusal to worship him; in other words, Paul believed that God punished humanity in such a way that the latter has become dominated by defiling passions.¹⁰ Similarly, in verse 26, Paul elaborates on this form of divine wrath when he says, “Because of this,¹¹ God handed

consigned (rightly Wiard Popkes, “Zum Aufbau und Charakter von Römer 1.18–32,” *NTS* 28 [1982]: 496). In any event, Gaventa’s reading of Rom 1:18–32 is compatible with the argument I am making regarding DRA.

⁷ The inferential conjunction διὸ indicates that v. 24 is grounded by the statements which precede it. As such, God’s actions in v. 24 should be understood as a response to humanity’s transgressions described in vv. 19–23. Similarly, see Schreiner, *Romans*, 99; Moo, *Romans*, 120–21; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 284; Peterson, *Romans*, 119–20; Frank Thielman, *Romans*, Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 107; Popkes, “Röm 1.18–32,” 496–97.

⁸ Dixon correctly notes that “Paul’s initial, driving image for God’s wrath as handing people over would have rung true to Jewish ears familiar with Israel’s traditions. God delivers the disobedient (often Israel) to enemies repeatedly in the Jewish literature circulating in Paul’s time, most especially in that which he considered scripture.” Thomas P. Dixon, “Judgement for Israel: The Marriage of Wrath and Mercy in Romans 9–11,” *NTS* 66 (2020): 569–70.

⁹ While some have argued that the ἐν should be read causally (Gaventa, “God Handed Them Over,” 48; Linebaugh, “Announcing the Human,” 234), I think it is more likely that the preposition retains its locative sense and describes the “realm” within which God’s “handing over” takes place. In other words, “in the desires of the hearts” qualifies this operation of divine agency by specifying that it terminates upon human desires.

¹⁰ Schreiner rightly discerns Paul’s emphasis on God’s personal agency in these verses. He states, “The handing over to sin is not to be construed impersonally. . . . The consequences that are inflicted because of sin are the result of God’s personal decision. The wrath of God, then, is to be understood in personal terms.” Schreiner, *Romans*, 101. See also Gaventa, “God Handed Them Over,” 43–50; Käsemann, *Romans*, 43–44; Peterson, *Romans*, 119; Cranfield, *Romans 1–8*, 120; Mininger, *Theme of Revelation*, 145; Peter Stuhlmacher, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Daniel P. Bailey (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 313–14; John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, trans. John Owen, 500th anniversary ed., *Calvin’s Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 75–77; Martin Luther, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, trans. J. Theodore Mueller (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1954), 30.

¹¹ The διὰ τοῦτο construction in v. 26 refers to the relative clause in v. 25 as the reason why God handed humanity over to dishonorable passions. So also Schreiner, *Romans*, 98; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 284; Peterson, *Romans*, 122.

them over to dishonorable passions.” Lastly, in verse 28, Paul revisits this idea of God’s reprobating influence a third time: “And, even as¹² they did not approve of knowing God in accordance with knowledge, so also God handed them over to a worthless mind.” Importantly, in each case wherein God “hands” mankind over (Rom 1:24, 26, 28), Paul notes that God’s negative influence upon and through the passions was intended to lead humanity to engage in transgressive behaviors.¹³ In verse 24, the goal of God’s “handing over” is “that their bodies might be dishonored among themselves,”¹⁴ which is an expression best understood to refer to sexually immoral acts.¹⁵ Verses 26–27 reflect the same dynamic, as Paul argues that God’s negative influence is evidenced when individuals desire or engage in homosexual intercourse.¹⁶ And again in verse 28, Paul states that the reason why God subjects humanity to “a debased mind” is “so that [they]

¹² Καθώς introduces a comparative clause that rhetorically provides the ground for God’s reprobating actions in Rom 1:28b; as such, interpreters probably should not force a sharp distinction between comparative and causal readings of the conjunction in this instance.

¹³ As Linebaugh states, the effect of God’s influence “is an ethical decline, rooted in the meta-sin of idolatry, which spirals downwards into sexual sin (1.24, 26-27) and then overflows into a smorgasbord of non-sexual immorality (1.29-31).” Linebaugh, “Announcing the Human,” 219. It is highly improbable that Paul considered this ethical decline to be a divinely unintended consequence of God’s “handing over.”

¹⁴ The infinitive ἀτιμάζεσθαι should be interpreted as a passive as opposed to a middle (rightly Cranfield, *Romans 1–8*, 122; Käsemann, *Romans*, 48). Moreover, I understand the phrase τοῦ ἀτιμάζεσθαι τὰ σώματα ἐν αὐτοῖς to be a purpose clause, though Schreiner rightly observes that readers should not distinguish too sharply between purpose and result at this point (see Schreiner, *Romans*, 109).

¹⁵ For similar interpretations, see Moo, *Romans*, 122; Schreiner, *Romans*, 102 (though he sees v. 24 as already referring specifically to homosexual intercourse); Peterson, *Romans*, 120 (though he believes the phrase also includes “abusive human relationships”); Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 271.

¹⁶ So also Mininger, *Theme of Revelation*, 147. Esler argues that the reference to homosexual practice alongside the condemnation of idolatry demonstrates that Rom 1:18–32 is a reflection on the Sodom tradition as it developed in Judaism. Philip F. Esler, “The Sodom Tradition in Romans 1:18–32,” *BTB* 34 (2004): 9–13. However, not many scholars have followed Esler’s proposal. Esler’s argument is tenuous since there are few (if any) lexical links between Rom 1:18–32 and Gen 19. Moreover, none of the intertestamental texts Esler cites as part of the Sodom tradition espouse Paul’s perspective on homosexuality itself being evidence of divine judgment. Lastly, even if Paul did allude to the Sodom tradition, such an observation sheds little light on the argument in Rom 1:18–32.

might do things which ought not be done.”¹⁷ Finally, Paul brings his initial description of God’s wrath to a close by emphasizing the depths of perversity to which humanity has been consigned: “Although such persons know God’s righteous decree that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do them but also give approval to those who do them.”¹⁸ In sum, Romans 1:18–32 portrays God’s wrath being expressed as a punitive influence over human beings that leads them into sin so that they might be degraded and made worthy of the punishment of death; therefore, readers have good reason for detecting the presence of DRA in these verses.¹⁹

What can be said about Paul’s characterization of DRA found in Romans 1:18–32?²⁰ First of all, the passage clearly describes God’s reprobating agency as an act of

¹⁷ The infinitive *ποιεῖν* should be understood as indicating purpose. Moreover, though Paul has focused on sexual immorality in v. 24 and vv. 26–27, vv. 28–29 demonstrate that God’s influence leads people to commit moral evils of every kind. As Lucas states, “The point of this last giving-over is to suggest that the foundational idolatrous exchange of v. 23 leads not just to disordered sexual desires but to the myriad of vices that plague society and also to a defiant attitude toward God.” Lucas, “Intra-Jewish Debate,” 75.

¹⁸ As Cranfield helpfully discusses, giving approval to wickedness can often be a sign of even greater depravity than committing wicked deeds. Cranfield, *Romans 1–8*, 135.

¹⁹ Although Fitzmyer acknowledges that Paul portrays God as having visited moral degradation upon pagan society, he criticizes such language about God as “primitive” and he dismisses it as “[Paul’s] inherited way of expressing the inevitability of evil finding its own retribution.” Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 272. Such content criticism goes beyond the task of the biblical exegete. Moreover, Fitzmyer’s conclusions do not do justice to the fact that there were several models of divine and human agency that were available to Paul (see Josephus, *Ant.* 18.1.2–18.1.6; *J.W.* 2.8.14; also see my review of scholarship in chap. 2, s.v. “Divine and Human Agency”). As such, it is illegitimate to treat Paul’s actual language about DRA as being theologically insignificant.

²⁰ Some have argued that Rom 1:18–32 does not reflect Pauline convictions at all. For instance, Porter argues that the relationship between Rom 1:18–32 and Wisdom of Solomon shows that the former should not be interpreted as representing Paul’s thinking; on the contrary, this passage represents the perspective of the opponent whom Paul proceeds to condemn in 2:1–5 (see Calvin L. Porter, “Romans 1.18–32: Its Role in the Developing Argument,” *NTS* 40 [1994]: 220–23). However, Porter misunderstands Paul’s argument: the apostle does not rebuke “the one who judges” because he shares the view espoused in 1:18–32; instead, he chastises him because he engages in the same sins that he condemns in others (cf. Rom 2:1, 3). For a more helpful analysis of Paul’s use of Wisdom of Solomon and its significance for Rom 1, see Watson, *Hermeneutics of Faith*, 371–78.

retribution.²¹ Moreover, the language of “handing over” with God as the subject implies both an immediate and active form of divine agency.²² Finally, in these verses, Paul seems to view the debauchery towards which people are impelled to be its own form of punishment. Such a conclusion follows from a number of observations. First, it follows from Paul’s distinctive use of the phrase *παραδίδωμι* + *εἰς* (cf. 1:24, 26, 28). As Paul uses the expression in Romans 1, the object of *εἰς* always refers to a state of domination by sin (*εἰς ἀκαθαρσίαν, εἰς πάθη ἀτιμίας, εἰς ἀδόκιμον νοῦν*). Since Paul describes God’s act of “handing over” as an act of divine retribution, readers should understand the state of domination by sin to itself be the punishment inflicted upon humanity. Second, the phrase *τοῦ ἀτιμάζεσθαι τὰ σώματα αὐτῶν* should be understood as a purpose clause with a passive infinitive (“so that their bodies might be dishonored”, cf. Rom 1:24); thus,

²¹ So also Linebaugh, “Announcing the Human,” 219; Popkes, “Römer 1.18–32,” 496; Schreiner, *Romans*, 101–2; Moo, *Romans*, 120–21; Thielman, *Romans*, 114; Käsemann, *Romans*, 47–49; Lucas, “Intra-Jewish Debate,” 73; Peterson, *Romans*, 119; Luther, *Romans*, 30–31; Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 45; Stuhlmacher, *Biblical Theology*, 313–14; Calvin, *Romans*, 75–77; Mininger, *Theme of Revelation*, 127; Peter Abelard, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Steven R. Cartwright, FC: Mediaeval Continuation (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 119–21; Meadors, “Idolatry and Hardening of Heart,” 17; Kim, “Paul’s Common Paraenesis,” 120n20; Beale, *We Become What We Worship*, 204; Richard B. Hays, “Relations Natural and Unnatural: A Response to J. Boswell’s Exegesis of Rom 1,” *JRE* 14, no. 1 (1986): 190; Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel, vol. 1 (New York: Scribners, 1951), 250; Adolf Schlatter, *The Theology of the Apostles: The Development of New Testament Theology*, trans. Andreas J. Köstenberger (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 204–5; S. Lewis Johnson Jr., “‘God Gave Them Up’: A Study in Divine Retribution,” *Master’s Seminary Journal* 21, no. 1 (2010): 25.

²² While the language of God “handing over” is metaphorical, the metaphor suggests that God does more than merely withhold his aid or allow a negative state to come into existence (contra Abelard, *Romans*, 119; Cranfield, *Romans 1–8*, 120–21; Meadors, “Idolatry and Hardening of Heart,” 22–23; Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 62–63; Hays, “Relations,” 190). That such is the case may be demonstrated by examining less metaphorical uses of the expression in the LXX and the NT. When *παραδίδωμι* is used with a human subject and when *εἰς* takes an object that refers to real persons or institutions, the verb regularly indicates the act of delivering a person into someone else’s custody or power (cf. Deut 19:12; Judg 15:12–13; 1 Sam 30:15; Jdt 6:10; 10:15; Jer 33:24; Matt 10:17; 17:22; 26:45; Mark 9:31; 13:9; 14:41; Luke 9:44; 21:12; 24:7; Acts 8:3; 21:11; 22:4; 28:17). In these instances, the verb does not refer to simple permission or to non-action. Thus, as Moo correctly points out, “The meaning of ‘hand over’ demands that we give God a more active role as the initiator of the process. God does not simply let the boat go—he gives it a push downstream.” Moo, *Romans*, 122. See also Calvin, *Romans*, 76–77; Mininger, *Theme of Revelation*, 145; Johnson, “‘God Gave Them Up,’” 25; Peterson, *Romans*, 119–20.

according to verse 24, God’s purpose for humanity’s enslavement to unclean desires is that they experience the inherent shame of their sins in their own bodies or persons. Third, in verse 27, Paul refers to same-sex intercourse as a “fitting recompense” (τὴν ἀντιμισθίαν ἣν ἔδει) for humanity’s refusal to acknowledge the truth about God (cf. Rom 1:25). Such a statement suggests that homosexuality was viewed by Paul to itself be a judgment from God.²³ Lastly, Paul uses wordplay in verses 25–28 in order to stress that humanity’s consignment to depravity is a fitting punishment for their rejection of God.²⁴ For these reasons, Seifrid accurately describes Paul’s meaning in Romans 1:24–32 when he says, “All sins are punishments, divine judgments upon the primal sin of exchanging the true God for idols.”²⁵ Now, in addition to being punished by the shameful acts themselves, is it possible that all those “handed over” to such sinful patterns are also consigned to the punishment of eschatological wrath (cf. Rom 1:32; 2:5–10)? In my judgment, such a reading seems very unlikely to be correct. First, it is important to note

²³ For similar perspectives, see Cranfield, *Romans 1–8*, 126–27; Schreiner, *Romans*, 106; Thielman, *Romans*, 110; Peterson, *Romans*, 125–26; Calvin, *Romans*, 79; Hays, “Relations,” 190–91; Dale B. Martin, “Heterosexism and the Interpretation of Romans 1:18–32,” *BibInt* 3 (1995): 335. Space does not allow me to take part in the lively debate regarding Paul’s views on homosexuality as expressed in Rom 1. For a few essays that treat the subject, see Benjamin H. Dunning, “Same Sex Relations,” in *The Oxford Handbook of New Testament, Gender, and Sexuality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019); Preston M. Sprinkle, “Romans 1 and Homosexuality: A Critical Review of James Brownson’s Bible, Gender, Sexuality,” *BBR* 24, no. 4 (2014): 515–28; Martin, “Heterosexism,” 333–55; David E. Malick, “The Condemnation of Homosexuality in Romans 1:26–27,” *BibSac* 150 (1993): 327–40; Hays, “Relations,” 184–215.

²⁴ So for instance, in vv. 25–26, Paul uses the verb μεταλλάσσω to refer both to humanity’s idolatry (v. 25) and then again to the sexual perversity which results from God’s “handing over” (v. 26). In addition, v. 28 uses the verb δοκιμάζω to refer to man’s refusal to know God; then, it employs the related adjective ἀδόκιμος to describe the depraved mindset to which man has been subjected as punishment for their rebellion.

²⁵ Seifrid, “Unrighteous by Faith,” 108. See also Schreiner, *Romans*, 106; Käsemann, *Romans*, 43; G. B. Caird, *New Testament Theology*, ed. L. D. Hurst (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 81; Peterson, *Romans*, 125–26; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 284–85; Calvin, *Romans*, 75–76; Cranfield, *Romans 1–8*, 126–27; Mininger, *Theme of Revelation*, 148; Meadors, “Idolatry and Hardening of Heart,” 17; Johnson, “God Gave Them Up,” 26; Beale, *We Become What We Worship*, 216; Schlatter, *Theology of the Apostles*, 208; James B. Prothro, *Both Judge and Justifier: Biblical Legal Language and the Act of Justifying in Paul*, WUNT (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 160.

that verse 32 only says that the sins to which humanity has been consigned render them *worthy* of death (οἱ τὰ τοιαῦτα πράσσοντες ἄξιοι θανάτου εἰσίν). Thus, it is not clear that God intends for those “handed over” to actually experience death as their final punishment. Second, the overall argument in Romans 1:16–4:25 demonstrates that some who were consigned to sin would in fact be saved from God’s wrath through faith in Christ.²⁶ Thus, it seems improbable that Romans 1:18–32 has final judgment in view; instead, readers should conclude that Romans 1:18–32 bears witness to non-eternal DRA.²⁷

Romans 9–11.²⁸ Perhaps the most well-known examples of DRA in the Bible are found in Romans 9–11. Even here however, Paul’s use of the concept is complex and must be carefully traced out in order to avoid flattening his descriptions of God’s

²⁶ Rightly Dixon, “Judgment for Israel,” 573. In fact, as Olson argues, Paul’s use of the verb παραδίδωμι in Rom 4:25 and 8:32 may allude back to Rom 1 and indicate that “one escapes the horror of this fate [i.e., being “handed over” by God to depravity] through God’s handing over of Christ.” Robert C. Olson, *The Gospel as the Revelation of God’s Righteousness: Paul’s Use of Isaiah in Romans 1:1–3:26*, WUNT (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 180–81.

²⁷ Some scholars speculate that the process of “handing over” in vv. 24–32 serves an ultimately gracious aim towards those “handed over.” So for instance, Cranfield argues that “God allowed them to go their own way, in order that they might at last learn from their consequent wretchedness to hate the futility of a life turned away from the truth of God. . . . This delivering them up was a deliberate act of judgment and mercy on the part of the God who smites in order to heal (Isa 19.22), and . . . throughout the time of their God-forsakenness God is still concerned with them and dealing with them.” Cranfield, *Romans 1–8*, 121. However, Cranfield’s claims have little grounding in the text. Though Paul obviously does assert that people can be saved from God’s wrath through faith in Christ (Rom 3:21–26; 5:1–11; 6:5–7, 14, 17–23; 7:4–6), Rom 1:18–32 provides no indication that God’s judicial wrath was itself intended to serve a merciful purpose (so also Peterson, *Romans*, 120). On the contrary, Rom 1:18–32 repeatedly affirms that God’s purpose in delivering humanity over to their sinful passions was to punish them. Lastly, given Paul’s discussion in Rom 9:6–24, it seems that for at least some of those consigned to wrath, God smites with *no intention* to heal.

²⁸ The issues involved in interpreting Rom 9–11 are incredibly complex, and a thorough investigation of these chapters would require a monograph in itself. Given the limitations of my project, I will only focus on the verses and issues that directly pertain to DRA. Moreover, since these passages have been so thoroughly discussed, I will at times refer readers to commentaries instead of rehearsing well-worn exegetical disputes.

reprobating agency.²⁹ For this reason, I attend to Paul's witness to DRA by proceeding sequentially through Romans 9–11 without assuming that all his talk of DRA must be understood univocally.

In Romans 9:1–24, Paul raises and begins to address the theological problem of Israel's unbelief.³⁰ As the apostle readily acknowledges, God had granted great covenant promises to Jacob's descendants (cf. Rom 9:4–5). However, due to their unbelief, the vast majority of Israelites did not experience the salvation that their Messiah had accomplished (cf. Rom 9:1–3). Anticipating that this situation would raise questions

²⁹ Surely Taylor is correct when he notes the importance of reading Rom 9 within its immediate context. See John W. Taylor, "The Freedom of God and the Hope of Israel: Theological Interpretation of Romans 9," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 56, no. 1 (2013): 25. Nevertheless, he and others fail to attend to the opposite error, which involves flattening the witness of Rom 9 by prioritizing particular statements made in subsequent (or, in some cases, prior) chapters at the expense of what Paul actually does say in Rom 9:6–24; for an example of this, see Taylor's treatment in "Freedom of God," 38–40. Furthermore, while a charitable reading of Paul would assume a level of consistency in his writing, "consistency" need not mean that (1) Paul could not address a particular issue from different "angles," or that (2) concepts which strike moderns as contradictory would also have been considered contradictory by Paul. In my estimation, these two errors have prevented readers from seeing how Rom 9:6–24 functions as part of the apostle's defense of God's truthfulness in the face of Israel's unbelief and their separation from Christ. To provide a brief (if somewhat oversimplified) summary of my understanding of the overall argument in Rom 9–11, Paul defends God's fidelity to his word (cf. Rom 9:6a) on the following grounds: (1) the Scriptures themselves testify that membership within God's people has never depended upon human ancestry or human agency (Rom 9:6–13); (2) God's characteristic way of electing without regard for human ancestry or agency does not compromise his righteousness because the Scriptures attest that God has always been free to show mercy or to harden as he pleases (Rom 9:14–24); (3) in accordance with the Scriptures, there still remained during Paul's time a remnant of Israelites chosen by grace (Rom 9:24–29; 11:1–6); (4) the Scriptures predicted that Israel would "stumble over the stumbling stone" and refuse to believe in Christ (Rom 9:30–10:21; cf. 11:7–10); (5) the Scriptures describe how Israel's temporary unbelief would function within God's plan to bring salvation to the Gentiles (Rom 10:19; 11:11–16); and (6) God would be faithful to fulfill his saving promises to a future generation of Israelites (Rom 11:25–32). Only in Rom 11:17–24 does Paul digress from his defense of God's faithfulness in order to undercut Gentile pride. In any event, this analysis of the overall argument shows that one need not empty Rom 9:6–24 of its unique witness in order to see Rom 9–11 as a coherent, though multifaceted, response to the matter of Israel's (partial and temporary) rejection.

³⁰ While Wolter is right to point out that Paul does not explicitly raise the matter of Israel's unbelief in vv. 1–5, it seems more than likely that readers are meant to assume a connection between their separation from Christ and their refusal to believe. See Michael Wolter, "'It Is Not as Though the Word of God Has Failed': God's Faithfulness and God's Free Sovereignty in Romans 9:6–29," in *God and Israel: Providence and Purpose in Romans 9–11*, ed. Todd D. Still (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2017), 28.

regarding whether or not God had kept his promises to Israel (Rom 9:1–6a),³¹ Paul preemptively tackles the issue and contends that Israel’s failure to believe the gospel has not undermined the Lord’s fidelity to his word.³² On the contrary, the Lord cannot be charged with unfaithfulness towards Israel because (1) God’s word attests that membership into the true Israel³³ has never depended upon human ancestry or human agency (Rom 9:6–13), and (2) because God’s word also testifies to his freedom to elect and to harden whomever he pleases (Rom 9:14–23).³⁴

While Paul was greatly distressed by Israel’s plight (cf. Rom 9:1–3), the apostle argues that God’s Word indicates that not all ethnic Israelites would be considered part of God’s true people (Rom 9:6b)³⁵; instead, the Scriptures demonstrate that election

³¹ Käsemann helpfully describes why this would be an issue for Paul’s readers: “If the promise to the Jews has lost its validity, the gospel can no longer give final assurance and everything will depend on a personal faith which no longer has any previously given basis.” Käsemann, *Romans*, 261. Gaventa fails to convince when she claims that Paul could not be addressing the issue of God’s faithfulness here because “it seems doubtful that such a question would actually have occurred to either Paul or his audience.” Beverly Roberts Gaventa, “On the Calling-Into-Being of Israel: Romans 9:6-29,” in *Between Gospel and Election: Explorations in the Interpretation of Romans 9–11*, ed. Florian Wilk and J. Ross Wagner, WUNT (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 257.

³² As Venema says regarding Paul’s purpose in Rom 9–11, “The inference that might be drawn from Israel’s unbelief and separation from Christ, namely, that the Word of God has proven ineffectual in their case, must be forthrightly rejected and shown to be false.” Cornelis P. Venema, “‘Jacob I Loved, but Esau I Hated’: Corporate or Individual Election in Paul’s Argument in Romans 9?,” *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 26 (2015): 44.

³³ For the similarities between Paul’s complex use of “Israel” and that of certain documents from Qumran, see Annette Steudel, “Die Texte aus Qumran als Horizont für Römer 9–11: Israel-Theologie, Geschichtsbetrachtung, Schriftauslegung,” in Wilk and Wagner, *Between Gospel and Election*, 119–20.

³⁴ Of course, Paul continues to provide other defenses of God’s faithfulness to his word throughout Rom 9:24–11:32. Moreover, I agree with Moo when he argues that *ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ* in Rom 9:6 “[refers to] God’s OT word, with particular reference to his promises to Israel.” Moo, *Romans*, 593; also see Walter Schmithals, *Der Römerbrief: Ein Kommentar* (Gütersloh, Germany: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1988), 338. Belli helpfully explains the importance of Paul’s appeals to the Scriptures in Rom 9 when he says, “If this chapter is a defense of the Word and of God’s way of acting itself, therefore of the person of God, the motive for the prevalent use of scriptural ‘proofs’ is clear. In effect, Paul cannot presume to defend God; it is God himself who through his word rejects the possible accusations.” Filippo Belli, *Argumentation and Use of Scripture in Romans 9-11*, AnBib 183 (Rome: Gregorian and Biblical Press, 2010), 68.

³⁵ Contra Cranfield, who claims that both “those from Israel” and “Israel” should be

into the true people of God has always depended solely upon the Lord's determination rather than upon human ancestry or human agency (Rom 9:6–13).³⁶ The apostle begins his argument by referring to the case of Isaac in order to establish the principle³⁷ that membership within God's covenant people does not finally depend upon human ancestry (Rom 9:7–9).³⁸ When God made a covenant with Abraham, he informed him that not all his children would be reckoned as "seed" (σπέρμα), but only those born through Isaac (9:7; cf. Gen 17:15–19; 21:12).³⁹ Thus, Paul observes that the physical descendants of Abraham were not all counted as members of God's covenant people,⁴⁰ but only the

understood as full-fledged members of God's elect people. C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans: Romans 9–16*, vol. 2, ICC (London: T & T Clark, 1975), 473–74. His reading suffers because it does not adequately explain Paul's grief (cf. Rom 9:1–3), and it does not do justice to the distinction Paul draws between the two groups.

³⁶ Similarly, Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 238–39; Schmithals, *Der Römerbrief*, 339; Mark A. Seifrid, "Romans," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 639; F. C. Baur, *Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ: His Life and Works, His Epistles and Teachings* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 1:328; Belli, *Argumentation*, 51, 73–75; Schreiner, *Romans*, 482; Käsemann, *Romans*, 262–63; Peterson, *Romans*, 352–53; Calvin, *Romans*, 343–45; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1988), 548; Moo, *Romans*, 589.

³⁷ Though Aageson wrongly downplays the importance of typology and redemptive history in Paul's reading of Scripture, he rightly observes that Paul draws out timeless truths from the OT and applies them in the present. In his own words, "Paul often appears to have used scripture verbally or thematically to make an ethical or theological statement without linking scripture to the present according to a notion of redemption-history. Rather than a view of history, the underlying assumption of Paul's application appears often to be that which is 'true' in scripture . . . is also 'true' in the present." J. W. Aageson, "Typology, Correspondence, and the Application of Scripture in Romans 9–11," *JSNT* 31, no. 1 (1987): 54. For others who recognize that Paul draws theological principles from the OT, see Belli, *Argumentation*, 53; Peterson, *Romans*, 354; Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 242, 303; Moo, *Romans*, 591; Thomas R. Schreiner, "Corporate and Individual Election in Romans 9: A Response to Brian Abasciano," *JETS* 49, no. 2 (2006): 382.

³⁸ So also Jonathan A. Linebaugh, "Not the End: The History and Hope of the Unfailing Word in Romans 9–11," in Still, *God and Israel*, 152; Schreiner, "Corporate and Individual Election," 382; John M. G. Barclay, "Unnerving Grace: Approaching Romans 9–11 from the Wisdom of Solomon," in Wilk and Wagner, *Between Gospel and Election*, 105.

³⁹ There is an implicit contrast here between Isaac and Ishmael/the rest of Abraham's descendants; the former was elected by God while the latter was not. Rightly, Belli, *Argumentation*, 77–78.

⁴⁰ In Rom 9:6–9, Paul uses an array of terms to describe a fundamental distinction between two groups (contra Gaventa, "Calling-Into-Being," 159–60). On the one hand, Paul speaks about "those from

“children of the promise” were so considered (9:8).⁴¹ And of what did that promise originally consist?⁴² “This is the word of promise: *I will come* at this time and a son will be had by Sarah” (Rom 9:9; cf. Gen 17:15–21; 18:10–14).⁴³ The promise was that God Himself would come and would act so that elderly Abraham and his barren wife would have a son, thus demonstrating that Isaac’s conception and birth were due to God’s own doing.⁴⁴ The display of divine autonomy in election only heightens with the example of

Israel” (οἱ ἐξ Ἰσραὴλ), which readers later discover refers to ethnic Israelites who find themselves outside covenant membership due to their refusal to trust in Jesus (cf. Rom 9:27–33; 11:1–7). He then refers to this same group with the labels “all children” (πάντες τέκνα) and “the children of the flesh” (τὰ τέκνα τῆς σαρκός). On the other hand, Paul refers to a second group by the names “Israel,” “the seed of Abraham” (σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ), “the children of God” (τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ), “the children of the promise” (τὰ τέκνα τῆς ἐπαγγελίας), and “seed” (σπέρμα). Given (1) Paul’s use of the Genesis texts (cf. Gen 18:10, 14; 21:12), (2) the recurrence of σπέρμα in Rom 9:29 (cf. Isa 1:9), and (3) Paul’s later discussions regarding a saved “remnant” from Israel (cf. Rom 9:27; 11:1–7), it seems likely that this second group refers to a subset of ethnic Israelites that has been included among the covenant people by virtue of God’s merciful initiative. However, it should be noted that the precise identity of these groups is not the primary subject of Rom 9:6–9; instead, vv. 6–9 serve to establish the preliminary principle that God’s Word itself demonstrates the insufficiency of ancestry in determining covenant membership (see also John M. G. Barclay, “I Will Have Mercy on Whom I Have Mercy’: The Golden Calf and Divine Mercy in Romans 9-11 and Second Temple Judaism,” *Early Christianity* 1, no. 1 [2010]: 98). Because it is not the main point of vv. 6–9, clarity regarding the identities of “those from Israel” and “Israel” only emerges at later points in the argument (cf. Rom 9:24–29; 11:1–7).

⁴¹ Similarly, Robert B. Foster, *Renaming Abraham’s Children: Election, Ethnicity, and the Interpretation of Scripture in Romans 9*, WUNT (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 118; Schreiner, *Romans*, 484; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 560–61; Calvin, *Romans*, 346; Linebaugh, “Not the End,” 152; Heikki Räisänen, *The Idea of Divine Hardening: A Comparative Study of the Notion of Divine Hardening, Leading Astray and Inciting to Evil in the Bible and the Qur’ān*, Publications of the Finnish Exegetical Society 25 (Helsinki, Finland: Kirjapaino Oy Savo, 1972), 79–80.

⁴² Wolter correctly notes that the “promise” of Rom 9:8 should not be conflated with the “promise” in Rom 4. Wolter, “God’s Faithfulness,” 34–35.

⁴³ While Thielman rightly recognizes that “Paul’s point at the most immediate level of Rom 9:6–9 is that out of Israel God calls some and not others to be his people,” I am unconvinced by his assertion that these verses “show that God’s choice to include Gentiles within a newly constituted Israel is not as inconsistent with scripture as it as [*sic.*] first seems.” Frank Thielman, “Unexpected Mercy: Echoes of a Biblical Motif in Romans 9–11,” *SJT* 47 (1994): 178–80. While he does bring in the issue of Gentile inclusion in Rom 9:24, it seems unlikely that Paul is already addressing the inclusion of the Gentiles in Rom 9:6–9.

⁴⁴ Both the argument in Rom 9:6–9 and the texts cited by Paul undermine Abasciano’s claim that faith is the basis by which one becomes part of the “children of promise.” Brian J. Abasciano, *Paul’s Use of the Old Testament in Romans 9.1-9*, LNTS (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 197. First, in Gen 17 and 18, God’s promise was granted to those who did not initially respond with faith. So for instance, YHWH

Jacob, for God's choice of Jacob over Esau demonstrates that election does not depend upon human ancestry or human agency of any kind.⁴⁵

After exploring the implications of God's choice of Isaac and Jacob, Paul anticipates an objection to his teaching: if God does not discriminate between persons on the basis of factors such as ancestry or agency, would that not render him unjust? Rather than retreat from his affirmation of unconditional election, Paul goes further and introduces the notion of DRA as part of his defense of God's righteousness:

What will we say therefore? Is there unrighteousness with God? Of course not! For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy upon whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion upon whom I have compassion." So then, [it is] not of the one who wills nor of the one who runs, but [it is] of the God who exercises mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "I raised you up for this very purpose, so that I might show my power in you and so that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth!" Therefore then, he has mercy upon whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.⁴⁶ (Rom 9:14–18)

affirms his promise to Sarah *despite* her laughter *and* her denial at the very end of her interaction with God (Gen 18:15). Thus, Seifrid correctly says, "In defining 'promise' by appeal to God's announcement to Abraham, Paul again discerns the pattern (or type) of God's saving dealings: in the face of human unbelief—Sarah's laughter—the word announces that which is humanly impossible and creates a faith that waits for the time of fulfillment." Seifrid, "Romans," 640. Second, so far from seeing Isaac's faith as the grounds of the promise, Paul argues that it was the very word of promise that gave rise to Isaac's birth (similarly, John Piper, *The Justification of God: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Romans 9:1-23*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1993), 69; Foster, *Renaming Abraham's Children*, 134; Gaventa, "Calling-Into-Being," 261; Barclay, "The Golden Calf," 99). As such, though Abasciano is theologically correct to identify the "children of promise" with those who have faith, Paul's argument in Rom 9 suggests that God's word of promise is itself what creates believing individuals (so also Piper, *Justification of God*, 69–70). For similar interpretations of the relationship between election and faith in Rom 9, see Schreiner, *Romans*, 489–90; Moo, *Romans*, 603–4, 608.

⁴⁵ See Linebaugh, "Not the End," 152–53; Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 530–31; Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 355; Belli, *Argumentation*, 53, 80–82; Piper, *Justification of God*, 52; Calvin, *Romans*, 347–53; Moo, *Romans*, 598–604; Wolter, "God's Faithfulness," 35–36; Peterson, *Romans*, 356; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 562; Seifrid, "Romans," 640; Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 549. Some argue Rom 9:10–13 demonstrates that God's election does not depend upon human ancestry or agency while denying that these verses refer to election to salvation (see Cranfield, *Romans 9–16*, 478–79; Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 244–45).

⁴⁶ Abasciano (*Old Testament in Romans 9.10-18*, 203–10) suggests that hardening consists of an "external" act of God that psychologically provokes people towards obstinacy. In particular, he claims that hardening in Rom 9–11 refers to "God's sovereign act of making elect status conditional on faith in Christ apart from works or ancestry" (205). This description of hardening is far from convincing. First, while he is correct to see Pharaoh's hardening as paradigmatic for Paul, Abasciano's reading of hardening in the Exodus story is unpersuasive. According to Abasciano, God's influence upon Pharaoh was

In a seemingly counter-intuitive move, Paul alludes to the hardening of Pharaoh's heart as part of his defense of God's righteousness in 9:14–18.⁴⁷ Here, Paul emphatically denies

retributive and mainly indirect; on the contrary, a straightforward reading of Exod 3–14 suggests that the hardening of Pharaoh's heart represents an immediate, non-retributive form of DRA (see my discussion of Pharaoh's hardening in chap. 3, s.v. "DRA in Exodus"). Second, Abasciano himself concedes that "at other times, YHWH does seem to directly and supernaturally infuse boldness into the heart of Pharaoh" (139n247). Thus, even granting Abasciano's reading of hardening in Exodus, Paul could have referred to Pharaoh's hardening in order to speak of a form of direct divine influence as opposed to some "external" act of God. Third, Abasciano's definition of hardening does not comport with Paul's actual language about hardening and DRA in Rom 9–11. On Abasciano's terms, hardening is more a psychological byproduct of divine action rather than an act of God. In other words, divine hardening is more akin to a psychological mind game: God takes certain actions anticipating (though not ensuring) that they will provoke a negative response from some person(s). But Paul does not talk about hardening this way. Far from viewing it as a byproduct, Paul (and the author of Exodus) speaks about hardening as an act of God by which he effectually stunts a person's ability to take a proper course of action. So in Rom 11:8–10, Paul says God hardened Israel by giving them "a spirit of stupor, eyes not to see and ears not to hear." This description simply does not fit Abasciano's idea of hardening as a byproduct of an "external" act of God. Fourth, Abasciano's argument does not make sense of the objection Paul addresses in Rom 9:19, nor does it suit the answer given in vv. 20–23. If Paul was talking about God changing the stipulations for election, then it would be clear why God found fault with Israel: the nation opposed God's will by refusing to abide by the new covenant stipulations! Moreover, the metaphor of a potter fashioning pots for honor and dishonor is ill-suited for describing an "external" act of God which provoked a negative, independently-generated human response. Fifth, to maintain his definition of hardening, Abasciano must insert the notion of faith as the basis of election into the argument in Rom 9:10–14. But despite his arguments to the contrary, the claim that "individual Christians are elected as a consequence of their identification with Christ through faith" (*Old Testament in Romans 9.10–18*, 62) completely misrepresents Paul's meaning. Rightly, Foster, *Renaming Abraham's Children*, 149n97. Sixth, Abasciano's definition of hardening rests on a faulty understanding of the relationship between corporate election and the election of individuals (for more convincing treatments of the relationship between individual and corporate election, see Schreiner, "Corporate and Individual Election," 373–86; Venema, "Corporate or Individual Election," 48–53). Seventh, according to Abasciano, God set new conditions for entry into elect status partly in order to "bring judgment upon Israel for the very ethnocentrism, pride and self-reliance that would lead them to establish their own righteousness." Abasciano, *Old Testament in Romans 9.10–18*, 209. This seems to make the contents of the gospel accidental as opposed to intrinsically necessary. In other words, if Abasciano is correct, then it is unclear whether there exists any intrinsic reason why salvation has to be grounded in faith in Christ. This is a radical suggestion that seems contrary to the tenor of the NT. Lastly, Abasciano fails to account for the fact that the gospel is offensive *not only* to Jews *but also* to Gentiles. Abasciano overlooks the numerous NT texts that show Gentile offense at the gospel (cf. Acts 14:8–23, 16:19–24, 17:16–32, 19:23–34, 26:24; 1 Cor 1:18; 2 Cor 4:3–4). If Abasciano is correct that God changed the conditions of covenant membership specifically in order to "harden" the Jews, then why did he establish terms that are also odious to Gentiles? As all these reasons suggest, Abasciano's reformulation of divine hardening in Rom 9–11 should be rejected. For more compelling descriptions of hardening, see Piper, *Justification of God*, 175–78; Moo, *Romans*, 617; Schreiner, *Romans*, 500; G. K. Beale, "An Exegetical and Theological Consideration of the Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart in Exodus 4-14 and Romans 9," *TJ* 5, no. 2 (1984): 149–51.

⁴⁷ Though Paul does not quote a hardening passage in 9:17, the inference he draws in 9:18 clearly alludes to the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. As to why Paul quoted Exod 9:16 instead of a verse that mentions hardening, Moo is probably correct when he says, "Of particular importance in the quotation is

that God's freedom in election and rejection entails any unrighteousness on God's part (cf. 9:6–13).⁴⁸ He grounds this denial by first appealing to YHWH's declaration to Moses that "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I have compassion" (Rom 9:15).⁴⁹ From this citation, Paul infers that no one is chosen to be included among the "children of God" (cf. Rom 9:6–13) or is made a recipient of divine compassion (cf. Rom 9:15) on the basis of any form of human agency⁵⁰; instead, it

the purpose of God's raising Pharaoh up. . . . Indeed, this purpose clause is probably the reason that Paul has cited this particular text." Moo, *Romans*, 615.

⁴⁸ In my judgment, Wallace's reading of Rom 9:6–13 is significantly flawed. The problems emerge from the beginning when he reads v. 6 as Paul's response to the insinuation that God had done a poor job in choosing Israel. This leads him to conclude that vv. 6–18 are a defense of the merciful nature of God in election. However, while the text undoubtedly highlights God's mercy, the point of the passage is to assert God's freedom in determining to whom he shows mercy *and* to whom he shows hostility. Furthermore, Wallace reads concerns into the text that seem absent. I will provide just two examples. First, Wallace claims that Rom 9:12–13 demonstrates that God desires humble service from both Jacob and Esau, as the latter "[was] to serve Yahweh by honoring God's choice of Jacob." David R. Wallace, *Election of the Lesser Son: Paul's Lament-Midrash in Romans 9–11* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 72. On the contrary, the text is explicit that God subjugated Esau to Jacob because he hated him. Moreover, Paul does not actually discuss God's desire for humility anywhere in Rom 9. Second, Wallace foists a foreign notion into his interpretation of Rom 9:6 when he claims that Paul here "explains 'Israel' not in terms of ethnicity but in relation to faith" (64). However, Paul makes no mention of faith in Rom 9:6–13, and as such, he cannot be said to be explaining Israel's identity in relation to faith.

⁴⁹ Scholars provide different explanations for the logic behind Paul's rebuttal of the charge of unrighteousness in v. 14. In my judgment, Paul's argument is in essence an appeal to authority that rests on two hidden premises which he expected his original readers to accept: namely, (1) whatever the OT teaches about YHWH is true, and (2) whatever YHWH does (or claims to do) is unquestionably righteous. On the basis of these premises, Paul countered the accusation by demonstrating that the OT portrays YHWH as attesting to his own sovereign freedom to show mercy to whomever he pleases. Thus, if the charge of unrighteousness was to stand, the hypothetical objector would have to either deny the truthfulness of the OT or claim that the God of the OT was unrighteous (for similar appraisals of the argument, see Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 253; Calvin, *Romans*, 356; Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, new ed. [New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1882], 491). Piper rejects this characterization of the argument by posing the rhetorical question: "Do we not expect [Paul] to use [the OT] to render more intelligible his denial of the conclusion that God is unrighteous, rather than using it to offer an authoritative repetition of the stumbling block?" Piper, *Justification of God*, 99–100. However, it is unclear why Paul should not be expected to argue from the authority of the OT; after all, an appeal to authority is a legitimate form of argumentation (see T. Ryan Byerly, *Introducing Logic and Critical Thinking: The Skills of Reasoning and the Virtues of Inquiry* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017], 124–32). Moreover, Rom 9:19–23 shows that Paul was not opposed to using an "authoritative repetition of the stumbling block" to conclude an argument.

⁵⁰ As Thielman states regarding Rom 9:16, "Nothing that originates from the human side, whether desire or effort, influences God's decision to show mercy to some and not others." Thielman,

all depends upon “the God who has mercy” (Rom 9:16).⁵¹ In addition, Paul upholds the righteousness of God by quoting YHWH’s speech to Pharaoh in Exodus 9:16⁵²: “For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, ‘For this very reason I raised you up, so that I might show my power in you and so that my name might be proclaimed in all the Earth’” (Rom 9:17).⁵³ To Paul, the divine speeches to Moses and to Pharaoh demonstrate God’s supremacy over man’s destiny⁵⁴: because YHWH (1) tells Moses that he has mercy on whom⁵⁵ he pleases (Rom 9:15; cf. Exod 33:19), and because he (2) says to Pharaoh that he was raised up specifically to be destroyed (Rom 9:17; cf. Exod 9:16), Paul deduces the general principle that “[God] has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills” (Rom 9:18).⁵⁶ In other words, Paul rebuts the charge of unrighteousness (cf. 9:14)

Romans, 456. Dunn is also correct to observe that “Paul does not disparage ‘willing’ and ‘running’; willing and running are, of course, part of the human response to God. But they are not factors in election.” Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 553.

⁵¹ The subject of Rom 9:16 is unstated. Eastman takes the subject to be God’s purpose of election. See Susan Grove Eastman, “Israel and the Mercy of God: A Re-Reading of Galatians 6.16 and Romans 9–11,” *NTS* 56 (2010): 377. Schreiner posits “salvation or God’s merciful promise, which is essentially the same thing.” Schreiner, *Romans*, 497. Given the close relationship between election, membership among God’s covenant people, salvation, God’s merciful promise, etc., perhaps Dunn is correct to say that “the genitive formulation . . . should be left vague in translation.” Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 552.

⁵² Moo is probably correct that vv. 17–18 function as “a second reason to reject the accusation that God is unjust” Moo, *Romans*, 614. However, it is also possible that they explicate the principle in v. 16.

⁵³ Kujanpää rightly notes that Paul’s quotation of Exod 9:16 functions to add “vividness and drama to the argument.” Katja Kujanpää, “From Eloquence to Evading Responsibility: The Rhetorical Functions of Quotations in Paul’s Argumentation,” *JBL* 136, no. 1 (2017): 190.

⁵⁴ Sanday and Headlam are correct when they state that, in Rom 9:15–18, Paul is “distinctly dealing with individuals and lays down the principle that God’s grace does not necessarily depend upon anything but God’s will.” Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 254–55. Moreover, they rightly detect that Paul uses Moses and Pharaoh as “examples of [God’s] dealings with the two main classes of mankind” (255).

⁵⁵ Schreiner is right to note that the singular relative pronouns in Rom 9:15 and 18 suggest that Paul is speaking of individual election. See Thomas R. Schreiner, “Does Romans 9 Teach Individual Election unto Salvation? Some Exegetical and Theological Reflections,” *JETS* 36, no. 1 (1993): 34.

⁵⁶ The two relative pronouns in Rom 9:18 (as well as in 9:15) are best understood to have indefinite antecedents (for discussions on the indefinite use of ὅς, see A. T. Robertson and W. Hersey

by appealing to Scripture's own witness to God's sovereign freedom,⁵⁷ even while he implicitly provides another line of evidence that Israel's unbelief has not undermined God's fidelity to his Word (cf. 9:6b).

At this point, Paul preemptively confronts another objection that could be raised against his teaching; namely, if God does harden whomever he chooses, then he has no right to hold people responsible for their actions (Rom 9:19).⁵⁸ But instead of softening his claims or digressing into a philosophical discussion regarding the interplay between divine and human agency, Paul goes on the offensive against his imaginary objector and reasserts in the strongest terms that God has the right to do with all men as he sees fit:

On the contrary, O man, who are you who answers back to God? Will what is molded say to the one who molds, "why did you make me this way?" Or does the potter of the clay have no authority to make from the same lump a vessel for honor on the one hand and a vessel for dishonor on the other?⁵⁹ Now if God bore with

Davis, *A New Short Grammar of the Greek Testament*, 10th ed. [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977], 323–24; F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. Robert W. Funk [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961], 152–53). In other words, Paul uses the relative clauses to make the general statement that God is free to decide who will be the objects of his mercy and the objects of his reprobating influence. Thus, Linebaugh is correct to conclude, "Here, as in the contrast between love and hate in the Jacob and Esau narrative, the difference between mercy and hardening is reducible to the sheer fact that 'God wills.'" Linebaugh, "Not an End," 155.

⁵⁷ It is unlikely that Cranfield is correct when he claims that v. 15–18 testifies solely to God's freedom to have mercy (see Cranfield, *Romans 9–16*, 471–72). Such a reading fails to account for the place afforded to the example of Pharaoh. After all, is there any evidence to suggest that Paul understood Pharaoh to have finally been a recipient of divine mercy? As such, Rom 9:17–18 (and 9:21–22) should be understood to assert God's liberty to harden those upon whom he has chosen not to have mercy.

⁵⁸ Shellrudes denies that Rom 9:19–23 refers to predestination; instead, he believes that the text means that "God is not under obligation to ensure that Israel recognizes the time of fulfillment." Glen Shellrude, "The Freedom of God in Mercy and Judgment: A Libertarian Reading of Romans 9:6–29," *EvQ* 81, no. 4 (2009): 314–16. However, his reading is unpersuasive because it fails to provide a fitting answer to the objection in v. 19, in which a question is raised about how God can hold accountable those who are unable to resist his will.

⁵⁹ Scholars have tried to identify which OT texts influenced Paul's use of the potter metaphor in Rom 9:21. It seems best to conclude with Käsemann that the metaphor "comes from a broad OT tradition" which "Paul develops . . . in his own way." Käsemann, *Romans*, 269. See also Moo, *Romans*, 623; Cranfield, *Romans 9–16*, 492.

much patience vessels of wrath⁶⁰ fashioned for destruction,⁶¹ because he desired⁶² to show wrath and to make known his power and so that he might make known the

⁶⁰ Different suggestions have been forwarded with regard to the referent of the term “vessels of wrath.” Wright suggests that the vessels of wrath refer to God’s elect people as they live out the pattern of election and rejection established by their Messiah (see Wright, *Paul and Faithfulness of God*, 1190–93); however, such a reading is far from obvious since v. 24 identifies the “vessels of mercy” with Jewish and Gentile believers, and since the text makes a sharp distinction between the two types of vessels. Moreover, Wright’s overall concept of the “messianic shaping” of Israel’s destiny has been rightly criticized (see especially Janghoon Park, “A Neglected Area of Critical Attention in N. T. Wright’s Perspective on Paul,” *신약연구* 15, no. 1 [2016]: 242–57). Meanwhile, Eastman posits that Pharaoh is the “vessel of wrath,” though she does not explain why Paul speaks of vessels in the plural rather than in the singular (see Eastman, “Israel and Mercy of God,” 378). On the other hand, Cosgrove contends that Paul is speaking hypothetically in 9:22ff and as such, readers may doubt whether God has actually made any to be vessels of wrath. Charles H. Cosgrove, “Rhetorical Suspense in Romans 9–11: A Study in Polyvalence and Hermeneutical Election,” *JBL* 115, no. 2 (1996): 281; however, such a reading flounders since the relative clause in v. 24 demonstrates that the expression “vessels of mercy” has a real referent. Belli evades the question by claiming that the text is more concerned with “God’s acting and the criteria with which he acts.” Belli, *Argumentation*, 103. In contrast to these various approaches, I agree with Käsemann when he says, “When vessels of wrath and mercy are mentioned they refer to specific groups, although the statement is still general. In concrete application the first reference is to unbelieving Jews, even if Gentiles are substantively included.” Käsemann, *Romans*, 270.

⁶¹ Ryliškytė argues that the verb *κατηρτισμένα* should be understood as being in the middle voice; thus, she claims that the “vessels of wrath” are those who have made themselves fit for destruction. Ligita Ryliškytė, “God’s Mercy: The Key Thematic Undercurrent of Paul’s Letter to the Romans,” *CBQ* 81 (2019): 97. She argues that the contrast between the voice of *κατηρτισμένα* and that of *προητοίμασεν* only makes sense if God is not the agent responsible for the former (similarly, Shellrude, “Freedom of God,” 315). Moreover, she also posits that this reading is more consistent with God’s activity described in Rom 1:18–32. However, neither of her arguments are compelling. First of all, to read *κατηρτισμένα* as a middle is to violate the analogy that Paul is using. The very point of comparing the “reprobate” to pots and to vessels is to highlight God’s sovereign freedom in shaping them for his own purposes. Thus, to read the passage as a testimony to human self-determination would shatter the metaphor. Second, there is little evidence that *κατηρτισμένα* and *προητοίμασεν* were intended to be so sharply contrasted. The mere choice of two different verbal forms is no indication of a contrast, as authors may choose to use different verbs and verb forms for stylistic reasons. Third, in order to read Rom 9:20–23 in light of Rom 1:18–32, one must assume that the two passages refer to the same form of DRA. However, a comparison of the two passages reveals that they likely testify to different divine activities. To quickly highlight just four key differences, (1) Rom 1:18–32 and Rom 9:20–23 do not use the same vocabulary (*παράδιδωμι* vs. *ποιέω/καταρτίζω*) or sets of metaphors (imprisonment vs. pottery) to describe DRA; (2) Rom 1:18–32 refers to a form of DRA that is directed towards all humanity, while Rom 9:20–23 distinguishes between a group subjected to DRA (i.e., vessels of wrath) and a group that is not subjected (i.e., the vessels of mercy); (3) Rom 1:18–32 speaks of a form of DRA that has human corruption as its intended punishment, while Rom 9:20–23 refers to DRA that directs individuals towards (eternal) destruction; and (4) in Rom 1:18–32, DRA is clearly an act of retribution against the sin of idolatry, while Rom 9:20–23 makes no mention of any sins which might have provoked God’s reprobating agency. For these reasons, DRA in Rom 1:18–32 should not be determinative for the interpretation of DRA in Rom 9:20–23.

⁶² Though some have interpreted the participle *θέλων* to be concessive (see Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 261), the context strongly suggests a causal reading. So also Schreiner, *Romans*, 507; Moo, *Romans*, 625; Piper, *Justification of God*, 187; Cranfield, *Romans 9–16*, 494.

riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy which he prepared beforehand for glory, [then what of it?].⁶³ (Rom 9:20–23)⁶⁴

In these verses, Paul asserts that God has the right to both harden persons while holding them accountable simply because he is man's maker. In the same way that a jar has no right to complain about how it has been fashioned, human beings have no right to complain about God's predestining work⁶⁵; instead, God is fully justified when he creates

⁶³ I agree with Schreiner's analysis of the syntax of 9:22–23. He argues that the verse contains an anacoluthon and that the apodosis is implied. As he says, "The unstated apodosis is probably summarized well in the words, 'he has the right to do this.'" Schreiner, *Romans*, 507. For similar readings, see Moo, *Romans*, 624; Craig A. Evans, "Paul and the Hermeneutics of 'True Prophecy': A Study of Romans 9–11," *Bib* 65, no. 4 (1984): 563; Calvin, *Romans*, 367; Käsemann, *Romans*, 270; Piper, *Justification of God*, 205–6; Gaventa, "Calling-into-Being," 266; Belli, *Argumentation*, 55.

⁶⁴ Seifrid is correct to argue that Rom 9:20–23 is focused on the eschatological fate of individuals. As he states, "[Paul's] interest remains fixed on individuals. His subsequent shift to the plural 'vessels' (9:23) shows that his use of the singular in 9:21 is specific, not generic. As the following context indicates, 'honor' and 'dishonor' (or 'infamy, shame') reflect, respectively, salvation and judgment." Seifrid, "Romans," 645. This observation undermines his later assertion that "Paul does not identify God with a hidden election of some to destruction and some to glory" (646). For an important defense of individual election in Rom 9, see Schreiner, "Romans 9," 33–40.

⁶⁵ Oropeza attempts to refute this interpretation of Rom 9:22–23 (see B. J. Oropeza, "Paul and Theodicy: Intertextual Thoughts on God's Justice and Faithfulness to Israel in Romans 9–11," *NTS* 53 [2007]: 70–73). First, he claims that Rom 9:22–23 cannot be describing double predestination because "potters do not (and cannot afford to) make vessels simply to destroy them" (70n40). Second, he contends that these verses echo Wis 12:12, which then suggests that God's patience is intended to lead the vessels of wrath to repentance (cf. Rom 2:4–5). Third, he speculates that Paul probably thought of himself as a vessel of wrath who nevertheless became a vessel of mercy. Fourth, he claims that Rom 9:22–23 refer to corporate entities rather than individuals. Finally, Oropeza entertains an intertextual relationship between Rom 9:22–23 and Isa 54:7–17, which he takes to suggest that the former passage refers to God's commitment to have mercy on Israel. None of these points stand up under scrutiny. First, Oropeza takes an overly rigid approach to metaphors that would create innumerable problems were it applied to the rest of the letter (e.g., believers cannot have died to the law to be married to Christ since dead persons do not marry [Rom 7:3–4], the liberation of creation cannot be compared to childbirth since birthing did not set slaves free in Roman society [Rom 8:18–22], humans cannot be compared to pots because pots cannot speak [Rom 9:19–20], etc.). Second, there is little textual evidence for an echo to Wis 12:12. Moreover, even if one were to grant such an intertextual connection, Oropeza's conclusion would still be unjustified since he fails to consider that Paul could allude to texts in order to refute them. In fact, some scholars have argued that Paul does just that in Rom 1:18–32 (see for instance Watson, *Hermeneutics of Faith*, 371–78). Third, Oropeza fallaciously assumes that Paul could only refer *either* to corporate entities or to the individuals that compose them; on the contrary, interpreters do not need to choose between the two (rightly Schreiner, "Corporate and Individual Election," 375–86; Venema, "Corporate or Individual Election," 48–53; Moo, *Romans*, 572). Lastly, Oropeza bases his argument on premises that even he tacitly acknowledges are speculative. For instance, Oropeza's evidence for a connection with Isa 54 is rather weak (which may be why he says Paul was "perhaps" influenced by Isa 54); moreover, he provides no evidence for his claim that Paul "probably" would have thought of himself as a vessel of wrath. Such flimsy contentions provide

some men to be recipients of his saving mercy and others to be the recipients of his just wrath.⁶⁶

Good reasons exist for understanding both divine hardening (Rom 9:17–18) and the fashioning of vessels of wrath (Rom 9:20–23) as examples of DRA.⁶⁷ First of all, it seems evident that in both cases, God’s activity leads to the destruction of those divinely rejected. The allusion to the fate of Pharaoh makes this point clear (cf. Rom

little warrant for overturning what seems to be the plain meaning of the text.

⁶⁶ Despite pointing out that “at first glance Rom 9:22ff. suggests that Paul does indeed assert the election of some human beings for temporary use and then destruction, the election of others for mercy and ultimate salvation,” Cosgrove goes on to suggest that Rom 9:22–24 could be understood hypothetically: by reading Rom 9:22ff in connection with Rom 11:11–32, one may choose to conclude that the former passage speaks only of what God has the right to do and not of what God actually does (Cosgrove, “Rhetorical Suspense,” 271, 281–82). Despite his arguments, Cosgrove’s initial impression of Rom 9:22ff seems more accurate than his final assessment. As he himself notes, the immediate context surrounding Rom 9:22ff suggests that “Paul meant his ‘what if’ as an ‘indeed’” (281). After all, Paul had just discussed the case of Pharaoh, who seems to be a historical example of the kind of activity under consideration in Rom 9:22–23. Moreover, Paul certainly understood the “vessels of mercy” to refer to real people (cf. Rom 9:24). Lastly, Cosgrove overplays the tension between Rom 9:22–24 and Rom 11:26 because he does not consider that the two passages may describe Israel at different points in time. Together, these passages indicate that Paul believed the vast majority of Israelites would be consigned to wrath *until* the mission to the Gentiles was fulfilled; then, once the full number of Gentiles had been called, the Israelites of that day would no longer be subjected to divine hardening (so also Schreiner, *Romans*, 500).

⁶⁷ While Rom 9:17–23 suggests a relationship between “hardening” (Rom 9:18) and “making”/“fashioning” vessels of dishonor/wrath (Rom 9:21–22), the two do not seem to refer to the same divine activity. On the one hand, the allusion to Pharaoh’s own experience of hardening suggests that the former involves a kind of divine influence impacting a person during their lifetime. On the other hand, Paul’s use of the potter metaphor may imply that the latter refers to an influence exercised prior to the creation of the reprobate that predetermines the overall course of their life (contra Seifrid, “Romans,” 646). While Paul does not explicitly elaborate upon the nature of their relationship, Rom 9:17–23 may hint at how “hardening” and “fashioning” function together. In v. 17, Paul refers to God’s decision to raise Pharaoh up in order to show his power in him (ἐξήγειρά σε ὅπως ἐνδείξωμαι ἐν σοὶ τὴν δύναμίν μου); then, Paul later says that he bore with vessels “prepared for destruction” (κατηρτισμένα εἰς ἀπώλειαν) because “[he] desired to show his wrath and make known his power” (θέλων ὁ θεὸς ἐνδείξασθαι τὴν ὀργὴν καὶ γνωρίσαι τὸ δυνατὸν αὐτοῦ; Rom 9:22a). In both passages, Paul seems to allude to a “creative” act (i.e., ἐξήγειρά σε and κατηρτισμένα εἰς ἀπώλειαν) motivated by God’s desire to display his power. As such, it may be the case that Paul is referring to the same divine activity in v. 17 as he is in vv. 21–22; in other words, God’s act of “raising up” Pharaoh could perhaps also be described as the Lord “fashioning” him to serve as a “vessel of wrath.” Furthermore, since hardening seems to follow God’s prior decision to “raise up” Pharaoh for the purpose of destroying him (Rom 9:17–18), it seems plausible that divine hardening logically proceeds from the prior act of “raising up”/“making”/“fashioning” for destruction. If this is the case, one may perhaps conclude that hardening functions as a means by which God fulfills his creative decision to “raise up”/“make”/“fashion” a person for destruction.

9:17), as does Paul’s language in Romans 9:20–22 wherein he speaks of God’s wrath and of the destruction of the reprobated vessels.⁶⁸ But in addition, the language of “hardening” and of “fashioning vessels of dishonor/wrath” likely refer to divine influences that lead persons to commit the sins for which they are later destroyed. So on the one hand, Moo rightly observes that “the word group ‘harden’ is consistently used in Scripture to depict a spiritual condition that renders one unreceptive and disobedient to God and his word.”⁶⁹ Moreover, the example of Pharaoh in the Exodus story suggests that Paul conceived of hardening as a divine influence leading first to sin and then to destruction.⁷⁰ Furthermore, in Romans 11:7–11, Paul posits that hardening (πωρόω) prevented Israel from attaining righteousness (cf. Rom 9:30–31) and served to bring about their “transgression” (παράπτωμα). These clues all suggest that divine hardening in Romans 9:18 involves a form of influence that leads to unrighteous behavior.⁷¹ On the other hand, the “making”/“fashioning” imagery in 9:20–23 also seems to refer to a divine influence that leads to sin.⁷² The invocation of God’s patience towards the “vessels of wrath” suggests that they provoked God’s displeasure,⁷³ which implies sinful behavior on

⁶⁸ Dixon correctly notes that “σκέυη ὀργῆς describes recipients of wrath rather than mere instruments of wrath.” Dixon, “Judgment for Israel,” 575n54.

⁶⁹ Moo, *Romans*, 616.

⁷⁰ See my discussion of hardening in the Exodus story in chap. 3, s.v. “DRA in Exodus.”

⁷¹ Wright is unpersuasive when he argues that hardening “is what happens when otherwise immediate judgment is postponed but people do not avail themselves of the change to repent and believe.” N. T. Wright, “The Letter to the Romans: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in vol. 10 of *The New Interpreter’s Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 688. For a helpful critique of Wright’s definition of hardening, see Park, “Neglected Area,” 250–54.

⁷² Contra Sanday and Headlam, the δέ in v. 22 does not signal a “change of thought.” Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 261. On the contrary, the similar imagery throughout vv. 20–23 suggests that the conjunction indicates a development *within* the argument (for this use of δέ, see Steven E. Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010], 31).

⁷³ As Käsemann rightly points out, readers should not posit an antithetical relationship between God’s wrath and his patience in vv. 22–23. On the contrary, v. 17 already foreshadows how God’s patience

their part. Moreover, given Paul's teaching elsewhere, it seems implausible that the apostle conceived of God pouring out his wrath upon the innocent; instead, since Paul portrays God's wrath as a response to human sin in Romans 1:18–2:11, it is more likely that Paul envisioned the "vessels of wrath" being destroyed on account of the sins which God "fashioned" them to commit.⁷⁴ For these reasons, it seems warranted to conclude that Romans 9:20–23 metaphorically describes forms of divine influence by which God leads people to unrepentant sin,⁷⁵ thereby predestining them to destruction.

What can be said about DRA in these verses?⁷⁶ While it seems evident that Paul attests to immediate and active DRA,⁷⁷ two questions require more detailed attention. First, is DRA here presented as an act of retribution?⁷⁸ Second, is eternal punishment presented as the outcome of DRA? I proceed by addressing each question in turn.

and his wrath work together to demonstrate his power in judgment. See Käsemann, *Romans*, 270–71.

⁷⁴ This does not mean that the "fashioning" must itself be a response to human sinfulness; as I argue below, DRA in Rom 9:6–24 is best understood as being non-retributive. Moreover, it is worth noticing that Paul does not describe the "fashioning" as itself being motivated by divine wrath.

⁷⁵ Baur is correct to say that "[Paul] does not hesitate to ascribe [Israel's] disobedience not merely to a permission, but to an ordinance, of God." Baur, *Paul the Apostle*, 2:264.

⁷⁶ Though Rom 9:17–22 seems to suggest at least two different kinds of reprobating agencies (i.e., "hardening" and "raising up"/"making"/"fashioning"), the differences between the two do not relate to the fourfold grid that I have used to classify forms of DRA. As such, I treat both forms together in my exploration of the characterization of DRA in Rom 9:17–23.

⁷⁷ In Rom 9:17–23, Paul repeatedly refers to active, transitive verbs to depict God's reprobating activity (i.e., ἐξήγειρά, "I raised up"; σκληρύνει, "He hardens"; ἐποίησας, "You made"). Furthermore, the only passive verb used (κατηρτισμένα) is likely a divine passive, which thus implies an act of God that takes an object (i.e., the "vessels of wrath"). Thus, the text favors an active interpretation of DRA (rightly Park, "Neglected Area," 253–54). In addition, Paul mentions no mediating agents that come between God and the objects of his reprobating influence; instead, he repeatedly describes God as acting directly upon individuals to lead them towards sin and judgment. For this reason, it seems best to interpret the passage as bearing witness to immediate DRA.

⁷⁸ As argued for instance by Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 568; Oropeza, "Paul and Theodicy," 66; Abasciano, *Old Testament in Romans 9.10–18*, 216–19; Thielman, *Romans*, 469.

With respect to the first question, at least four observations make it unlikely that Paul depicts hardening or making/fashioning vessels of dishonor/wrath to be acts of retribution. First, because Romans 9:6–24 repeatedly stresses God’s freedom to act apart from any considerations of human merits or behaviors,⁷⁹ the overall context favors seeing non-retributive DRA behind the hardening of Romans 9:18 and the preparation of vessels of wrath in Romans 9:21–22 (cf. Rom 9:17). To begin with, Romans 9:6–13 clarifies that membership in God’s covenant people does not finally depend upon human ancestry or human agency⁸⁰; instead, it depends ultimately on God’s free decision.⁸¹ Thus, according to verses 6–13, Israel’s own prehistory⁸² (as recorded and interpreted in the Scriptures) demonstrates that membership within the people of God is due to divine election and is not finally dependent upon anything outside of God’s own purposes.⁸³ Furthermore, as he

⁷⁹ As Foster correctly points out, Rom 9:6–24 bears a “monergistic emphasis.” Foster, *Renaming Abraham’s Children*, 187n5.

⁸⁰ Shellrude disputes this reading and argues instead that Rom 9:6b–13 only makes the point that divine election is based on grace and not on obligation. Thus, while the passage teaches that “God is free to bypass unbelieving Israel and establish a new community from those who have responded to his gracious initiative” (Shellrude, “Freedom of God,” 310–11), it also allows readers to assume that election takes into account a person’s response to the gospel. While it is true that Paul did not believe God was obliged to elect anyone to salvation, that observation misses the point of the text. In Rom 9:6–13, Paul does not merely say that God is not obliged to elect those who respond to his gracious initiative; instead, the apostle highlights the fact that human actions or decisions play *no role whatsoever* in determining God’s election—a point made especially clear by the retelling of God’s choice of Jacob over Esau (Rom 9:10–13). Moreover, if Shellrude is correct, then why does Paul also say that evil works were not a factor in God’s choice of Jacob over Esau (cf. Rom 9:11)? After all, it is self-evident that evil-doing would not have placed God under any obligation to favor the one over the other. Thus, it seems much more likely that Paul’s point was that all works, whether good or evil, are excluded from God’s consideration when it comes to the matter of election. And in fact, Paul seems to express this point explicitly in Rom 9:16.

⁸¹ Of course, this is not to deny that the apostle believed faith was necessary for inclusion among God’s people. Paul in fact has emphasized the salvific importance of faith in earlier parts of the letter (Rom 3:21–26; 4:1–12, 23–24), and will again underscore its significance in Rom 10–11. However, it is to say that Paul does not present divine election to be a response to any form of human agency, including faith.

⁸² As Ryliškytė rightly states, “God’s promises have not failed, for God has always worked through sovereign election in Israel’s history.” Ryliškytė, “God’s Mercy,” 93.

⁸³ As Wolter states, “God’s election is always and only God’s antecedent *action* and never *re-action*. . . . It is solely the sovereign initiative of God who decides about who is in and who is out.” Wolter,

responds to a false implication that might be drawn from God's unconditioned election of Jacob,⁸⁴ Paul continues to emphasize God's freedom "to love" or "to hate" apart from considerations of human actions or merits (Rom 9:14–18).⁸⁵ He maintains this focus when he quotes Exodus 33:19 ("For He says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whomever I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I have compassion'")⁸⁶ and when he reaches the conclusion, "So then, [it is] not of the one who wills nor of the one who runs, but [it is] of the God who exercises mercy" (Rom 9:16).⁸⁷ In fact, according to Paul, God's unconstrained freedom expresses itself in both mercy and in hardening.⁸⁸ As illustrated by Pharaoh, whom God raised up for the specific purpose of destroying (Rom 9:17),⁸⁹ the Lord reserves the right to harden whomever he desires (Rom 9:18).⁹⁰ Paul's

"God's Freedom," 35–36. In addition, Eastman rightly explains the rationale behind the objection in v. 14 when she says, "God's choice appears unjust precisely because it occurs without reference to human actions, whether bad or good. Nonetheless, its very arbitrariness serves the divine purpose: 'in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not on the basis of works but on the basis of call.'" Eastman, "Israel and Mercy of God," 377. Also see Linebaugh, "Not the End," 153.

⁸⁴ As Belli explains, "The problem posed [in v. 14] regarding the possible injustice of God comes from the fact of having made a choice between two, Jacob and Esau, according to a criterion of preference." Belli, *Argumentation*, 86–87. See also Schreiner, *Romans*, 495.

⁸⁵ As Foster observes, "Using now the figures of Moses and Pharaoh, [Paul] extends the contrast between Jacob and Esau found in Malachi. While Moses and his ministry affirm God's right to proclaim 'Jacob I have loved,' the case of Pharaoh resumes the divine hostility expressed in 'Esau I have hated.'" Foster, *Renaming Abraham's Children*, 187.

⁸⁶ Schreiner is correct when he says, "The citation of [Exod] 33:19, therefore, represents a principle because it describes the very nature of God, the way he characteristically acts—in sovereign freedom in showing mercy and also withholding it." Schreiner, *Romans*, 496.

⁸⁷ According to Luther, "This does not mean that God's mercy altogether excludes our willing or running. But the words mean: the fact that a person wills and runs, he owes not to his own strength, but to the mercy of God; for it is He who gives us the power to will and to do." Luther, *Romans*, 123–24.

⁸⁸ "God retains the prerogative to act as he sees fit in bringing praise to his name, even to the point of orchestrating human resistance for the sake of his greater glory." Foster, *Renaming Abraham's Children*, 187.

⁸⁹ Rightly Schreiner, *Romans*, 498–99.

⁹⁰ Rightly Moo, *Romans*, 617–18. Though Abasciano concedes that Paul provides no explicit evidence that Pharaoh's hardening was retributive, he argues that "Paul could expect his audience naturally

emphasis on divine freedom then reaches a climax in Romans 9:19–23. Here, the apostle anticipates an objection from a “characteristic individual”⁹¹ to his statements regarding God’s sovereign freedom: “Then you will say to me, ‘Why then does he still find fault? For who has [ever] resisted his will?’” (Rom 9:19).⁹² Had Paul viewed hardening as an act of retribution, this would have been the perfect opportunity for him to provide a

to assume [a retributive view of hardening] without indication from him to the contrary.” Abasciano, *Old Testament in Romans 9.10–18*, 218. In order to support this claim, Abasciano contends that (1) Exodus presents hardening to be conditional, (2) early Christian tradition uniformly understood hardening to be retributive, and (3) Paul would have agreed with the early Jewish tradition which also assumed hardening was conditional. See Abasciano, *Old Testament in Romans 9.10–18*, 216–19. However, each of these premises is problematic. To begin with, I have already argued the Exodus story most likely testifies to non-retributive DRA. Second, throughout this dissertation, I have shown that the biblical tradition as a whole and the NT in particular present examples of both retributive and non-retributive DRA. Thus, the “early Christian tradition” is not in fact uniform and there is no *a priori* reason to assume that Paul could only refer to hardening as retributive. Third, it is not true that the Jewish tradition was uniform in its view of the relationship between divine and human agency (see my discussion on divine agency in early Jewish thought in chap. 2, s.v. “Divine and Human Agency”). More to the point, at least some texts from Qumran betray a belief in a strong form of determinism that would be consistent with non-retributive DRA (so also Philip S. Alexander, “Predestination and Free Will in the Theology of the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Divine and Human Agency in Paul and His Cultural Environment*, LNTS 335 [London: T & T Clark, 2006], 27–49). Thus, there is Jewish precedent for the view that God’s acts of election and reprobation are non-retributive. Finally, contrary to Abasciano’s suggestion, Paul gives *every indication* that he disputes a retributive view of divine hardening in Rom 9:6–24. In fact, it is difficult to envision what more Paul could have said to establish the point that election and hardening do not finally depend upon human ancestry or human agency. As such, Dunn’s criticism of the approach Abasciano adopts rings true: “to look for reasons for God’s hardening in Pharaoh’s ‘evil disposition’ or previous self-hardening is a rationalizing expediency Such a thought clearly has no place in Paul’s exposition and in fact contradicts what Paul has been so careful to stress in vv. 11 and 16.” Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 555.

⁹¹ Dunson has classified the different ways Paul speaks of and uses “individuals” in his letter to the Romans. A “characteristic individual” is a “figure who represents a kind of action, or a possible response to Paul’s proclamation. It is a rhetorical tool Paul uses to make certain points about his gospel.” Ben C. Dunson, *Individual and Community in Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, WUNT (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 111. The individual in this case responds to Paul with an irreverent objection rather than with an innocent question (so also Luther, *Romans*, 125; Schreiner, *Romans*, 503; Moo, *Romans*, 619–20).

⁹² Käsemann is probably right to describe ἀνθέστηκεν to be a gnomic perfect. Käsemann *Romans*, 269.

clarification to that effect.⁹³ But instead, the apostle asserts that, as the divine creator,⁹⁴ God has the right to do with all men as he pleases (Rom 9:20–24),⁹⁵ even so far as determining in advance which persons will be recipients of his gracious mercy and which ones will be subjected to his anger.⁹⁶ Thus, given the consistent stress laid on God’s sovereign freedom in Romans 9:6–24 irrespective of human distinctives,⁹⁷ Romans 9:17–23 should be understood as describing non-retributive DRA.⁹⁸

Second, the manner in which Paul quotes Exodus 9:16 also suggests that

⁹³ Moo is especially helpful when he says, “Before analyzing what Paul does say in response to this objection, we do well to note what he does *not* say. He makes no reference to human works or human faith (whether foreseen or not) as the basis for God’s act of hardening. Nor does he defuse the issue by confining God’s hardening only to matters of salvation history; quite the contrary, vv. 22–23 make more explicit than ever that Paul is dealing with questions of eternal destiny.” Moo, *Romans*, 620–21.

⁹⁴ Gaventa correctly highlights that “what drives 9:19–21 is the contention that God is the creator of humanity, that God has the prerogative to do what God wills, and that humanity is not entitled to question God’s designs.” Gaventa, “Calling-Into-Being,” 265. However, she falsely asserts that Rom 9:19–23 “does not suggest that either part of the lump is intended for destruction” (265). Such a claim seems to directly contradict what Paul actually says. Moreover, the utility of the vessels intended for dishonor is no argument against the notion that they are fated for destruction. On the contrary, Rom 9:22–23 suggests that the vessels of wrath are useful precisely because they are made to be destroyed; through these vessels, God displays the glory of his power and grace to a different set of vessels—the vessels of mercy who were made to experience God’s glory as a salutary reality (cf. Rom 5:2; rightly Calvin, *Romans*, 368–69). This argument may (understandably) disturb readers, but it does seem to be the argument Paul actually makes in Rom 9:19–23.

⁹⁵ “God is not merely a functionary who has to execute the nexus of conduct and consequences, but he is God Almighty who has the right to act as he wills without being compelled to give an account to anybody.” Wolter, “God’s Freedom,” 40. See also Calvin, *Romans*, 366; Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 259–60 (though they claim that Paul is speaking of God’s rights hypothetically in vv. 20–21); Abelard, *Romans*, 295–96.

⁹⁶ As Calvin rightly notes regarding the reason why some are elect and others are not, “It is indeed evident that no cause is adduced higher than the will of God.” Calvin, *Romans*, 364. For others who see Rom 9:19–24 as attesting to double predestination, see Foster, *Renaming Abraham’s Children*, 188; Käsemann, *Romans*, 265, 267–72 (though he believes Paul is primarily interested in God’s present, apocalyptic wrath rather than on eternal, eschatological judgment); Baur, *The Apostle Paul*, 258–60; Schreiner, *Romans*, 501–11; Piper, *Justification of God*, 183–216; Moo, *Romans*, 618 (though he offers a few cautionary comments about the doctrine); Beale, “Exegetical and Theological Consideration,” 154.

⁹⁷ This focus on divine sovereignty extends beyond Rom 9:6–24; as Evans notes, “the one unmistakable theme running throughout this section [i.e. Rom 9–11] is the theme of God’s sovereignty.” Evans, “Hermeneutics of ‘True Prophecy,’” 562.

⁹⁸ While Paul’s emphasis throughout Rom 9:6–24 is on divine initiative, even in the matter of

Romans 9:17–23 refers to non-retributive forms of DRA. As others have noted, the initial half of Paul’s quotation departs from the LXX and resembles the MT, though with a more emphatic tone.⁹⁹ In contrast to the LXX, which translates the MT’s *העמדתך* (“I raised you up”) with *διετηρήθης* (“you were preserved”), Paul employs *ἐξήγειρά σε* (“I raised you up”). Both the context and the apostle’s translation suggest that he was speaking about YHWH’s action of causing Pharaoh to occupy his role in history,¹⁰⁰ not to the preservation of his life.¹⁰¹ Thus, in keeping more with the MT, Paul emphasizes that

hardening, it would be unwarranted to conclude on this basis that the apostle denied the significance of human responsibility (rightly Baur, *Paul the Apostle*, 2:58–60). To do so, one would have to dismiss the emphasis on moral responsibility that permeates the letter as a whole. Moreover, Schreiner is correct to note that Rom 9:19–24 itself attests to God’s ability to hold people responsible for their actions. As he states, “How should we interpret Paul’s response to the complaint in verse 20? I have already shown that he does not deny the premise: no one can ultimately resist God’s will. What he denies is the conclusion: God therefore cannot find fault with human beings. In other words, Paul believes that God is absolutely sovereign and determines all things and at the same time posits that human beings are responsible for their choices and actions.” Schreiner, *Romans*, 503. For a philosophical defense of the compatibility of deterministic divine sovereignty and human responsibility, see Guillaume Bignon, *Excusing Sinners and Blaming God: A Calvinist Assessment of Determinism, Moral Responsibility, and Divine Involvement in Evil*, Princeton Theological Monograph (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2018), 13–165.

⁹⁹ The emphasis is seen in the formulation *εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο* (LXX: *καὶ ἔνεκεν τούτου*, MT: *בעבור זאת*), which Paul uses to stress God’s purpose (“for this very reason”; rightly, Belli, *Argumentation*, 91; Cranfield, *Romans 9–16*, 485–86; Schreiner, *Romans*, 497; Peterson, *Romans*, 358; Käsemann, *Romans*, 268). For others who argue that Rom 9:17 resembles the Exod 9:16 MT, see Schreiner, *Romans*, 498; Käsemann, *Romans*, 268; Piper, *Justification of God*, 166; J. Ross Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News: Isaiah and Paul in Concert in the Letter to the Romans*, NovTSup (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2002), 55n36; Morris, *Romans*, 360n72; Seifrid, “Romans,” 643.

¹⁰⁰ As Gaventa states, “Because the history Paul narrates here is a history of God’s creation of Israel, what is important is not simply that God permitted Pharaoh to continue to live . . . but that God actually provided Pharaoh—brought Pharaoh onto the scene . . . —for God’s own purposes.” Gaventa, “Calling-Into-Being,” 164. Similarly Peterson, *Romans*, 358–59; Calvin, *Romans*, 360–61; Schreiner, *Romans*, 498; Cranfield, *Romans 9–16*, 486. Sanday and Headlam deny that Paul was speaking of Pharaoh’s creation, though they affirm that Rom 9:17 means that “Pharaoh’s position was owing to [God’s] sovereign will and pleasure.” Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 256.

¹⁰¹ Abasciano unconvincingly argues that *ἐξήγειρά σε* means that “God allowed Pharaoh to continue living.” Abasciano, *Old Testament in Romans 9.10-18*, 162–63. He notes that Paul uses the same verb to refer to the resurrection (Rom 6:14) and yet does not see how this actually undermines his argument since Jesus was not preserved alive but was raised from death to life. He also claims unpersuasively that “sparing Pharaoh’s life—especially when he deserved death and God had been unleashing destruction upon Egypt—was tantamount to giving him life” (163). Such an argument seems like special pleading. It seems highly unlikely that this was Paul’s intention since the verb *ἐξείργω* is hardly (if ever) used to refer to the act of preservation (see entries in LSJ and BDAG). Moreover, if Paul was aware of the reading preserved in

God's twofold purpose stood behind Pharaoh's existence in history. First, God appointed Pharaoh to show his power in him or by means of him¹⁰²; second, God raised up Pharaoh so that his name "might be proclaimed in all the earth." In other words, Pharaoh came onto the scene of history only because God predetermined to demonstrate his might and increase his reputation by destroying him.¹⁰³ And, as both the inference in Romans 9:18 and the Exodus story seem to imply, divine hardening functioned as the means by which God fulfilled this plan. Therefore, since Paul believed that God brought Pharaoh into the realm of history with the very intention of hardening and destroying him, it is unlikely that the apostle here presents DRA as an act of retribution.¹⁰⁴

Third, Romans 9:17–23 most likely depicts a non-retributive form of DRA since these verses provide explanations for God's reprobating actions without grounding it in a divine desire for retribution. Throughout this section, Paul does address God's

the LXX (which at the very least is possible), he would have probably employed the verb *διετηρήθης* had he intended to refer to the preservation of Pharaoh's life.

¹⁰² While it is possible that the prepositional phrase *ἐν σοί* ("in you") indicates means (so Moo, *Romans*, 615n227), it may signify the sphere in which God manifests his power (Abasciano rightly sees sphere as a possible meaning for *ἐν σοί*; see *Old Testament in Romans 9.10-18*, 165). If this is correct, then the use of *ἐν σοί* is not necessarily a departure from the MT, which has *הִרְאִתְךָ* ("to cause you to see/experience"). As lexicographers have noted regarding the hiphil of *רָאָה*, the verb can refer to causing another person to experience something (see the entries in both BDB and HALOT for *רָאָה*); in Pharaoh's case, YHHW would cause him to experience his destructive power. Thus, *ἐν σοί* in both the LXX and Paul could represent an attempt to clarify the intention behind the MT.

¹⁰³ As Seifrid states, "Pharaoh himself is determined and defined even into the present, not by his own plans and purpose, but rather by the divine word to him: 'To this end I raised you up: that I might display in you my power, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.'" Seifrid, "Romans," 643.

¹⁰⁴ It must be noted that Paul makes no reference to any sins on Pharaoh's part for which hardening might have been just punishment. As Barclay rightly observes, "With a scandalous disregard for moral reason, [Paul] speaks of God hardening Pharaoh, with no record of his or the Egyptians' crimes. . . . Where Wisdom [of Solomon] neatly illustrates the moral design of the cosmos in the punishment of crime by the very means of transgression, Paul offers no explanation for this divine treatment in Pharaoh's moral or religious failures. Indeed, he flouts any such rationale." Barclay, "Unnerving Grace," 106. In addition, Gaventa rightly observes that "it is noteworthy that Paul says nothing of Pharaoh's disposition to be stubborn. In this account, Pharaoh is no more the author of his hardening than Isaac and Jacob are of their selection." Gaventa, "Calling-Into-Being," 264. See also Belli, *Argumentation*, 92–94; Beale, "Exegetical and Theological Consideration," 149–50; Moo, *Romans*, 617–18.

motivations for hardening and for fashioning vessels of wrath.¹⁰⁵ So for instance, Paul highlights God's desire to show his power (Rom 9:17, 22), to further his reputation (Rom 9:17), and to demonstrate his glory to the recipients of his mercy (Rom 9:23).¹⁰⁶ What is telling is that Paul does not posit human sinfulness to have been the grounds for God's reprobating influence in this section.¹⁰⁷ Thus, given its noteworthy absence, it seems unwarranted to read retribution into the argument when Paul provides a different rationale for explaining DRA in these verses.

Finally, by contrasting Paul's description of Pharaoh with that of other Second Temple Jewish texts, it becomes apparent that the apostle focuses on a non-retributive form of DRA in Romans 9:17–18.¹⁰⁸ In contrast to Paul, many early Jewish writers tended to retell the Exodus story without the original text's emphasis on non-retributive DRA.¹⁰⁹ So for instance, in his retelling, Josephus deletes *all* traces of YHWH's

¹⁰⁵ Räisänen correctly notes that “Paul does not merely wish to stress the freedom of God. He also wants to make the point that everything happens to fulfil God's *purpose*” Räisänen, *Idea of Divine Hardening*, 81.

¹⁰⁶ As Gaventa observes, “God's actions—both in the case of Israel and in the case of Pharaoh—have as their goal the publication of God's own power and glory, yet God's power and glory are not ends in themselves but have as their goal mercy on God's children, Jew and Gentile alike.” Gaventa, “Calling-Into-Being,” 268. While Paul likely does present mercy to be God's ultimate goal, it is important to note that God intends for this mercy to be experienced by some and not by others (rightly, Moo, *Romans*, 627–28).

¹⁰⁷ Beale goes so far as to argue that, in Rom 9:6–24, DRA is not a response to human sin *or* to a person's sinful nature. See Beale, “Exegetical and Theological Consideration,” 150n87.

¹⁰⁸ Though my focus here is on the hardening of Pharaoh, others have made the complementary observation that Paul retells the election of Jacob and Esau with an emphasis on divine initiative that is not found in other Second Temple texts. See for instance Gaventa, “Calling-Into-Being,” 262; Seifrid, “Romans,” 640.

¹⁰⁹ As Abasciano correctly concludes, “Interpretive traditions surrounding Exod. 9:16 and the hardening of Pharaoh's heart emphasized Pharaoh's wickedness, viewing the hardening of his heart and the plagues as just punishment for his (and his people's) severe oppression of God's people Israel, a fulfilment of God's covenant promises.” Abasciano, *Old Testament in Romans 9.10–18*, 143–53, 218. However, he fails to draw the correct conclusion from this observation: instead of recognizing the contrast between Paul and these Second Temple texts, Abasciano uses the latter as a procrustean bed to which the former must be conformed.

involvement behind Pharaoh's rebellion while drawing attention to the monarch's self-derived sinfulness (*Ant.* 2.264–349).¹¹⁰ The author of *Wisdom of Solomon* betrays a similar agenda as he reshapes the Exodus story to reflect his own theological commitment to a certain form of retributive justice and divine omni-benevolence.¹¹¹ Philo summarizes the exodus story without mentioning that God stood behind the hardening of Pharaoh's heart¹¹²; instead, he emphasizes the evil character of Pharaoh and the Egyptians,¹¹³ while citing their wickedness as the (only?) reason they were subjected to the divine plagues and were destroyed in the sea.¹¹⁴ Similar sentiments seem to be

¹¹⁰ Josephus accomplishes this reading through a series of strategic omissions and additions. First, Josephus makes key omissions that serve to remove the emphasis in Exodus on DRA. So for instance, Josephus omits (1) God's foreknowledge of Pharaoh's disobedience (cf. Exod 3:19), (2) God's sovereignty over malfunctioning human organs (cf. Exod 4:10–11), (3) YHWH's predictions that he would harden Pharaoh's heart (cf. Exod 4:21), (4) the summary statement in Exod 11:10, (5) YHWH's claim to have orchestrated Pharaoh's rise in order to demonstrate his destructive power (cf. Exod 9:16), (6) YHWH's claim to have influenced Pharaoh to give chase after Israel departed from Egypt (cf. Exod 14:4, 8, 17), and (7) all references to God hardening Pharaoh's heart. Second, Josephus adds details to the story in order to highlight Pharaoh's culpability. He (1) elaborates upon Moses' initial confrontation with Pharaoh, stating that Moses provided both ample reasons and miraculous signs to justify YHWH's command (*Ant.* 2.281–89), (2) adds a speech by Moses before the plagues narrative which anticipates that the coming judgments were all occasioned by Pharaoh's refusal to heed God's commands (*Ant.* 2.291–92), (3) provides insight into the thought-process by which Pharaoh decided to chase after Israel (*Ant.* 2.320–21). Each of these additions magnify Pharaoh's culpability while minimizing the Exodus narrative's focus on God's influence upon the Egyptian king.

¹¹¹ Barclay provides a helpful reading of *Wisdom of Solomon* that mirrors my own. As he also notes, *Wisdom* reflects a heightened focus on symmetry between human action and divine blessing/punishment. Moreover, he also observes that “the *Wisdom of Solomon* puts consistently heavy stress on the goodness, the love and the mercy of God. The text is replete with references to divine benevolence, a benevolence built into the design of the cosmos and practiced throughout history.” Barclay, “Unnerving Grace,” 104–9. As Barclay also observes, the emphasis on moral symmetry and on omni-benevolence are jarringly absent from Rom 9:6–24.

¹¹² For Philo's summary of the Exodus story, see *Moses I* 15.87–32.180.

¹¹³ So Philo describes Pharaoh as someone whose soul was oppressed by vanity from childhood (ὁ δ' ἐξ ἔτι σπαργάνων προγονικῶν τύφῳ τὴν ψυχὴν πεπιεσμένος; see *Moses I*, 15.88). He also highlights that the Egyptians refused to heed God's signs because of their “inhumanity” (ἀπανθρωπία) and “impiety” (ἀσέβεια; *Moses I*, 16.95). For other examples of this emphasis on the innate wickedness of Pharaoh/the Egyptians from the Philonic corpus, see *Sacrifices* 19; *Names* 3.19–20; *Agriculture* 14.62; *Confusion* 16; *Flight* 32.180; *Abraham* 21–22; *Moses 2*, 36.194–95; *Flaccus* 5.29.

¹¹⁴ Philo says that the plagues came upon the Egyptians because they willfully refused to heed the signs provided through Moses and Aaron; in fact, the perfect number of plagues was visited upon them

reflected in Ezekiel the Tragedian and Artapanus,¹¹⁵ as both neglect divine hardening and focus on Egyptian ungodliness throughout their retellings of the Exodus story.¹¹⁶

Meanwhile, in addition to emphasizing God's retributive justice,¹¹⁷ the book of Jubilees distances YHWH from the act of hardening by assigning it to the agency of Prince Mastema,¹¹⁸ the book's Satan figure. As these observations show, stark contrasts exist between these Second Temple texts and Paul's own conception of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart.¹¹⁹ These differences should not be ignored or flattened out; instead, the

because they had perfected sinfulness (*Moses 1*, 16.95–96). Furthermore, the death of the firstborn occurred because Pharaoh “yielded to his customary self-will” (εἰζάντος δ' ἀθάδεια τῆ συνήθει; see *Moses 1*, 24.139). Finally, while Exodus appeals to divine hardening as the reason for Pharaoh's change of heart (Exod 14:4–5), Philo refers to the king's wickedness to explain why he reneged on his decision to let Israel go (*Moses 2*, 45.248–49).

¹¹⁵ For both these texts (and for Jubilees), I make use of James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2, *Expansions of the “Old Testament” and Legends, Wisdom and Philosophical Literature, Prayers, Psalms, and Odes, Fragments of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic Works* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983).

¹¹⁶ Ezekiel the tragedian recounts the Exodus story in lines 90–242. The text states that the hearts of the Egyptians were hardened (lines 138–40) and that Pharaoh would not be moved by YHWH's commands (line 149); however, it does not assign God with any responsibility for bringing about these states. Ezekiel also focuses on the Egyptians' hard-heartedness and pride as explanations for the plagues (lines 140 and 147–48). In addition, Ezekiel recounts Pharaoh's pursuit of the Hebrews without noting God's influence on the king (lines 193–242). Meanwhile, Artapanus's version of the Exodus story is preserved in Eusebius's “Praeparatio Evangelica,” 9.27.1–37. He also retells the story without any suggestion of divine influence upon Pharaoh. Instead, Artapanus attributes Pharaoh's actions to his presumptuousness and foolishness. Furthermore, he insinuates that Pharaoh changed his mind about freeing the Hebrews because he wanted to take back the Egyptian property that the Israelites had plundered.

¹¹⁷ The plagues are said to be God's judgments upon Egypt for their maltreatment of Israel and their idolatry (Jub 48:3, 5, 7–8). Meanwhile, the drowning at the Red Sea was vengeance for Egypt's drowning of the Hebrew infants (Jub 48:14).

¹¹⁸ The text states repeatedly that Mastema was the one who influenced the Egyptians to follow after Israel (Jub 48:12, 14, 17), though it also posits that God somehow orchestrated these events in order to punish Egypt for murdering the children of Israel (Jub 48:12–18). Thus, Jubilees probably testifies to a mediated, retributive form of DRA.

¹¹⁹ So Räisänen is accurate when he says, “Paul's interpretation [of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart] differs from the normal Jewish exegesis, which stressed Pharaoh's own guilt. . . . Paul makes no reference to the possibility that Pharaoh had deserved to be hardened. On the contrary, his whole argument requires here that God acts sovereignly, regardless of man's personal quality (cf. v. 11–13). God is the initiator of Pharaoh's stubbornness.” Räisänen, *Idea of Divine Hardening*, 81.

contrasts should serve to highlight how unconcerned the apostle was to characterize DRA as being retributive in Romans 9:17–23.¹²⁰

One question has yet to be answered: does DRA in Romans 9:17–23 have eternal punishment as its outcome? Though the text might not be explicit,¹²¹ there are good reasons to believe that it does.¹²² First of all, it is important to read Paul's witness to DRA in light of the concerns that animate this section of his letter. The issue that drives the discussion throughout Romans 9–11 is Israel's current plight: the nation stands outside of God's saving grace because of their refusal to trust in Christ.¹²³ This is made clear in several places throughout these chapters. For instance, Romans 9:1–3 opens this section with a soteriological orientation, since Paul expresses a desire to be cursed and separated from Christ for Israel's sake. Paul's radical wish reflects his understanding of Israel's current state: they are currently under God's curse and separated from Christ

¹²⁰ Similarly, Barclay, "Unnerving Grace," 104–8; Gaventa, "Calling-Into-Being," 264–65. This is not to say that Paul's views on divine agency were completely novel; as Käsemann points out, Paul seems to reflect a theological perspective that was also adopted within the Qumran community (see *Romans*, 271; so also Piper, *Justification of God*, 198).

¹²¹ While Rom 9:17–24 *may not overtly* refer to eternal punishment, Sanday and Headlam go too far when they say that Rom 9:17–24 "says *nothing* about eternal life or death. . . . He never says *or implies* that God has created man for the purpose of his damnation." Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 258. On the contrary, there are good reasons why a steady stream of Christians throughout history have understood Rom 9 to be about eternal salvation and eternal damnation (see my discussion in chap. 2, s.v. "Predestination"). In fact, Paul's use of "destruction" language elsewhere may indicate that he *was* explicitly referring to eternal destruction in Rom 9:22 (cf. Rom 2:12; 1 Cor 1:18; 2 Cor 2:15; 4:3; Phil 1:28; 3:19; 2 Thess 2:3; 1 Tim 6:9; see Moo, *Romans*, 627n284).

¹²² For others who seem to interpret Rom 9:17–23 as attesting to eternal DRA, see Peterson, *Romans*, 362; Schreiner, *Romans*; 501–11; Beale, "Exegetical and Theological Consideration," 153; Calvin, *Romans*, 353–70; Moo, *Romans*, 616–17; Piper, *Justification of God*, 202–3; Räisänen, *Idea of Divine Hardening*, 82; Peter Christopher Sammons, "The Decree of Reprobation and Man's Culpability: The Role of God's Use of Secondary Causality" (PhD diss., The Master's Seminary, 2017), 98; Fulgentius, "The Truth about Predestination and Grace," in *Fulgentius of Ruspe and the Scythian Monks: Correspondence on Christology and Grace*, trans. Rob Roy McGregor and Donald Fairbairn, FC, vol. 126 (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2013), 125–26.

¹²³ See Venema, "Corporate or Individual Election," 45–47; Foster, *Renaming Abraham's Children*, 114–17; Moo, *Romans*, 578; Schreiner, "Romans 9," 27–28.

because of their unbelief.¹²⁴ Moreover, Romans 10:1 corroborates that Romans 9–11 centers around the apostle’s concern for Israel’s eschatological fate, since Paul here alludes back to his initial concerns (cf. Rom 9:1–3) and prays for his people’s “salvation” (σωτηρίαν; cf. Rom 1:16).¹²⁵ Furthermore, when Paul finally concludes Romans 9–11, he expresses confidence regarding Israel’s future salvation (Rom 11:26). These key verses at the beginning, middle, and end of Romans 9–11 suggest that Paul’s overall focus throughout this section has to do with the matter of Israel’s salvation.¹²⁶ Additionally, I see evidence of soteriological overtones even within the more immediate context surrounding Romans 9:17–23. For instance, as Schreiner has shown, Paul’s language in Romans 9:6–9 and Romans 9:22–24 suggests that these verses refer to eschatological salvation rather than to matters of historical destiny.¹²⁷ Because the verses that bear witness to DRA are found in a highly soteriological context,¹²⁸ it seems likely that Paul sees God’s reprobating influence as hindering persons from attaining salvation.¹²⁹ After

¹²⁴ As Moo points out, “Paul’s willingness to suffer such a fate himself makes sense only if those on behalf of whom he offers himself stand under that curse themselves.” Moo, *Romans*, 577–78. See also Simon J. Gathercole, “Locating Christ and Israel in Romans 9–11,” in Still, *God and Israel*, 117–18.

¹²⁵ So also Schreiner, “Romans 9,” 30.

¹²⁶ There are further indications that Paul’s concern throughout Rom 9–11 is soteriological. See Rom 9:27, 30–33; 10:9–13; 11:11, 14.

¹²⁷ Schreiner points to words and phrases like “children of God” (τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ), “the children of promise” (τὰ τέκνα τῆς ἐπαγγελίας), “calling” (καλεῖν), and “it is counted” (λογίζεσθαι). Moreover, with regard to Rom 9:22–24, Schreiner also correctly observes that terms like “wrath” (ὀργή), “destruction” (ἀπώλεια), “honor” (τιμὴ), “glory” (δόξα), and “mercy” (ἔλεος) are associated with eschatological judgment and eternal life elsewhere in Paul. Schreiner, *Romans*, 485, 506. For an extended defense of the view that Rom 9:1–29 concerns eschatological salvation, see Schreiner, “Romans 9,” 27–40.

¹²⁸ It is unconvincing to argue that Paul cannot be speaking of eschatological salvation in Rom 9–11, because he quotes OT passages that do not refer to eschatological salvation (rightly Moo, *Romans*, 591–92; Schreiner, “Romans 9,” 31–32). Such a position reflects an overly wooden approach to Paul’s hermeneutic, as it proceeds from the assumption that Paul could only use texts in a literalistic fashion. Moreover, it fails to prioritize the immediate literary context, which should serve as the interpretive key for understanding what a biblical author intends to do through their use of other texts.

¹²⁹ In fact, Paul seems to suggest that the removal of divine hardening is what prepares the way

all, neither Romans 9:17–18 nor 9:22–23 can be viewed as digressions from Paul’s immediate purpose; on the contrary, both function as part of the apostle’s defense of the truthfulness of God’s Word in the face of the exclusion of many Israelites from eternal salvation.¹³⁰ This being so, *the very least* that can be said about DRA in Romans 9:17–23 is that Paul understood God’s reprobating agency as preventing persons from experiencing God’s eschatological salvation.¹³¹

Second, in an earlier portion of the letter, Paul may allude to eternal death as the eschatological penalty for those who remain in a hardened state. In Romans 2:5–11, Paul addresses the final end of those who refuse to repent of the sins outlined in Romans 1:18–32. These individuals with “*hardened hearts*” (τὴν σκληρότητα καρδίας) are said to be “storing up *wrath*” (θησαυρίζεις . . . ὀργήν) for themselves “on the day of *wrath* [ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ὀργῆς] and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God” (Rom 2:5). Paul then contrasts these people with another set of individuals who would be honored on the day of eschatological judgment: “to those who seek glory and honor and immortality by enduring in doing good, eternal life [will be given]; but to those who, on account of selfishness, are disobedient to the truth and are obedient to unrighteousness, *wrath* and anger [will be given]” (Rom 2:7–8). Significantly, Paul contrasts the wrath and anger

for Israel’s future salvation (cf. Rom 11:26–27). So also Moo, *Romans*, 617n235.

¹³⁰ As Schreiner rightly contends, “The unity of the text is such that all of Romans 9–11 constitutes Paul’s answer as to how God’s word has not failed with reference to the promises of salvation for Israel, even though many in Israel have not believed in Jesus as Messiah.” Schreiner, “Romans 9,” 31. This however does not mean that DRA in vv. 17–23 must refer *exclusively* to Israel’s experience. On the contrary, I would argue that Rom 9:14–23 continues to address the problem introduced in vv. 1–5, but at an “abstracted” level. In other words, vv. 14–23 present certain principles drawn from the Scriptures regarding divine agency that are related to the state of unbelieving Israel, but that also apply more generally to God’s dealings with mankind. Then in Rom 9:30–11:32, the apostle begins to address Israel’s plight more concretely and from differing vantage points. For others who agree that Rom 9:14–23 applies also to non-Israelites, see Dixon, “Judgement for Israel,” 575n55; Gaventa, “Calling-Into-Being,” 267; Käsemann, *Romans*, 267–68; Seifrid, “Romans,” 643, 646; Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 254–57.

¹³¹ Rightly Abasciano, *Old Testament in Romans 9.10–18*, 210–11 (though he wrongly argues that hardening in Rom 9:18 can be reversed).

(which awaits the hardened group) with eternal life (which awaits the non-hardened group). While the text is not explicit, the contrast between “wrath/anger” and “eternal life” may suggest that the former should also be understood as enduring for eternity. If this is so, then the nature of the punishment described in Romans 2:5–10 may in fact illumine the nature of the punishment in Romans 9:17–23. The conceptual links between Romans 2:5–10 and Romans 9:17–23 should not be missed: in both texts, it is those who are hardened (Rom 2:5; 9:18) who experience God’s eschatological wrath (Rom 2:8; 9:16, 22). Thus, Romans 2:5–10 suggests that the punishment that follows DRA in Rom 9:17–23 is also of eternal duration.¹³²

Third, the fate of the vessels made for honor (εἰς τιμὴν σκεῦος) and the vessels of mercy (σκεύη ἐλέους) may also illumine the fate of the vessels made for dishonor (εἰς ἀτιμίαν [σκεῦος]) and the nature of the destruction experienced by the vessels of wrath (σκεύη ὀργῆς).¹³³ In Romans 9:21, Paul says that God has the authority to make certain vessels for honor (ποιῆσαι ὃ μὲν εἰς τιμὴν σκεῦος) and that God also has the authority to make other vessels for dishonor (ποιῆσαι . . . ὃ δὲ εἰς ἀτιμίαν). Then, in verses 22–23, Paul expresses that God has prepared the vessels of mercy for glory (σκεύη ἐλέους ἃ προητοίμασεν εἰς δόξαν), while he has also fashioned vessels of wrath to be destroyed (κατηρτισμένα εἰς ἀπώλειαν). Paul does not here discuss precisely what he means by “dishonor” or “destruction”; however, Paul’s references to honor (τιμὴ) and glory (δόξα) may help readers understand his intention. To begin with, “honor” and “glory” are used earlier in Romans to describe eschatological salvation (cf. Rom 2:10). In fact, Paul links

¹³² As such, Peterson is likely correct: “In Exodus the issue is not Pharaoh’s eternal salvation, . . . but Paul goes on to use the biblical portrayal of Pharaoh as part of a developing argument about how individuals are saved eschatologically.” Peterson, *Romans*, 360.

¹³³ Though he makes the suggestion tentatively, I believe Moo is correct when he says that “the contrast between ‘honor’ and ‘dishonor’ mirrors the contrast between ‘glory’ and ‘wrath,’ or ‘destruction,’ in vv. 22–23.” Moo, *Romans*, 623.

the experience of eschatological honor and glory with the inheritance of eternal life.¹³⁴ Moreover, “glory” plays an especially important role in Paul’s understanding of the eschatological, eternal reward that awaits God’s people (cf. Rom 2:10; 5:2; 8:18, 21). Thus, given Paul’s use of *τιμή* and *δόξα* elsewhere, it seems likely that both the honorable vessels and the vessels of mercy prepared for glory refer to those whom God has chosen to grace with eternal life. As such, the contrast between these vessels and those vessels made for dishonor and destruction seems to suggest that *ἀτιμία* and *ἀπώλεια* in Romans 9:21–22 refer to nothing less than eternal death.¹³⁵ If this is so, God’s activity in reference to the vessels of dishonor/wrath should be understood to be a form of eternal DRA.¹³⁶

In addition to the famous cases from Romans 9:17–23, another possible example of DRA may be found in Romans 9:30–33.¹³⁷ After proving that God’s Word

¹³⁴ “Honor,” “glory,” and “eternal life” serve as different concepts by which Paul refers to the eschatological reward of those deemed righteous by faith. Thus, in 2:7, those who seek *glory* and *honor* (and immortality; Gk: *ἀφθαρσία*) finally receive eternal life as their ultimate reward. But in v. 10, those who continuously do what is good receive *glory* and *honor* (and peace) as their eschatological reward. While the three are not synonymous, they are intimately related with final salvation and each can be used as a shorthand designation for the final hope of believers.

¹³⁵ So also Sammons, “Decree of Reprobation,” 98; Räisänen, *Idea of Divine Hardening*, 82.

¹³⁶ Many scholars deny that Rom 9:17–23 attests to any form of DRA. Some maintain that God’s aims towards the “hardened” are ultimately salvific (see Oropeza, “Paul and Theodicy,” 70–73), or that the verb forms used in Rom 9:20–23 suggest that the “vessels of wrath” fit themselves for destruction (Ryliškytė, “God’s Mercy,” 97), or that the text is about corporate entities *rather than* individuals (Schmithals, *Der Römerbrief*, 350; Oropeza, “Paul and Theodicy,” 70–73), or that the overall argument in Rom 9–11 precludes the possibility of DRA being attested in Rom 9:4–24 (Shellrude, “God’s Freedom,” 306; Taylor, “Freedom of God,” 36–40), or that a reading that posits DRA would suggest inconsistencies within Paul’s thinking (Shellrude, “God’s Freedom,” 307–9), or that individuals could reverse God’s hardening through exercises of their own will (Abasciano, *Old Testament in Romans 9.10–18*, 211). I have sought to engage with these and other arguments in footnotes throughout this section. To provide a general comment, I believe it must be admitted that a straightforward reading of Rom 9:6–24 suggests that Paul refers to DRA (as even some who deny DRA acknowledge; see Cosgrove, “Rhetorical Suspense,” 271, 281–82). Moreover, though his observation is directed towards the doctrine of divine election, Venema may also describe why interpreters fail to see DRA in Rom 9 when he says, “In the final analysis, the objections to the view that Paul teaches the election of specific individuals to salvation in Rom 9 are not so much exegetically driven as they are based upon broader theological commitments.” Venema, “Corporate or Individual Election,” 53.

¹³⁷ Lambrecht argues that Rom 9:30–33 should be understood as the conclusion of Rom 9:6–33 rather than as starting a new section. Jan Lambrecht, “The Caesura between Romans 9.30–33 and 10.1–4,”

itself anticipates both the inclusion of Gentiles into the covenant people and the exclusion of a large portion of Israelites (Rom 9:24–29),¹³⁸ Paul explains why believers from non-Jewish nations had attained God’s righteousness while most of the sons of Jacob failed to do so.¹³⁹ So he says,

What therefore will we say?¹⁴⁰ That nations that did not pursue righteousness attained righteousness—that is, the righteousness that comes from faith.¹⁴¹ But although Israel was pursuing the law of righteousness,¹⁴² they did not reach the

NTS 45 (1999): 142–44. While I agree with him that 9:30–33 concludes the preceding argument (contra Belli, *Argumentation*, 133), even Lambrecht himself concedes that Rom 9:30–33 “announces what will be the main topic of chapter 10.” Lambrecht, “Rom 9.30–33 and 10.1–4,” 147. Thus, Lambrecht wrongly downplays the passages introductory function. It seems better to say with Peterson that “although 9:30–33 forms an introduction to 10:1–21, it also supplies a fitting conclusion to 9:1–29.” Peterson, *Romans*, 369. And since Rom 9:30–33 plays both these roles, it may be best to view this subsection as being transitional (so also Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 576; Schmithals, *Der Römerbrief*, 365).

¹³⁸ As Goodrich observes, “Paul’s extensive use of Scripture shows that Israel’s rebellious and unbelieving state was promised long ago; God’s word, therefore, has not failed, but is currently being fulfilled.” John K. Goodrich, “The Word of God Has Not Failed: God’s Faithfulness and Israel’s Salvation in Tobit 13:3–7 and Romans 9–11,” *TynBul* 67, no. 1 (2016): 62.

¹³⁹ Similarly William J. Dumbrell, “Paul and Salvation History in Romans 9:30–10:4,” in *Out of Egypt: Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation*, Scripture and Hermeneutics (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 288.

¹⁴⁰ I agree with Schreiner when he points out that the question in v. 30 probably goes back to the argument in Rom 9:24–29. As such, he is correct to paraphrase the question, “What then shall we say about the election of Gentiles unto salvation, while only a remnant of Jews are experiencing the same blessing?” Thomas R. Schreiner, “Israel’s Failure to Attain Righteousness in Romans 9:30–10:3,” *TJ* 12 (1991): 210.

¹⁴¹ Schreiner correctly notes the implicit role of election in Paul’s argument: “the point of v. 30 as a whole is that even though the Gentiles did not seek a right relation with God, nevertheless because of God’s merciful election they have exercised faith and obtained right standing before him.” Schreiner, “Israel’s Failure,” 211. Also see Moo, *Romans*, 641.

¹⁴² The expression νόμον δικαιοσύνης (“law of righteousness”) is fraught with difficulties. While I am attracted to the interpretation that takes νόμος as a principle (see John Paul Heil, “Christ, the Termination of the Law [Romans 9:30–10:8],” *CBQ* 63 [2001]: 488; Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 279), I think it is more likely that Paul here references the Mosaic law (C. Thomas Rhyne, “Nomos Dikaiosynēs and the Meaning of Romans 10:4,” *CBQ* 47 [1985]: 489; Dumbrell, “Paul and Salvation History,” 308; Moo, *Romans*, 643; Thielman, *Romans*, 479; François Refoulé, “Note Sur Romains IX, 30–33,” *RB* 92, no. 2 [1985]: 175; Frank J. Matera, *Romans*, Paideia [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010], 241). Additionally, νόμον δικαιοσύνης could be taken to refer to the law insofar as it demands (Schreiner, *Romans*, 525) or perhaps promises (Rhyne, “Romans 10:4,” 488–89) the righteousness that comes from faith. However, since text’s witness to DRA does not depend upon the meaning of νόμον δικαιοσύνης, these issues need not detain.

law.¹⁴³ Why? Because [they pursued the law of righteousness] not from faith but as though [it were to be pursued] from works.¹⁴⁴ (Rom 9:30–32a)

Here, Paul seems to focus on Israel’s own culpability as the reason for their failure to attain the righteousness of God.¹⁴⁵ Instead of approaching the “law of righteousness” in the correct manner (i.e., “from faith”),¹⁴⁶ they proceeded as though the law could provide justification on the basis of one’s works. However, as Paul already pointed out, both Jews and Gentiles were under the dominion of sin (Rom 1:18–3:20), and God has always justified sinners on the basis of faith rather than on the basis of works of law (cf. Rom 1:17; 3:19–26; 4:1–8).¹⁴⁷ Moreover, Paul believed that the Torah itself bore witness to

¹⁴³ While the expression εἰς νόμον οὐκ ἔφθασεν may also imply that Israel failed to observe the law despite its attempts to do so (see Lambrecht, “Rom 9.30–33 and 10.1–4,” 146; Schreiner, “Israel’s Failure,” 220; Moo, *Romans*, 646; Thielman, *Romans*, 479), I think Paul here intends to indict Israel for misunderstanding the true meaning of the law (so also Rhyne, “Romans 10:4,” 490; Cranfield, *Romans*, 509–10). Incidentally, this implies that Abasciano is wrong to claim that Rom 9:30–33 provides support for his contention that God hardened Israel by changing the conditions for election. Abasciano, *Old Testament in Rom 9.10–18*, 205. On the contrary, Paul’s argument in Rom 9:30–33 depends upon his claim that Israel always should have approached the law from faith.

¹⁴⁴ The ὡς signals that Paul believed it was illegitimate to pursue the law “from works” (rightly, Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 280; Käsemann, *Romans*, 278; Wright, *Paul and Faithfulness of God*, 1178; Wagner, *Heralds of Good News*, 124n17). It is probably correct to see a criticism of some form of legalism here (see Schreiner, “Israel’s Failure,” 216, 219; Cranfield, *Romans 9–16*, 510, 512; contra Wolfgang Reinbold, “Paulus Und Das Gesetz: Zur Exegese von Röm 9,30–33,” *BZ* 38, no. 2 [1994]: 259). Although he does not use the language of legalism, Thielman expresses a similar idea, stating that unbelieving Israelites “thought they could attain life by doing what the law required.” Frank Thielman, “Paul’s View of Israel’s Misstep in Rom 9.32–3: Its Origin and Meaning,” *NTS* 64 (2018): 377.

¹⁴⁵ So also Schmithals, *Der Römerbrief*, 365; Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 278; Käsemann, *Romans*, 276; Heil, “Termination of the Law,” 486–87; Schreiner, “Israel’s Failure,” 211. While Lambrecht wrongly argues that Israel’s guilt is only brought up in chap. 10, he is correct to reject the idea that Israel is here being chided for nationalistic exclusivism (see “Rom 9.30–33 and 10.1–4,” 146–47).

¹⁴⁶ As Schreiner observes about v. 32, “Israel is faulted for the way and manner in which they approached the law.” Schreiner, *Romans*, 526. See also Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 578; Cranfield, *Romans 9–16*, 507–10; Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 278; Thielman, *Romans*, 480; Matera, *Romans*, 242; Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 582; Peterson, *Romans*, 371; Rhyne, “Romans 10:4,” 489; Wright, *Paul and Faithfulness of God*, 1177; Wagner, *Heralds of Good News*, 124. I am not persuaded that Paul here faults Israel for pursuing the “law of righteousness” as a goal (for proponents of this position, see Moo, *Romans*, 645–46; Dumbrell, “Paul and Salvation History,” 308).

¹⁴⁷ Rightly Moo, *Romans*, 646n368. Peterson also points out that the law itself taught that justification was by faith (see Peterson, *Romans*, 371).

these realities (cf. Rom 3:21; 4:1–3; 10:4; Gal 2:19; 4:21–31).¹⁴⁸ Thus, Israel failed to reach “the law of righteousness” because they misunderstood the law and its testimony to the gracious nature of divine righteousness (Rom 10:2–4)¹⁴⁹; as a result, they refused to trust in Christ and receive the gift of God’s righteousness (Rom 9:32).¹⁵⁰ However, while the apostle points to Israel’s responsibility for their present plight, he also goes on to reveal that there is more (not less) to the story.

After addressing Israel’s fatal and sinful mistake,¹⁵¹ Paul turns his attention to God’s own involvement behind the scenes: “[Israel] stumbled over the stone of stumbling,¹⁵² just as it is written, ‘Behold! I am placing a stone of stumbling and a rock

¹⁴⁸ Contra Moo, who denies that Paul (at least in Romans) claims that the law attested to justification by faith (Moo, *Romans*, 642).

¹⁴⁹ As Rhyne explains, “[The Jews] failed to reach the law *because* they misunderstood it and transformed it into a tool of personal achievement.” Rhyne, “Romans 10:4,” 490. See also Cranfield, *Romans 9–16*, 509–10.

¹⁵⁰ Shum is correct to argue that ἐκ πίστεως in Rom 9:30, 32 refers to human faith/trust which is put in God/Christ. Shiu-Lun Shum, *Paul’s Use of Isaiah in Romans: A Comparative Study of Paul’s Letter to the Romans and the Sibylline and Qumran Sectarian Texts*, WUNT (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 218–19. Moreover, Schreiner is probably correct that v. 32b functions as an inference that follows from Israel’s failure to approach the “law of righteousness” by faith (see Schreiner, “Israel’s Failure,” 214).

¹⁵¹ Refoulé argues that Israel’s only mistake was their failure to trust in Christ. As such, he rejects the idea that Paul faults Israel for pursuing the law in the wrong way. However, Refoulé’s reading requires him to posit δικαιοσύνην as the implied object of εἰς in v. 31b (see Refoulé, “Romains IX, 30–33,” 183). If Paul had in fact said “[Israel] did not reach righteousness” (εἰς δικαιοσύνην οὐκ ἔφθασεν), then Refoulé would be on firm ground in arguing that v. 32 means that Israel failed to attain righteousness because they pursued it by works and not by faith in Christ. However, as the text stands, v. 32 is not an explanation of why Israel failed to attain righteousness; it is an explanation of why Israel failed to reach *the law (of righteousness)*. As such, it seems more likely that v. 32a signifies that Israel pursued the law in the wrong manner.

¹⁵² Reinbold fails to persuade when he argues that there should be no break between Rom 9:32a and 9:32b. First of all, Reinbold mistakenly posits a change of subject between v. 31 and v. 32 (see Reinbold, “Paulus und das Gesetz,” 255–56). No such change is required since collective nouns can take singular or plural verbs (A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 3rd ed. [London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1914], 404). In this case, the plural verb προσέκοψαν matches Israel according to its sense. Second, Reinbold’s interpretation of ἐκ πίστεως leads him to unnecessarily problematize the notion that Israel ought to have pursued the law “from faith.” Reinbold understands πίστις in Paul as having an exclusively Christian (as opposed to Jewish) sense, and so he concludes that ἐκ πίστεως means “aus christlicher Überzeugung” in Rom 9:32 (“Paulus und das Gesetz,” 258). However, Paul presents the faith of Abraham as the paradigm for both Israelites and Gentiles (cf.

of offense in Zion. And the one who believes upon him will not be put to shame” (Rom 9:32b–33). Here, Paul splices together Isaiah 8:14 and 28:16¹⁵³ in order to demonstrate that God had already revealed his intention to bring about Israel’s stumbling by sending “the stone of stumbling,” Jesus Christ.¹⁵⁴ Though it is possible that Paul understood these passages as *merely* foretelling Israel’s refusal to trust in the one whom God would send,¹⁵⁵ it seems more likely that he *also* reads them as evidencing God’s reprobating agency.¹⁵⁶ First, as I argued in a previous chapter, Isaiah 8:14–17 (MT) seems to attest to

Rom 4:4ff); as such, “faith” for Paul can refer to the sincere trust in God exercised by his people even prior to Christ’s coming. As such, there is nothing problematic about the idea that Israel always ought to have approached the law ἐκ πίστεως. Lastly, while Reinbold is correct to point out the ambiguities in Rom 9:32a, it is likely that Paul believed v. 31 was clear enough to suggest that the implicit verb ἐδιώξαν and the object νόμον were to be understood in v. 32a (rightly Cranfield, *Romans*, 509). Moreover, despite his claim to the contrary, Reinbold’s own interpretation requires him to *also* fill in the ambiguities with concepts not explicitly stated (see “Paulus und das Gesetz,” 260). As such, it is difficult to see how his suggestion improves upon the interpretation he criticizes.

¹⁵³ Thielman and others may be correct that Christians before Paul had already grouped together Isa 8:14–17, 28:16, and Ps 118:22 (MT) into a collection of “stone texts” which were used to explain the rejection of Christ by Jerusalem’s elites. Thielman, “Israel’s Misstep,” 362–64. However, even if Paul relied on previous tradition (whether written or oral), Belli is also right to say that Rom 9:33 reflects a combination that is “distinctly Pauline.” Belli, *Argumentation*, 216; so also Moo, *Romans*, 648. Moreover, Shum persuasively argues that “the common wisdom that Paul was here citing these Isaianic passages from an early Christian tradition *and not from the Book of Isaiah itself* is untenable [emphasis added].” Shum, *Paul’s Use of Isaiah*, 213.

¹⁵⁴ Most rightly understand the “stone of stumbling/rock of offense” to be Christ; see for example Lambrecht, “Rom 9.30–33 and 10.1–4,” 146; Schreiner, “Israel’s Failure,” 214; Thielman, “Israel’s Misstep,” 362; Gathercole, “Locating Christ,” 125; Käsemann, *Romans*, 278–79; Moo, *Romans*, 647; Matera, *Romans*, 243; Cranfield, *Romans 9–16*, 510–11; Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 584; Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 280–81; Peterson, *Romans*, 369; Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 369; Heil, “Termination of the Law,” 489; Reinbold, “Paulus und das Gesetz,” 263; Dumbrell, “Paul and Salvation History,” 308; Abasciano, *Old Testament in Romans 9.10–18*, 205; Wagner, *Heralds of Good News*, 156–57; Seifrid, “Romans,” 650–51; Calvin, *Romans*, 380; Refoulé, “Romains IX, 30–33,” 182.

¹⁵⁵ According to Matera, Rom 9:33 means that “Scripture was already speaking of contemporary Israel and Christ when Isaiah uttered these words. This is why it is not the word of God that has failed but Israel that has failed to heed God’s word.” Matera, *Romans*, 243.

¹⁵⁶ So also Lambrecht, “Rom 9.30–33 and 10.1–4,” 147; Gathercole, “Locating Christ,” 125–26.

a form of DRA.¹⁵⁷ Though this point is by no means decisive, it may provide corroborating evidence that Paul was here speaking about DRA. Second, as compared with Isaiah 8:14–17, Romans 9:33 highlights God’s initiative in bringing about Israel’s stumbling by taking the concept of the “stone of stumbling/rock of offense” from Isaiah 8:14 and making it the object of the 1S verb *τίθημι* (which seems to be based on Isa 28:16). While Isaiah 8:14–17 (MT) predicts Israel’s stumble and relays that the teaching of God’s Word would be confined to a subset of Israelites,¹⁵⁸ it does not describe God as having actively placed the “stone of stumbling” in Israel’s way. However, by equating the “stone of stumbling” in Isaiah 8:14 with the “precious, chosen stone” from Isaiah 28:16, Paul is enabled to say just that.¹⁵⁹ Thus, in order to posit a purely predictive reading of Romans 9:33, one must maintain that Paul understood God to have set the stone of stumbling in Israel’s way *without actually intending for Israel to stumble over it*. While theoretically possible, such a reading seems unlikely (especially given the third reason for positing DRA).¹⁶⁰ Third, it is important to read Romans 9:30–33 in light of the argument that preceded it.¹⁶¹ Given Paul’s testimony to DRA and the emphasis on God’s sovereignty in Romans 9:6–29, it seems highly probable that Paul intends to ascribe

¹⁵⁷ See my discussion in chap. 5: “DRA in the Book of Isaiah”; “DRA against Israel”; “Other Passages in Isaiah.”

¹⁵⁸ With regard to Paul’s citation of Isa 8:14, the apostle’s quotation seems to depart from the LXX and hew more closely to the MT. So also Thielman, “Israel’s Misstep,” 365.

¹⁵⁹ As Dunn states accurately, “The combination of the texts (i.e. Isa 28:16 and 8:14) strengthens the note of divine purpose behind the ‘stone of stumbling.’ Israel’s fall was intended by God. This note . . . catches up the predestinarian emphasis of vv. 18–22.” Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 584. For others who understand Paul to be emphasizing God’s agency in Rom 9:33, see Lambrecht, “Rom 9.30–33 and 10.1–4,” 143–44; Belli, *Argumentation*, 218.

¹⁶⁰ Thus, Heil is correct when he says, “That Israel failed to believe in Christ . . . is part of God’s plan.” Heil, “Termination of the Law,” 489. See also Käsemann, *Romans*, 279; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 576; Wright, *Paul and Faithfulness of God*, 1178.

¹⁶¹ Rightly Schreiner, “Israel’s Failure,” 211.

Israel's stumbling to God's agency.¹⁶² For these reasons, it seems warranted to posit that Romans 9:30–33 also bears witness to DRA.

If Romans 9:30–33 does attest to DRA, how does it characterize it?¹⁶³ While it seems apparent that the text describes an active,¹⁶⁴ mediated,¹⁶⁵ eternal form of DRA,¹⁶⁶ the text is less explicit regarding whether or not the “stone of stumbling” was laid as a punishment for Israel's sins. Nevertheless, it seems more likely than not that Paul here intends to describe a non-retributive form of DRA. First, rather than claiming that God responded to Israel's unbelief with DRA, Paul *grounds* Israel's failure to believe through recourse to DRA. In other words, the apostle provides two reasons for Israel's refusal to believe in Jesus:¹⁶⁷ (1) they were pursuing the “law of righteousness” as though one could

¹⁶² As Belli states, “The first contribution [of Rom 9:33] is to put Israel's anomaly within God's design as revealed in the Scriptures: *καθὼς γέγραπται*. Indeed, the Scriptures witness to what God has accomplished and continues to accomplish. That Israel has stumbled or that it is responsible for its failure does not mean, therefore, that it has left the sphere of the history of salvation. This is so much so that a summary reading could even attribute the complete responsibility for Israel's stumbling to God. If there is an ‘Israel-problem’, Paul hastens immediately to add that it is not extraneous to God's design and action.” Belli, *Argumentation*, 220.

¹⁶³ It is important to be clear about what exactly God does to negatively influence Israel in Rom 9:33. Here, it is the sending of “the stone of stumbling” that constitutes DRA. Though this action may be related to divine hardening (cf. Rom 9:30–33; 11:7), the two are unlikely to be equivalent. Thus, Abasciano is mistaken to assume that Rom 9:32–33 illumines the nature of divine hardening in Rom 9:18 Abasciano, *Old Testament in Romans 9.10–18*, 205.

¹⁶⁴ According to Rom 9:33, God placed the “stone of stumbling” in Israel's way to bring about their stumbling. In other words, God's sending of Christ constituted an active form of DRA against non-elect Israelites.

¹⁶⁵ Paul's quotation of the passage suggests that Christ himself was the agent through whom God would cause (the majority of) Israel to stumble. Such a reading is consistent with the Synoptics' own perspective on Jesus' ministry (cf. Matt 13:10–17; Mark 4:10–12; Luke 8:9–10). Moreover, the mediated nature of God's work in Rom 9:33 demonstrates that it does not refer to the hardening described in Rom 9:18 (contra Abasciano, *Old Testament in Romans 9.10–18*, 205).

¹⁶⁶ Paul clearly links Israel's stumble with their failure to attain the righteousness of God. Given Paul's discussion in Rom 1:18–3:26, such a failure should be understood as having eternal ramifications (cf. Rom 2:1–10).

¹⁶⁷ While Refoulé rightly notes that Paul is concerned with faith in Christ in Rom 9:30–32, he wrongly pits faith in Christ against faith in God. Refoulé, “Romains IX, 30–33,” 179. On the contrary, Paul's Christological citation of Isa 28:16/8:14 shows that, for Paul, faith in God and faith in Christ are

be justified by works,¹⁶⁸ and (2) God’s Word reveals that he *intended* for Christ to be a stumbling stone for the majority of Israelites.¹⁶⁹ As such, to take Israel’s unbelief as the reason for God’s reprobating activity is to place the cart before the horse.¹⁷⁰ Second, though Paul explains that Israel failed to believe in Christ because they pursued the law in the wrong way (i.e., from works instead of from faith), he does *not* claim that Jesus was sent as a punishment for their misguided pursuit of righteousness through law-keeping.¹⁷¹ Had Paul intended this latter notion, he could have used the Isaianic quotation as an inference from verse 32a (“Why did they fail to attain to the law? Because they pursued the law of righteousness not from faith but as though it were to be pursued from works. Therefore, it is written, ‘Behold! I am placing in Zion a stumbling stone!’”). However, it is Romans 9:32b and not Romans 9:33 that is the inference from verse 32a. Thus, there is little exegetical warrant for viewing God’s placement of the stumbling stone as having been a punishment for Israel’s misuse of the law. Third, when Paul revisits Israel’s stumble in Romans 11:7–15, Paul discloses the reason for God’s reprobating agency against them—a reason which had nothing to do with exacting

inseparable.

¹⁶⁸ Rightly Schreiner, *Romans*, 527; Rhyne, “Romans 10:4,” 491.

¹⁶⁹ Similar to Rom 1:28b, *καθὼς* in Rom 9:33 introduces a comparative clause that functions rhetorically as a ground.

¹⁷⁰ In no way does this reading minimize Israel’s own responsibility for unbelief; on the contrary, Paul will go on to once again focus the nation’s failure to submit to God’s righteousness as the reason for their separation from Christ (cf. Rom 10:1–3). However, it does demonstrate that Paul understood divine and human agency as being compatible with one another, even as he assigns preeminence to the former (rightly Calvin, *Romans*, 376).

¹⁷¹ In addition, it is important to remember that Paul is here characterizing the sending of Christ as itself being a form of reprobating influence upon a large portion of Israel. As such, to understand Rom 9:32b–33 as a retributive form of DRA, one would have to argue that Paul believed that God sent Christ as a punishment for Israel’s sins. However, Rom 9:30–33 does not make such a claim and I am unaware of any instance wherein Paul may be said to have characterized the Son’s first-coming as an act of divine retribution against Israel (cf. Rom 3:21–26; 5:6–8, 15–21; 8:1–4, 32; 11:26–27; 15:8–13).

retribution. Instead, the apostle reveals that “Israel had to ‘stumble’ so that the world might be saved.”¹⁷² Thus, Paul’s understanding of Israel’s place within God’s plan of salvation suggests that Israel was caused to stumble for reasons other than divine vengeance.

The concept of DRA makes another appearance in Romans 11:7–10. After further demonstrations of God’s fidelity to his Word in Romans 10:1–21 and 11:1–6, Paul revisits the matter of Israel’s stumble in Romans 11:7–10.¹⁷³ Here, Paul alludes back to Romans 9:30–33 by referring once more to Israel’s failure to obtain what it was seeking¹⁷⁴; however, instead of comparing unbelieving Jews to believing Gentiles (cf. Rom 9:30–31), Paul here describes a contrast *within* Israel between a hardened majority and an elect remnant (Rom 11:7; cf. Rom 9:6, 24–29; 11:1–6).¹⁷⁵ So he states,

What then? That which Israel seeks, this it did not obtain. The elect obtained it,¹⁷⁶ but the rest were hardened, just as it is written: “God gave them a spirit of stupor,

¹⁷² Wright, *Paul and Faithfulness of God*, 1178.

¹⁷³ Moo describes Rom 11:7 as having “an important summary role” and as “blend[ing] the predestinatory focus of 9:6–29 . . . with the human responsibility perspective of 9:30–10:21.” Moo, *Romans*, 697n602.

¹⁷⁴ So also Belli, *Argumentation*, 374.

¹⁷⁵ For others who understand ἡ ἐκλογή in Rom 11:7 to refer to elect Israelites, see Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 313; Peterson, *Romans*, 402; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 606; Belli, *Argumentation*, 374n65; Wright, *Paul and Faithfulness of God*, 1225; Moo, *Romans*, 697; Thielman, *Romans*, 518; Foster, *Renaming Abraham’s Children*, 224; Dixon, “Judgment for Israel,” 575. While it is possible to understand “the elect” (ἡ ἐκλογή) in Rom 11:7 as encompassing both Gentile and Jewish believers (so Schreiner, *Romans*, 570–71; Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 640, 648), it seems more likely that Paul here uses the term to refer to chosen Israelites. Such a reading follows from Rom 11:1, which suggests that the discussion to follow focuses on whether or not God had abandoned the Israelite nation. Moreover, the contrast Paul draws between “the rest” (οἱ λοιποὶ) and “the elect” bolsters this interpretation since the word λοιποὶ suggests that both groups are subsets within a larger group (which in this case is probably the nation of Israel).

¹⁷⁶ Fitzmyer is probably correct to state that “the election” (ἡ ἐκλογή) here expresses the concrete notion of “those whom God chose” (Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 606; see also Luther, *Romans*, 141). Schreiner points out that this formulation “stresses the work of God that accomplished what the seeking of Israel could not.” Schreiner, *Romans*, 570; so also Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 313; Calvin, *Romans*, 416; Cranfield, *Romans 9–16*, 548; Moo, *Romans*, 698n606.

eyes not to see and ears not to hear, until this very day.”¹⁷⁷ And David says, “Let their table become a snare and a trap,¹⁷⁸ an offense and a punishment for them. Let their eyes be darkened so as not to see, and bend their back always.”

The idea of Israel failing to obtain that which it was seeking is strongly reminiscent of Romans 9:31; as such, the object of Israel’s search in Romans 11:7 is probably the “the law of righteousness” or simply righteousness.¹⁷⁹ Moreover, though he uses different vocabulary (πωρόω vs. σκληρόνω), Paul seems to be applying his teaching regarding divine hardening (cf. Rom 9:18) directly towards Israel’s situation.¹⁸⁰ Thus, ἐπωρώθησαν (“they were hardened”) should be understood as a divine passive,¹⁸¹ as Paul’s citation of Isaiah 29:10 also demonstrates (“*God gave them* a spirit of stupor”). This then suggests that, according to Paul, God had divided Israel into a hardened majority and an elect minority.¹⁸² On the one hand, God graciously chose some Jews (like Paul) to be members

¹⁷⁷ Aletti posits that, by changing ἕως τῆς ἡμέρας ταύτης (Deut 29:3 LXX) to ἕως τῆς σήμερον ἡμέρας, Paul “allows us to better perceive the contemporary application of the situation described in Deut 29:3.” Aletti, *Argumentation*, 379.

¹⁷⁸ Scholars have made various attempts to interpret the significance of “their table” within Paul’s argument. Calvin suggests that the word refers to “whatever is desirable and happy in life,” which then becomes ruinous to the reprobate. Calvin, *Romans*, 419–20. Sanday and Headlam contend that the “table” signifies Israel’s dependence upon the Law and the Scriptures, which have become “the very cause of their fall.” Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 315. Both Seifrid and Wright argue that the “table” points towards Israel’s sin of excluding Gentiles from table fellowship (Seifrid, “Romans,” 671; Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1228). Käsemann favors a cultic interpretation, as he claims that “the cultus which represents Jewish piety causes the blinding and fall of Israel.” Käsemann, *Romans*, 302. Ultimately, none of these suggestions is persuasive since Paul does not provide any clarification regarding the matter. Thus, Moo is likely right to say of Rom 11:9–10 that “Paul probably did not intend to apply the details in the quotation to the Jews.” Moo, *Romans*, 701. As such, the reference to “their table” in Rom 11:9 should not be pressed for meaning (rightly Schreiner, *Romans*, 573–74; Cranfield, *Romans 9–16*, 551–52).

¹⁷⁹ Similarly Moo, *Romans*, 697–98; Schreiner, *Romans*, 570; Seifrid, “Romans,” 669; Peterson, *Romans*, 401; Thielman, *Romans*, 517–18; Dixon, “Judgment for Israel,” 575.

¹⁸⁰ See Seifrid, “Romans,” 669; Moo, *Romans*, 698; Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 640–41.

¹⁸¹ Dixon, “Judgment for Israel,” 575; Schreiner, *Romans*, 571–72; Peterson, *Romans*, 402; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 606; Cranfield, *Romans 9–16*, 549; Moo, *Romans*, 698; Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 640; Thielman, *Romans*, 518.

¹⁸² Similarly Moo, *Romans*, 690; Peterson, *Romans*, 396. Litwak is unpersuasive when he suggests that the hardened may not have outnumbered the remnant. See Kenneth Litwak, “One or Two Views of Judaism: Paul in Acts 28 and Romans 11 on Jewish Unbelief,” *TynBul* 57, no. 2 (2006): 243.

of true Israel (Rom 11:7; cf. 9:6–13). By grace (cf. Rom 11:5–6), these individuals obtained the goal of the law, which was God’s saving righteousness through faith in Christ (cf. Rom 10:1–4).¹⁸³ On the other hand, not only did God send Christ with the intention of causing many to stumble (cf. Rom 9:33), but he also hardened most Israelites precisely so that they might misunderstand the significance of the law and fail to believe in Christ (Rom 11:7–10).¹⁸⁴ Far from undermining God’s Word, such a scenario was actually consistent with the OT since the Law (Deut 29:3), the Prophets (Isa 29:10), and the Writings (Ps 68:23–24 LXX)¹⁸⁵ all bore witness to the Lord’s willingness to subject Israel to DRA.¹⁸⁶ Altogether, Romans 11:7–10 provides a clear example of DRA since it refers to God’s influence as the reason why most Israelites rejected Christ and found themselves outside of God’s salvation.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸³ “What the elect obtained by God’s grace was the righteousness that comes from faith in their Messiah.” Peterson, *Romans*, 402.

¹⁸⁴ As Eastman states, “Behind their ‘failure to believe’ is the ‘hardening’ activity of God. God’s sovereign freedom to harden hearts as well as to have mercy is now directed at empirical Israel itself.” Eastman, “Israel and the Mercy of God,” 384. Additionally, Moo is correct to reject the argument that Rom 11:7–10 speaks of Israel at a corporate level and not of Israelites at an individual level. As he points out, “vv. 7b–10 distinguish among people *within* the corporate entity of Israel [emphasis added].” Moo, *Romans*, 699. As such, the hardening described should be understood as terminating upon individual Israelites.

¹⁸⁵ As Evans states, “In this cluster of texts the three divisions of Tanak are represented, which signifies Paul’s effort to marshal the total witness of scripture.” Evans, “Hermeneutics of ‘True Prophecy,’” 568n26. While Wagner doubts that Paul was aware of a tripartite division of the canon, he does affirm that Paul’s use of these three OT books is significant. As he says, “Paul’s pattern of conjoining excerpts from Deuteronomy, Isaiah, and the Psalms points to his recognition of some sort of ‘canon within the canon’ that spanned the range of scriptural genres.” Wagner, *Heralds of Good News*, 257n122. For an argument that seeks to establish that the tripartite division was known during Paul’s time, see Roger T. Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church and Its Background in Early Judaism* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 110–80.

¹⁸⁶ Litwak misses the significance of the OT quotations in Paul’s argument when he says, “Paul is saying that his audience is acting the same way that its ancestors acted in being blind to God’s purposes and therefore rejecting God’s purposes.” Litwak, “Views of Judaism,” 245. Seifrid better captures the apostle’s meaning: “The present hardening of Israel conforms to the pattern of God’s dealings with Israel in the past.” Seifrid, “Romans,” 669; see also Schreiner, *Romans*, 572; Peterson, *Romans*, 404; Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 649.

¹⁸⁷ Schreiner correctly points out that “evidence is lacking that the hardening to which Paul

With regards to the characterization of God’s influence in Romans 11:7–10, it seems likely that Paul has in mind an immediate, active, eternal, and non-retributive form of DRA. First of all, since Romans 11:7 alludes back to Romans 9:18, it seems reasonable to assume a similar description of DRA unless the immediate context demands otherwise. Second, in addition to the hardening language, the manner in which Paul combines Isaiah 29:10 and Deuteronomy 29:3 suggests that he had in mind an active and immediate form of divine influence.¹⁸⁸ In their original contexts, Isaiah 29:10 bore witness to an active, mediate/immediate form of influence while Deuteronomy 29:3 spoke of DRA that was passive and immediate.¹⁸⁹ In his citation, Paul uses the active characterization of Isaiah 29:10a (“God *gave them* a spirit of stupor”) as opposed to the passive one found in Deuteronomy 29:3 (“And the Lord God *did not give you* a heart to know”).¹⁹⁰ Meanwhile, in the place of the mediated element in Isaiah 29:10b (“He will

refers is reversible.” Schreiner, *Romans*, 596–97. While Paul does hope that some Israelites might be saved through his ministry (cf. Rom 11:13–14), such an expectation need not suggest that Paul understood hardening to be reversible (contra Peterson, *Romans*, 403; Wright, *Paul and Faithfulness of God*, 1237). On the contrary, Paul’s optimism was probably based on his belief that members of the elect remnant within Israel (cf. Rom 9:24–28; 11:1–4, 7) would respond positively to the gospel. Furthermore, since Paul contrasts the remnant with “the rest” who were hardened, he probably believed that the former never were subjected to the negative influence experienced by the latter. Therefore, Paul would have likely understood conversions among his kinfolk to indicate membership among the elect remnant rather than assuming the reversal of divine hardening. Similarly, Paul’s expectation of the future salvation of the majority of Israel (cf. Rom 11:11–12, 15, 26) does not evidence the belief that hardening could somehow be reversed. Instead, it suggests that he anticipated a future day in which God would raise up a generation of Israelites who were mostly members of the elect and who would therefore be brought to saving faith.

¹⁸⁸ As Wagner argues, “With Isaiah 29:10 as catalyst, Moses’ lament that God has not intervened to cure Israel’s obtuse rebelliousness . . . is transmuted into the much stronger claim that Israel’s insensibility has been directly *caused by God*.” Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News*, 243–44. Similarly Schreiner, *Romans*, 572; Moo, *Romans*, 699–700; Aletti, *Argumentation*, 376–77; Cranfield, *Romans 9–16*, 549–50; Thielman, *Romans*, 519.

¹⁸⁹ See my discussions in chap. 5: “DRA in the Book of Isaiah”; “DRA against Israel”; “Other Passages in Isaiah.” See also chap. 3, s.v. “DRA in Deuteronomy.”

¹⁹⁰ See also Aletti, *Argumentation*, 376–77; Watson, *Paul and Hermeneutics of Faith*, 399 (though Watson unconvincingly minimizes the importance of Isa 29:10 in Paul’s citation); Cranfield, *Romans 9–16*, 549–50.

blind their eyes, even the prophets”), Paul inserts Deuteronomy 29:3’s reference to unseeing eyes and unhearing ears; by doing so, he leaves out the suggestion that God misled Israel through their leaders and instead portrays God’s reprobating influence as directly impacting the spiritual faculties of individual Israelites. In these ways, these OT citations support the contention that Paul understood God to have actively and immediately influenced Israel towards condemnation.¹⁹¹ Third, since God’s influence here prevents Israel from experiencing salvation, it seems more likely than not that DRA here has eternal punishment as its consequence. Lastly, though one could make a plausible argument for a retributive interpretation based on Paul’s citation of Psalm 98:23–24 (LXX),¹⁹² a non-retributive reading of Romans 11:7–10 is slightly more

¹⁹¹ Interestingly, the way that Paul combines Isa 29:10 and Deut 29:3 leads to a statement that reflects the thought found in Exod 4:11. Moreover, it also shares lexical (ἔδωκεν and the root βλέπω) and conceptual (i.e., blindness and deafness) affinities with both Deut 29:3 (LXX) and Rom 11:8. At the risk of needlessly multiplying hypotheses, perhaps Exod 4:11 provided Paul with the warrant for turning the negative statement found in Deut 29:3 into a positive one.

¹⁹² In my judgment, the strongest exegetical argument in favor of a retributive reading of Rom 11:7–10 would be based on Paul’s citation of Ps 68:23–24 (LXX; MT Ps 69:23–24). Because Ps 68 involves David praying for deliverance from those who are unjustly persecuting him, one could argue that Paul’s use of the imprecatory psalm implies that DRA here is retributive. Moreover, Paul includes within his quote a reference to retribution (“Let their table become . . . a punishment for them”). While these observations are important, I do not think they decisively settle the question of whether or not Paul means to describe the hardening of Israel as being an act of divine retribution. First of all, it is Paul’s own immediate argument that must serve as the decisive context for interpreting the meaning of his citations (rightly Kujanpää, “From Eloquence,” 200–201). While the original literary contexts of the OT passages used by Paul can be helpful for determining his meaning, it is the immediate literary context that determines *which aspects* of the original context are relevant for the apostle’s present argument. This is because the use of quotations *always* involves the decision to highlight some elements of the original context and not others. As Kujanpää reports, “In oral communication . . . the speakers quoting can never reproduce all the aspects of the original event and rather select the aspects they wish to highlight. . . . In the case of written texts, the authors quoting make similar choices when they delineate a certain passage and detach it from its original context. Many aspects of the original passage are not transferred to the new environment of the quoted words” (“From Eloquence,” 190). Given this feature of quotations in general, one must prove (rather than simply assume) that Paul specifically intended to import the connotations of retribution surrounding Ps 68:23–24 into the discussion of hardening in Rom 11:7–10. However, the context around Rom 11:10 does not support such a contention. Thus, rather than using Ps 68:23–24 in order to portray Israel’s hardening as an act of divine retribution, I would argue that Paul quoted the Psalm for two reasons: (1) because he wanted to prove from the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings that God had always shown a willingness to negatively influence Israel; and (2) because it was linked to Deut 29:3 and Isa 29:10 by the catchword “eyes” and by the notion of spiritual sightlessness. That these factors sufficiently explain Paul’s attraction to Ps 68:23–24 suggests that the psalm probably performed a limited

compelling than the alternative for three reasons¹⁹³: (1) Paul’s discussion of divine hardening in Romans 9:18 points in this direction; (2) Romans 11:5–6 strongly suggests that the distinction between the elect and the hardened cannot be explained through recourse to human agency¹⁹⁴; and (3) Paul provides a sufficient explanation for God’s motivations in hardening Israel without referencing a desire for retribution.¹⁹⁵ For these

function within Paul’s overall argument (i.e., to show God’s willingness to subject Israel to reprobating agency); as such, it would be a mistake allow details within the quotation to play an oversized influence in our understanding of Paul’s conception of hardening. Second, because most of the details within the quotation from Ps 68 seem to be of little importance to Paul’s argument (similarly Moo, *Romans*, 701), it is unlikely that the mention of “punishment” (ἀνταπόδομα) has an important place in Paul’s discussion of Israel’s hardening. As others have noted, Paul does not comment on the meaning of “their table,” nor does he disclose what he thinks “bend their backs always” means. Given Paul’s lack of interest in these details, it seems reasonable to suspect that some aspects of this quotation are incidental features of a passage that he cited in order to make a specific point: namely, that God has shown in the past a willingness to subject Israel to reprobating agency. And because Paul does not highlight retribution as the reason for hardening in Rom 11:7ff or elsewhere, I contend that εἰς ἀνταπόδομα αὐτοῖς is likewise incidental to the actual point Paul intends to make through his use of the psalm.

¹⁹³ Calvin gives expression to a non-retributive reading when he says of Rom 11:7, “What Paul means with regard to the reprobate is,—that the beginning of their ruin and condemnation is from this—that they are forsaken by God.” Calvin, *Romans*, 417. And again, “The ungodly are indeed, for their sins, visited by God’s judgment with blindness; but if we seek for the source of their ruin, we must come to this,—that being accursed by God, they cannot by all their deeds, sayings, and purposes, get and obtain anything but a curse” (417). For others who adopt a non-retributive view of DRA in Rom 11:7–10, see Aletti, *Argumentation*, 384n114; Moo, *Romans*, 698n610. For examples of those who disagree and take a retributive position, see Seifrid, “Romans,” 671; Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 313; Thielman, *Romans*, 517; Wagner, *Heralds of Good News*, 261–62.

¹⁹⁴ To distinguish the elect and the hardened on the basis of human agency would be to overturn Paul’s teaching regarding the nature of election. The Apostle states that a faithful remnant continued to exist “in accordance with [God’s] gracious election” (κατ’ἐκλογὴν χάριτος; Rom 11:5). By the use of the expression κατ’ἐκλογὴν, Paul recalls Rom 9:11 (ἵνα ἡ κατ’ἐκλογὴν πρόθεσις τοῦ θεοῦ μένη; see Käsemann, *Romans*, 300), where he argued that membership among the true people of God was based on God’s choice as opposed to human ancestry or agency. In keeping with what he had already said about election in Rom 9:6–18, Paul now states that, *by definition*, the gracious nature of God’s election means that works cannot be the basis of one’s elect status (Rom 11:6; see Schreiner, *Romans*, 568–69; Cranfield, *Romans 9–16*, 547–48; Moo, *Romans*, 696). And if works are not the basis of one’s place among the elect, it would seem to follow that works cannot be the basis of one’s membership among “the rest” who “were hardened.” Similarly, see Calvin, *Romans*, 414–15.

¹⁹⁵ Paul describes DRA as being motivated by God’s intention to use the temporary rejection of Israel as a means of embracing the nations within his saving plan (Rom 11:11–15, 25–32; so also Cranfield, *Romans 9–16*, 549; Foster, *Renaming Abraham’s Children*, 245–46; Dixon, “Judgment for Israel,” 578; Eastman, “Israel and Mercy of God,” 379; Evans, “Hermeneutics of ‘True Prophecy,’” 568, 570; Goodrich, “Word of God,” 57). According to Rom 11:11–15 and 11:25–32, God had a purpose *in* Israel’s unbelief, which suggests that the latter was somehow determined by the divine will. Moreover,

reasons, readers should probably understand hardening in Romans 11:7–10 to be non-retributive.¹⁹⁶

Finally, Paul addresses the hardening of Israel one more time in Romans 11:25–27.¹⁹⁷ In verse 25, Paul states that “a partial hardening has come upon Israel” (πάρωσις ἀπὸ μέρους τῷ Ἰσραὴλ γέγονεν).¹⁹⁸ This statement alludes back to what Paul has already said about the hardening of Israel (cf. Rom 9:18; 11:7–10) and it adds little to the apostle’s characterization of DRA.¹⁹⁹ However, verses 25–27 do more clearly disclose aspects of God’s plan of salvation at which Paul has previously hinted.²⁰⁰ Though God is

given that Paul ties Israel’s hardening to the unfolding of salvation history, it seems unlikely that he would have understood this form of DRA to have been retributive since that would imply that God’s plan of salvation developed in response to decisions made outside his own will. Such a suggestion (i.e., that God’s plan for history was shaped around and in response to Israel’s autonomous choices) does not fit well with the emphasis on divine sovereignty that pervades Rom 9–11.

¹⁹⁶ It is important to remember that by non-retributive DRA, I do not mean that God negatively influences the innocent towards sin and judgment; instead, by “non-retributive,” I refer to cases of DRA wherein retribution is not presented as the ground for God’s exercise of reprobating influence. Thus, DRA may terminate upon sinners and *still* be non-retributive. In this way, my understanding of hardening in Rom 11:7–10 is consistent with that of Moo’s, who says, “This is not to say that God chooses which people to harden based on the sin or failure to believe of those individuals. . . . It is rather that God’s hardening is to be seen as affecting individuals who are already sinners.” Moo, *Romans*, 699n613.

¹⁹⁷ Litwak makes the interesting observation that the divine hardening of Israel serves as a “point of contact” between Rom 11:25–27 and Acts 28:16–31, since in both passages, Paul asserts that Israel’s resistance to the gospel is part of God’s plan. Litwak, “Views of Judaism,” 248.

¹⁹⁸ As Cranfield correctly observes, ἀπὸ μέρους “refers to the fact that not all Jews were hardened.” Cranfield, *Romans 9–16*, 575. See also P. H. R. van Houwelingen, “The Redemptive-Historical Dynamics of the Salvation of ‘All Israel’ (Rom. 11:26a),” *Calvin Theological Journal* 46 (2011): 304; Wagner, *Heralds of Good News*, 278n191; Moo, *Romans*, 732n783.

¹⁹⁹ Since Rom 11:25 alludes back to the hardening discussed in Rom 11:7–10 (and 9:18), it should probably be similarly characterized (i.e., non-retributive, active, immediate, and eternal).

²⁰⁰ The interpretation of Rom 11:25–27 is highly debated. However, most of the controversies surrounding these verses do not impinge upon the question of Paul’s characterization of DRA. For this reason, I do not devote any space to defending my interpretation of Rom 11:25–27 as a whole. I take the passage to refer to Paul’s expectation that God would fulfill his saving promises to Israel through a future ingathering of a large number of unhardened Israelites who would respond to Christ with faith and repentance. For others who adopt similar interpretations, see Linebaugh, “Not the End,” 156–63; Goodrich, “Word of God,” 57–58; Moo, *Romans*, 729–41; Schreiner, *Romans*, 597–607; Thielman, *Romans*, 545–48; Cranfield, *Romans 9–16*, 574–77.

at present preventing Israel from coming to Christ, he does not intend to harden his people forever. Instead, after fulfilling his saving purposes towards the Gentiles, God will cease subjecting the chosen nation to reprobating influence.²⁰¹ In other words, God will raise up an unhardened generation of Israelites who will be enabled to respond to the gospel in faith and repentance.²⁰² In this way,²⁰³ Israel will be saved and God will climactically fulfill his word of promise to his people (cf. Rom 9:6).²⁰⁴

DRA in 2 Thessalonians

A final, explicit example of DRA within the Pauline corpus appears in the second chapter of Paul's second correspondence with the Thessalonians.²⁰⁵ In 2 Thessalonians 2:8–12, Paul says,

And then the lawless one will be revealed—whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and will reduce to nothing at the appearance of his arrival—

²⁰¹ Contra Wright, *Paul and Faithfulness of God*, 1237–38.

²⁰² This need not mean that every Israelite during that time would be saved; instead, πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ in v. 26 should be understood to refer to the majority of ethnic Israelites after the fullness of the Gentiles is saved. Moreover, Paul's argument throughout Rom 9–11 precludes the possibility that Israel might be saved apart from faith in Christ. See Schreiner, *Romans*, 596, 599; Moo, *Romans*, 737–741.

²⁰³ I understand καὶ οὕτως to refer to the manner in which Israel would be saved. At the same time, Paul describes how Israel will be saved precisely by outlining the sequence of events which would lead up to the nation's salvation. As Schreiner states, "Paul denotes the manner in which Israel would be saved, but in this context what is distinctive about the manner is the time frame in which Israel would be saved: all Israel is saved only *after* the fullness of the gentiles enters in." Schreiner, *Romans*, 602. See also Moo, *Romans*, 735.

²⁰⁴ Himes is correct to point out that Rom 11:26 is best understood to refer to the salvation of ethnic Israelites; otherwise, "Paul's change from sorrow over his ethnic kin (9:1–3) to glorious hope (11:33–36) would be inexplicable." Paul A. Himes, "Israel and Her Vocation: The Fourth Stage of Romans 11," *BibSac* 176 (2019): 40.

²⁰⁵ It is no secret that 2 Thess 2 has continued to bedevil interpreters. As Schreiner says of 2 Thess 2:1–12, "Virtually all agree that these verses are among the most difficult to understand in all of the Pauline literature." Thomas R. Schreiner, *Handbook on Acts and Paul's Letters*, Handbooks on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 356. Though these verses are quite puzzling, one does not need to solve the entire puzzle in order to closely examine the pieces that bear witness to DRA. As such, I wade into only those discussions that are pertinent to the task at hand.

whose arrival takes place according to the work of Satan, with²⁰⁶ every miracle, even signs and false wonders, and with every unrighteous deception directed against those who are perishing; [all this will take place] because they did not receive the love of the truth in order to be saved. And because of this, God is sending²⁰⁷ against them a work of deception in order that they might believe the lie, so that all those who do not believe the truth but take pleasure in unrighteousness might be judged.

In these verses, Paul seems to be speaking of the two interrelated events, i.e., the apostasy and the revelation of “the lawless one,”²⁰⁸ that must take place before Christ returns on the eschatological day of the Lord (cf. 2 Thess 2:3). The Apostle claims that the arrival of “the lawless one” will be empowered by Satan,²⁰⁹ as evidenced by the miracles and signs that will either accompany him or be performed by him. These deceptive works of power will function against a specific group of persons (i.e., “those who are perishing”) by

²⁰⁶ Bruce correctly contends that both uses of ἐν in vv. 9–10 are comitative. See F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, WBC (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1982), 173.

²⁰⁷ Though the verb is in the present tense (πέμπει), Paul is most likely referring to a future act of God; contra Jeffrey A. D. Weima, “The Slaying of Satan’s Superman and the Sure Salvation of the Saints: Paul’s Apocalyptic Word of Comfort (2 Thessalonians 2:1–17),” *Calvin Theological Journal* 41 (2006): 83; Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *First and Second Thessalonians*, paperback ed., Int (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012), 114. First of all, the use of the present tense verb for future actions is a regular feature of classical and NT Greek (see Herbert Weir Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, ed. Gordon M. Messing [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920], 421; Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996], 535–37). Second, the presence of πέμπει in several early manuscripts suggests that early interpreters understood the text to refer to the future. Lastly, if the objects of God’s judgment in v. 11 are those described in v. 10, then πέμπει probably refers to the future since “those who are perishing” are said to be impacted by the future activities of Satan and “the lawless one.” For others who interpret πέμπει to refer to the future, see Gary S. Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 293; Maarten J. J. Menken, *2 Thessalonians*, New Testament Readings (London: Routledge, 1994), 115; Fritz W. Röcker, *Belial und Katechon: Eine Untersuchung zu 2Thess 2,1–12 und 1Thess 4,13–5,11*, WUNT (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 507–8 (though he takes it as also having an iterative sense).

²⁰⁸ Menken is probably right to conclude that the revelation of the man of lawlessness “causes the apostasy mentioned in 2.3.” Menken, *2 Thessalonians*, 115.

²⁰⁹ Second Thess 2:9–10 presents “the lawless one” as being subordinate to Satan. Weima, “Satan’s Superman,” 80; Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 290; Menken, *2 Thessalonians*, 115. In fact, his arrival is said to be empowered or brought about by the latter (rightly Todd D. Still, “Eschatology in the Thessalonian Letters,” *Review and Expositor* 96 [1999]: 201; Frank Witt Hughes, *Early Christian Rhetoric and 2 Thessalonians*, JSNTSup [Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989], 58; Colin R. Nicholl, “Michael, the Restrainer Removed (2 Thess 2:6–7),” in *From Hope to Despair in Thessalonica: Situating 1 and 2 Thessalonians*, SNTSMS [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004], 227).

misleading them into further unrighteousness and by preventing them from trusting in God's saving truth.²¹⁰ According to verse 10b, the reason this group would be subjected to Satanic influence is because they will have already shown a disdain for the truth.²¹¹ However, rather than claiming that Satan alone would be responsible for this deception,

²¹⁰ Τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις should probably be understood as a dative of disadvantage (rightly Röcker, *Belial und Katechon*, 503); as such, it is only “those who are perishing” who are persuaded by the lawless one's Satanic activities (rightly Menken, *2 Thessalonians*, 116; Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 173).

²¹¹ While the construction ἀνθ' ὧν can indicate a ground or an inference/result, most scholars rightly identify it as introducing a reason in 2 Thess 2:10b. However, it is more difficult to identify which proposition finds its ground in v. 10b. There seem to be three possibilities. First, many suggest that v. 10b explains why “those who are perishing” do in fact perish (Schreiner, *Handbook*, 361; Weima, “Satan's Superman,” 83; Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 269; Menken, *2 Thessalonians*, 116). On this reading, the clause introduced by ἀνθ' ὧν seems to modify τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις (or perhaps an ellipted clause conceptually rooted in τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις). However, the syntactical basis for this interpretation is wanting: when used to indicate a ground or an inference, ἀνθ' ὧν does not modify a substantival participle in the NT (cf. Luke 1:20; 12:3; 19:44; Acts 12:23) or in the LXX (cf. Gen 22:18; 26:5; Lev 26:43; Num 25:13; Deut 8:20; 22:29; 28:46–48; Judg 11:36; 1 Sam 26:21; 2 Sam 3:30; 1 Kgs 3:11–12; 8:18; 9:9; 11:11, 31–33; 13:21–22; 16:2–3; 21:28, 36; 2 Kgs 10:30; 22:16–17; 2 Chr 1:11–12; 21:12–14; 34:24–25; Esth 14:6; Jdt 7:15; 9:2–3; 13:20; 4 Macc 12:11–12; 18:1–3; Ps 108:15–16; Prov 1:32; Job 36:14–15; Pss. Sol 2:2–3, 13; Hos 7:16–8:1; Amos 1:3, 9, 13; 2:1, 6; 5:11; Mic 3:4; 5:14; Joel 4:4–5, 19; Hag 1:9–10; Zech 1:15; 12:10; 13:4; Mal 2:9; Isa 3:16–17; 53:12; Jer 5:14, 19; 7:13–14; 16:10–11; 19:3–6; 22:8–9; 23:37–39; 27:7; 38:20; Ezek 5:7–8, 11; 13:7–10, 21–23; 15:8; 16:36, 43; 20:15–16, 23–24; 21:9–10, 29; 22:19; 23:35; 24:12–13; 25:3–9, 12–13, 15–16; 26:2–3; 28:1–7; 29:6; 31:10–11; 36:2–3, 13–14; 39:23; 44:12; Dan 11:30). Moreover, if the ἀνθ' ὧν construction is taken to modify τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις, then it would seem to function as a restrictive clause that further identifies a group of persons. This would then imply the existence of other “perishing ones” who differ from those being described in 2 Thess 2:10 (i.e., these are the ones who perish because they did not receive the love of the truth, but there are others who perish for different reasons). However, it is unlikely that Paul meant to use the clause introduced by ἀνθ' ὧν to further identify “those who are perishing.” For these reasons, I do not favor viewing ἀνθ' ὧν as grounding τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις. A second possibility is that v. 10b modifies the relative clause οὗ ἐστὶν ἡ παρουσία. On this reading, Paul would be claiming that the Satanic arrival of “the lawless one” and the efficacy of his false miracles among “those who are perishing” are somehow grounded in the latter group's unbelief (see Augustine, *Concerning the City of God against the Pagans*, trans. Henry Bettenson, Penguin Classics [New York: Penguin, 2003], 934–35; Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 174). In light of vv. 11–12, this would then suggest that God somehow stood behind these malevolent forces and was using them to punish the unbelieving. A third possibility is to advocate for both of the preceding options. Beale seems to voice this position when he says, “The end-time enemy will also be revealed so that his followers are further deceived and judged along with him. . . . The devil incarnate aims this deception at unbelievers who are perishing. *The reason that they are perishing is also the reason why they will be deceived further and ultimately judged* [emphasis added]. . . . The final judgment of unbelievers living on earth at the final phase of history will occur in two stages: they will be deceived further by the antichrist and then be condemned.” G. K. Beale, *1–2 Thessalonians*, IVP New Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 222. But since this option continues to be undermined by the problems related to the first view, this third approach is not an improvement over the second. For this reason, it seems best to take v. 10b as grounding the Satanic appearance of “the lawless one” and his deceptive impact on “those who are perishing.”

Paul goes on to posit God’s behind-the-scenes involvement: God was the one who sent the “work of deception,” thereby ensuring that certain persons would believe what was false, commit further acts of unrighteousness,²¹² and be judged as a result (cf. 2 Thess 2:11–12). Furthermore, the phrase “and because of this” (καὶ διὰ τοῦτο) in verse 11 points to verse 10b as the reason for God’s actions²¹³; and so according to the apostle, God will concoct this deceitful operation as a divine judgment against those who do not love the truth.²¹⁴ Thus, 2 Thessalonians 2:11–12 reveals that God intends to punish those who do not love the truth in poetic fashion: because they refused the truth,²¹⁵ God leads them to believe what is false through the Satanic influence of the lawless one.²¹⁶ And this is in

²¹² Paul draws a connection between falsehood and sinful behavior in 2 Thess 2:8–12. First, in the prepositional phrase ἐν πάσῃ ἀπάτῃ ἀδικίας (2 Thess 2:10), the genitive probably indicates what these deceptions produce (for this type of genitive, see Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 106–7). In other words, the Satanic influence at work through “the lawless one” would mislead people into committing further acts of unrighteousness (similarly Röcker, *Belial und Katechon*, 502–3, 508; Beale, *1–2 Thessalonians*, 222; Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 294; Paul Metzger, *Katechon: II Thess 2, 1–12 im Horizont apokalyptischen Denkens*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche [Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005], 117). Second, v. 12 seems to create a contrast between “believing the truth” and “taking pleasure in unrighteousness.” This then suggests that God’s “work of deception” (which would prevent persons from believing the truth) would serve to influence unbelievers towards wicked behavior (see also Menken, *2 Thessalonians*, 118; Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 175).

²¹³ In the LXX, διὰ τοῦτο is often used to refer back to a reason posited by ἀνθ’ ὧν. For just a few examples, see 1 Kgs 9:9; Amos 5:11; Hag 1:9–10; Isa 53:12; Jer 23:38–39; Ezek 5:7–8; 13:8.

²¹⁴ The inclusion of καὶ distinguishes Paul’s usage of ἀνθ’ ὧν + διὰ τοῦτο formula from the examples found in the LXX. Moreover, the conjunction suggests that v. 11 is an *additional* inference taken from v. 10b. As such, it seems warranted to conclude that v. 10b supplies the ground for both vv. 9–10a as well as v. 11. Another way of putting it is that there is a bilateral relationship between the propositions in 2 Thess 2:9–11: v. 10b is the ground for v. 9–10a while v. 11 is an inference drawn from v. 10b. For a description of bilateral relationships, see Thomas R. Schreiner, *Interpreting the Pauline Epistles*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 107–8.

²¹⁵ Menken rightly argues that “the truth” here refers to the claims of the Christian gospel. Menken, *2 Thessalonians*, 117.

²¹⁶ Tonstad is correct to point out that those who fall for the divine deception are “the ones who did not believe the truth.” Sigve K. Tonstad, “The Restraint Removed: A Truly Alarming Thought (2 Thess 2:1–12),” *HBT* 29 (2007): 148–50. Moreover, he is probably correct to suggest a connection between the work of the lawless one/Satan and God’s own activity described in 2 Thess 2:11–12. However, there is little basis for his argument that ὁ θεός in v. 11 should be understood as a tongue-in-cheek reference to the lawless one. This is unpersuasive because the apostle provides no signals that ὁ θεός was intended in a sarcastic manner. On the contrary, since the apostle has already used the article to distinguish between false

keeping with his purpose,²¹⁷ which is to ensure that “all those who do not believe the truth but take pleasure in unrighteousness” would fail to experience salvation and would be eternally condemned.²¹⁸

Altogether, 2 Thessalonians 2:8–12 seems to describe a retributive, eternal, mediated, active/passive form of DRA. First, these verses portray retributive DRA because God is said to punish lovers of falsehoods by subjecting them to irresistibly alluring deceptions which lead first to acts of unrighteousness and finally to divine judgment.²¹⁹ Second, Paul most likely has an eternal form of DRA in mind since the condemnation described in verse 12 probably refers to eternal punishment.²²⁰ In 2 Thessalonians 1:8–9, Paul has already said that “those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus” will be punished with “eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and away from the glory of his might.”²²¹ In context, the refusal

gods and the one true God in 2 Thess 2:4 (cf. “over every so-called god” [ἐπὶ πάντα λεγόμενον θεὸν] and “a god” [θεός] versus “into the temple of God” [εἰς τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ]), the articulated form ὁ θεός in v. 11 should be understood to refer to the one true God.

²¹⁷ The ἵνα in v. 12 introduces a purpose clause that modifies πέμπει in v. 11; as such, God’s action in sending the “work of deception” was meant to bring about the condemnation of the unbelievers (rightly Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 294).

²¹⁸ Paul highlights the importance of divine agency in bringing about the condemnation of “those who are perishing.” Nevertheless, 2 Thess 2:12 also implies that their judgment will be deserved. As Calvin says, “The participle εὐδοκῆσαντες means (so to speak) a voluntary inclination to evil, for in this way every excuse is cut off from the ungrateful, when they take so much *pleasure in unrighteousness*, as to prefer it to the righteousness of God.” John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, trans. John Pringle, 500th anniversary ed., *Calvin’s Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 340.

²¹⁹ Similarly, Schreiner, *Handbook*, 361; Röcker, *Belial und Katechon*, 507; Beale, *1–2 Thessalonians*, 222–23; Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 293; Gaventa, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 115; Menken, *2 Thessalonians*, 117; Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 174; Hughes, *Early Christian Rhetoric*, 61; Calvin, *Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, 338; Augustine, *City of God*, 934–35.

²²⁰ For others who see the condemnation described in 2 Thess 2:12 as referring to eternal punishment, see Beale, *1–2 Thessalonians*, 223.

²²¹ For others who take 2 Thess 1:9 to refer to divine punishment of an eternal duration, see Schreiner, *Handbook*, 355; Beale, *1–2 Thessalonians*, 187–89; Peter M. Head, “The Duration of Divine Judgment in the New Testament,” in *Eschatology in the Bible and Theology: Evangelical Essays at the*

to believe or love the truth (cf. 2 Thess 2:10–12) seems to correspond to the refusal to acknowledge God or submit to the gospel (cf. 2 Thess 1:8–9)²²²; as such, Paul probably understood the punishments ascribed to those who do the latter to also apply to those who do the former. Third, it seems to be the case that 2 Thessalonians 2:8–12 portrays God’s reprobating agency as being mediated through Satan and “the lawless one.”²²³ To begin with, certain lexical and conceptual parallels between verses 9–10 and verses 11–12 raise this possibility. Both Satan and God are said to perform an operation that seems to involve deception. In the case of the former, Satan’s *work* ushers in the arrival of his end-time representative (κατ’ ἐνέργειαν τοῦ σατανᾶ), through whom he performs “miracles of falsehood” (τέρασιν ψεύδους) and “every deception leading to *unrighteousness*” (ἐν πάσῃ ἀπάτῃ ἀδικίας) against those who are perishing. As is easy to see, this description of Satan’s activity seems to closely parallel the actions ascribed to God in verses 11–12. God also accomplishes a *work* of deception (ἐνέργειαν πλάνης) that leads individuals who love *unrighteousness* (εὐδοκῆσαντες τῆ ἀδικία) to believe *falsehoods* (εἰς τὸ πιστεῦσαι αὐτοὺς τῷ ψεύδει). In addition, a single reason seems to stand behind both Satan’s activity and God’s judgment: both are said to be responses to unbelievers’ apathy towards the truth.²²⁴ Since it is unlikely that Paul portrays Satan to have been motivated by a desire

Dawn of a New Millennium, ed. Kent E. Brower and Mark W. Elliott (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 225–26.

²²² Similarly Menken, *2 Thessalonians*, 117.

²²³ Bruce’s comments on this subject are confused. In some places he affirms an immediate form of DRA. For instance, in commenting on God’s “work of deception,” he says that “a power is set in operation within them which makes them prone to embrace error or be led astray.” Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 174. Then later, he says that “the embracing of falsehood, which leads to destruction, is the judgment divinely decreed on ‘all those who have not believed the truth’” (174). However, in another place, he distances God from negative influence by stating that “the true God is not the deliberate author of this infatuation; it is, as Paul puts it in 2 Cor 4:4, ‘the god of this aeon’ . . . who ‘has blinded the minds of the unbelievers’” (174). While I agree that 2 Thess 2:8–12 describes Satan playing a mediating role in God’s work of deception, Bruce is wrong to claim that the latter is “not the deliberate author of this infatuation.” Moreover, it is unclear how his latter statement is consistent with his earlier ones.

²²⁴ In v. 10b, Paul seems to posit a reason behind the arrival of the son of lawlessness which

for retributive justice, it seems reasonable to conclude that 2 Thessalonians 2:9–10 hints that Satan was merely a tool being used by God to punish unbelievers.²²⁵ Furthermore, a supporting argument for mediated DRA may be put forward on the basis of 2 Thessalonians 2:6–7. As most commentators observe, these verses suggest that the man of lawlessness will only come once τὸ κατέχον (“the thing that restrains”) and ὁ κατέχων (“the one who restrains”) stop detaining him.²²⁶ If one understands τὸ κατέχον and ὁ κατέχων to refer to something/someone that/who acts in accordance with God’s will or through his empowerment,²²⁷ then it would seem to follow that its/his/their departure would occur by God’s command; hence, the arrival of “the lawless one” must take place

proceeds on the basis of the work of Satan. As the apostle states, these events (which include the deception of unbelievers) will come about “because they did not receive the love of the truth which would have resulted in their salvation” (ἀνθ’ ὧν τὴν ἀγάπην τῆς ἀληθείας οὐκ ἐδέξαντο εἰς τὸ σωθῆναι αὐτούς). This very reason is then presented as also grounding God’s own deceptive work through the phrase καὶ διὰ τοῦτο (“and because of this”) in v. 11.

²²⁵ So Calvin says, “In short, Paul declares that Antichrist will be the minister of God’s righteous vengeance against those who, being called to salvation, have rejected the gospel, and have preferred to apply their mind to impiety and errors.” Calvin, *Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, 338. See also Metzger, *Katechon*, 117.

²²⁶ As is well-known, the identity/ies of τὸ κατέχον and ὁ κατέχων is/are heavily debated. Suggestions include: τὸ κατέχον = divine plan of salvation, ὁ κατέχων = Paul (Stuhlmacher, *Biblical Theology*, 491); τὸ κατέχον = Roman empire, ὁ κατέχων = Roman emperor (Metzger, *Katechon*, 287); τὸ κατέχον = God’s will, ὁ κατέχων = God (Roger D. Aus, “God’s Plan and God’s Power: Isaiah 66 and the Restraining Factors of 2 Thess 2:6–7,” *JBL* 96, no. 4 [1977]: 544–52); τὸ κατέχον and ὁ κατέχων = the archangel, Michael (Nicholl, “Restrainer Removed,” 230–48); τὸ κατέχον = cosmic order, ὁ κατέχων = God or an angel (Eduard Verhoef, “The Delay of the Coming of the Lord Is Controlled by God,” *BN* 100 [1999]: 43–44); τὸ κατέχον = the inclusion of the Gentiles; ὁ κατέχων = the antichrist (Calvin, *Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, 333–34); τὸ κατέχον = God’s predetermination of the timing of the end/the proclamation of the gospel, ὁ κατέχων = God/preachers (Röcker, *Belial und Katechon*, 468–73). For an overview of scholarship on this issue, see Röcker, *Belial und Katechon*, 422–73.

²²⁷ My argument at this point does not favor any particular identification for τὸ κατέχον and ὁ κατέχων. So long as Paul is speaking of something/someone that (1) expresses or acts in accordance with God’s will, (2) to prevent the coming of Satan’s agent, then the point I am trying to make stands. For examples of scholars who understand God as standing behind the activity of the restrainer(s), see Schreiner, *Handbook*, 360; Verhoef, “Coming of the Lord,” 42–44; Nicholl, “Restrainer Removed,” 230; Tonstad, “Restrainer Removed,” 144–45; Weima, “Satan’s Superman,” 82; Beale, *1–2 Thessalonians*, 217; Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 285–88; Menken, *2 Thessalonians*, 111–13; Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 170; Hughes, *Early Christian Rhetoric*, 60.

by God’s will and at the time of his choosing.²²⁸ This would suggest that Paul understood God to be sovereign over these end-time events²²⁹; as such, it is easy to see how Paul could have been referring to the coming of the lawless in verses 11–12.²³⁰ For these three reasons, it seems likely that 2 Thessalonians 2:8–12 depicts a form of mediated DRA.²³¹ Finally, there may be both an active and a passive element to God’s reprobating influence. Because God is said to “send” (πέμπει) this deceptive operation, readers should probably detect an active form of DRA in this passage.²³² But in addition, if 2 Thessalonians 2:6–7 does in fact indicate that the coming of the lawless one is predicated upon God’s decision to remove his restrainer(s), then one could argue that a passive form of influence is also being described.²³³

²²⁸ As Menken says, “God has decided at what time it will be given to the lawless one, who is an instrument of Satan, to be revealed.” Menken, *2 Thessalonians*, 112. See also Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 170.

²²⁹ Though Metzger wrongly argues that τὸ κατέχον and ὁ κατέχων refer to Rome as a human/demonic power that prevents the arrival of Christ, he is correct to acknowledge that “das Katechon ist ein Faktor in Gottes Heilsplan, dem von Gott seine Frist gesetzt wird.” Metzger, *Katechon*, 288–89.

²³⁰ Hughes makes a similar suggestion when he says, “The activity of restraining in 2.6–7 is perhaps also explained by 2.11–12 where it is clear that God is behind the scenes as the planner and executor of apocalyptic events.” Hughes, *Early Christian Rhetoric*, 60.

²³¹ So Menken again correctly concludes that “in 2 Thessalonians 2.11–12, Satan’s activity is ultimately reduced to God’s work.” Menken, *2 Thessalonians*, 112. However, Menken seems to go beyond what can be proven from the text when he posits that God also directly causes “those who are perishing” to disbelieve the truth and to fall for Satan’s lies (117).

²³² Rightly Nicholl, “Restrainer Removed,” 229.

²³³ Now, it is possible to make the argument that “sending” is Paul’s metaphorical way of referencing the removal of the restraints that serve to prevent the lawless one’s coming (cf. 2 Thess 2:6–7). Such a reading would suggest that DRA is completely passive here since it takes place only through God’s deliberate *inaction* (i.e., the cessation of restraint). While possible, there are good reasons for taking a both-and approach to this issue. First, though it is not by itself conclusive, the language Paul uses in v. 11 does suggest an active form of divine involvement. Second, descriptions of God’s interactions with evil supernatural beings elsewhere in the Bible provide a biblical basis for an active portrayal of DRA in 2 Thess 2:11 (cf. Judg 9:23; 1 Kgs 22:20–23; Job 1:6–12; 2:1–7). Third, there are a few other examples of DRA that involve both an active and a passive element (cf. Matt 13:10–17; Mark 4:10–12; Luke 8:9–10). For these reasons, it may be best to conclude that DRA in 2 Thess 2 has both a passive and an active element: God exercises his influence both by passively ceasing to restrain and by actively deploying Satan

DRA in 1 Peter

While Paul may have penned the most (in)famous examples of DRA, his were not the only NT epistles to refer to the concept. Peter also seems to describe this form of divine agency in his first letter.²³⁴ In 1 Peter 2:4–8, Peter juxtaposes the blessings and privileges reserved for Christ-followers with the fate of those who reject God’s chosen and precious cornerstone.²³⁵ In so doing, Peter also includes a telling comment that seems to attest to negative predestination:

By coming to him, a living stone,²³⁶ rejected by men but chosen [and] precious to God, you yourselves, as living stones, as a spiritual house, are also being built up²³⁷ into a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices that are pleasing to God through Jesus Christ. This is why²³⁸ it says in Scripture: “Behold! I am placing in Zion a

and his agent.

²³⁴ I assume that 1 Peter was written by the apostle Peter; however, the matter of the letter’s authorship does not impact the study of DRA one way or another. For a recent defense of the traditional view, see Thomas R. Schreiner, *1 and 2 Peter*, Christian Standard Commentary (Nashville: B & H, 2020), 4–18.

²³⁵ Parker is correct to notice an “emphatic contrast between the status of unbelievers and believers” in 1 Pet 2:4–10. Brent E. Parker, “The Church as the Renewed Israel in Christ: A Study of 1 Peter 2:4–10,” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 21, no. 3 (2017): 45. See also Lauri Thurén, *Argument and Theology in 1 Peter: The Origins of Christian Paraenesis*, JSNTSup (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 127; John H. Elliott, *1 Peter*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 409.

²³⁶ Goppelt is probably correct when he explains that the description “living stone” means that “Christ is the resurrected One who lives in order to communicate life.” Leonhard Goppelt, *A Commentary on 1 Peter*, ed. Ferdinand Hahn (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 137.

²³⁷ The verb *οικοδομεῖσθε* could be either an indicative (so Schreiner, *1 and 2 Peter*, 110–11; Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, BECNT [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005], 150; Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990], 86–87; J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, WBC [Waco, TX: Word Books, 1988], 97; Elliott, *1 Peter*, 412; Greg W. Forbes, *1 Peter*, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament [Nashville: B & H, 2014], 62) or an imperative (so Thurén, *Argument and Theology*, 124; Goppelt, *1 Peter*, 139–40; Jens Herzer, *Petrus Oder Paulus? Studien über das Verhältnis des ersten Petrusbriefes zur paulinischen Tradition*, WUNT [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998], 149n135). While I agree with those who take the verb to be indicative, the passage’s witness to DRA is not dependent on the mood of *οικοδομεῖσθε*. Moreover, though he may overstate the point, Donelson helpfully relativizes the significance of this decision when he says “the rhetorical force of this verse is much the same whether the verb is indicative or imperative. The command ‘Let yourselves be built up’ focuses almost more on the action of the God who builds up than upon those who let God do so. And the assurance ‘you are being built up’ implies a call to let this happen.” Lewis R. Donelson, *1 and 2 Peter and Jude*, NTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2010), 61.

²³⁸ Best correctly identifies the function of *διότι* in v. 6: it serves to “introduce [a] confirmatory

chosen, precious cornerstone, and the one who believes in him will never be shamed!” Therefore honor belongs to you who believe,²³⁹ but to unbelievers, “the stone that the builders rejected, this one became the chief cornerstone” and “a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.”²⁴⁰ They stumble because they disobey the word, which is indeed what they were appointed for.²⁴¹

Many scholars have argued that Peter betrays a predestinarian perspective in 2:8,²⁴² especially in light of the relative clause εἰς ἃ καὶ ἐτέθησαν (literally: “to which also they were placed”). When used with the verb τιθήμι, the preposition εἰς sometimes refers to the

quotation” and it “giv[es] a reason for what has preceded.” Ernest Best, “I Peter II 4–10 — A Reconsideration,” *NovT* 11, no. 4 (1969): 275.

²³⁹ I agree with Schutter when he argues that the noun τιμή here refers to honor and that Peter’s point is to remind his readers that “they enjoy the highest honour in God’s eyes, because of their faith in Christ.” William L. Schutter, *Hermeneutic and Composition in 1 Peter*, WUNT (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989), 134. However, Schreiner is also correct to point out that 1 Pet 2:7 speaks of the eschatological vindication that awaits believers (see Schreiner, *1 and 2 Peter*, 115). It seems unnecessary to decide between the divine honors bestowed upon believers in the midst of their earthly exile (cf. 1 Pet 2:9–10) and the future eschatological honors they will enjoy upon Christ’s return (cf. 1 Pet 1:7). Michaels buttresses this point when he comments on vv. 9–10 by saying, “The words ὑμεῖς δέ, picking up the ὑμῖν οὖν of v 7, introduce a series of honorific titles spelling out the τιμή of those who believe. If the ‘honor’ of v 7 was eschatological because of its connection with the οὐ μὴ καταισχυθῆ of v 6b, its basis ‘in God’s sight’ (παρὰ δὲ θεῶν, v 4) implied a present dignity for Christian believers as well. Vv 9–10 unfold both the present and future aspects of this ‘honor.’” Michaels, *1 Peter*, 107.

²⁴⁰ For examinations of Peter’s use of OT passages in 1 Pet 2:6–8, see Schutter, *Hermeneutic and Composition*, 130–38; Best, “I Peter II 4–10,” 270–78; D. A. Carson, “1 Peter,” in Beale and Carson, *New Testament Use of Old Testament*, 1023–30.

²⁴¹ First Peter 2:4–8 makes clear that, according to Peter, “Christ himself is the touchstone of one’s ultimate destiny.” Martin Williams, *The Doctrine of Salvation in the First Letter of Peter*, SNTSMS (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 67. As Goppelt puts it, “Christ is laid across the path of humanity on its course into the future. In the encounter with him each person is changed: one for salvation, another for destruction.” Leonhard Goppelt, *A Commentary on 1 Peter*, ed. Ferdinand Hahn (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 144. See also Schutter, *Hermeneutic and Composition*, 136; Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 89–90; Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 146, 153–55.

²⁴² See for instance Williams, *Doctrine of Salvation*, 67–72, 247–52; Thurén, *Argument and Theology*, 128n129; Schutter, *Hermeneutic and Composition*, 135; Schreiner, *1 and 2 Peter*, 118–20; Jobes, *1 Peter*, 156; Räisänen, *Idea of Divine Hardening*, 87–88; Davids, *First Peter*, 90 (though he believes the verse refers more to corporate destiny than to individual destiny); Donelson, *1 and 2 Peter*, 65–66; Best, “I Peter II 4–10,” 281; Carson, “1 Peter,” 1029–30; Martin Vahrenhorst, *Der erste Brief des Petrus*, Theologischer Kommentar zum neuen Testament (Stuttgart, Germany: Kohlhammer, 2016), 107; M. Eugene Boring, “Narrative Dynamics in First Peter: The Function of Narrative World,” in *Reading First Peter with New Eyes: Methodological Reassessments of the Letter of First Peter*, LNTS (New York: T & T Clark, 2007), 26; Donald P. Senior, *1 Peter*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), 55; Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 162–63.

literal space/location into which a thing is placed.²⁴³ However, the preposition can also be used with *τιθήμι* to refer to metaphorical “placements”; in these cases, *τιθήμι* + *εἰς* may refer to roles, actions, or experiences to which a person is assigned.²⁴⁴ This seems to be the construction’s function in 1 Peter 2:8c. In this clause, the role/actions/experience to which unbelievers (cf. 1 Pet 2:7) have been assigned is summarized in the relative pronoun *ὃ*, which refers back to the thought complex expressed in 1 Peter 2:8b (*οἱ προσκόπτουσιν τῷ λόγῳ ἀπειθοῦντες*).²⁴⁵ In other words, Peter declares that everyone²⁴⁶ who refuses to submit to the gospel and (as a result) stumbles over the stumbling stone does precisely what they were appointed by God to do.²⁴⁷ Furthermore, given the contrast Peter develops between the fates of believers and unbelievers (cf. 1 Pet 2:6–8), it is likely that “stumbling” here refers to an experience of eschatological judgment which comes as a result of rejecting the living stone, Jesus Christ.²⁴⁸ Thus, 1 Peter 2:8 bears witness to

²⁴³ Cf. Luke 11:33; Acts 12:4; 13:29; Rev 11:9.

²⁴⁴ This observation is consistent with Harris’ claim that “*εἰς* can also mark *divine appointment*, reflecting divine purpose.” Murray J. Harris, *Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 89. Cf. Isa 49:6; Acts 13:47; 1 Thess 5:9; 1 Tim 1:12.

²⁴⁵ So also Schreiner, *1 and 2 Peter*, 118; Williams, *Doctrine of Salvation*, 71; Donelson, *1 and 2 Peter*, 65–66; Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 162.

²⁴⁶ As Jobes points out, “One can see in the NT use of the stone passages a broadening in the identification of the rejecters. . . . Here in 1 Pet. 2:8, the rejecters are any and all people, whether Jew or Gentile, who reject Christ.” Jobes, *1 Peter*, 154.

²⁴⁷ There is little doubt that *ἐρέθησαν* is a divine passive. Rightly Schreiner, *1 and 2 Peter*, 117; Williams, *Doctrine of Salvation*, 68; Goppelt, *1 Peter*, 147n58; Michaels, *1 Peter*, 107; Donelson, *1 and 2 Peter*, 66; Elliott, *1 Peter*, 433; Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 162; Carson, “1 Peter,” 1029; Hubert Frankemölle, *1 Petrusbrief, 2. Petrusbrief, Judasbrief*, Die neue echter Bibel (Stuttgart, Germany: Echter Verlag, 1990), 43; Abson Prédessin Joseph, *A Narratological Reading of 1 Peter*, LNTS (New York: T & T Clark, 2012), 92n98.

²⁴⁸ Michaels accurately describes the meaning of “stumbling” when he says “it is the opposite of divine vindication, the negative equivalent of the ‘honor’ reserved for Christian believers of not being ‘put to shame.’” Michaels, *1 Peter*, 106.

DRA in so far as it describes God as having predestined certain persons to disobey the gospel and to be condemned as a result.

Unsurprisingly, not all scholars are convinced that 1 Peter 2:8 speaks of divine predestination. For example, some contend that the verse merely indicates that God has established the principle that those who disobey the gospel will stumble.²⁴⁹ Some support this reading by arguing that the pronoun δ in 2:8c refers narrowly to the concept of “stumbling” and not to the act of disobedience; thus, God only appoints stumbling in the sense that he has decreed it to be the just penalty that awaits all those who choose to disobey his word.²⁵⁰ Others posit that the broader biblical context undermines the predestinarian reading. In particular, since the Bible attests to God’s desire that all be saved (cf. Ezek 33:11; 1 Tim 2:4), some think it is impossible for God to have predestined for certain persons to be condemned.²⁵¹ Finally, Michaels denies that 1 Peter 2:8c refers to the predestination of unbelievers since he claims that 1 Peter 2:6–8 only describes a single divine “appointment”: Christ’s resurrection. And because Christ is a living stone for believers and a stumbling stone for unbelievers, a person’s response to

²⁴⁹ For examples, see Armin J. Panning, “What Has Been Determined (Ἐτεθῆσαν) in 1 Peter 2:8?,” *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 98 (2001): 50–52; Michaels, *1 Peter*, 107; Elliott, *1 Peter*, 434.

²⁵⁰ Michaels, *1 Peter*, 107; Elliott, *1 Peter*, 434; Forbes, *1 Peter*, 65–66.

²⁵¹ Panning, “What Has Been Determined,” 50–52. However, Panning does not fairly represent the biblical witness when he says that Scripture categorically rules out the possibility that 1 Pet 2:8 refers to negative predestination. He highlights only those passages helpful to his argument while completely ignoring all the biblical texts that bear witness to DRA or that evidence predestinarian theology. While the predestinarian texts admittedly stand in some tension with other passages that *seem* to ascribe to God a universal saving will, it will not do to simply overlook or downplay the former in favor of the latter. Instead, interpreters must do justice to both types of texts. For attempts to do just that, see John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, vol. 2, LCC (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 982–85; John Piper, “Are There Two Wills in God?,” in *Still Sovereign: Contemporary Perspectives on Election, Foreknowledge, and Grace*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce A. Ware (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 107–31.

this divine appointment determines their eschatological destiny.²⁵² For these reasons and others,²⁵³ some interpreters deny that 1 Peter 2:8c testifies to negative predestination.

Despite these objections, the predestinarian interpretation remains the best reading of 1 Peter 2:8c. First of all, the construction εἰς ὃ likely refers back to 1 Peter 2:8ab as a whole rather than to just a part of it.²⁵⁴ There are only a few cases in the LXX (Lev 5:25; 14:21; Num 33:54) and the NT (Col 1:29; Phil 3:16; 2 Thess 1:11; 2:14; 1 Pet 2:8) where εἰς ὃ is found without a neuter singular antecedent.²⁵⁵ In some of these instances, the relative pronoun takes an indefinite sense (“whatever,” “wherever;” cf. Lev 5:25; 14:21; Num 33:54; Phil 3:16)²⁵⁶; however, these examples are unlikely to serve as parallels for 1 Peter 2:8c because, in the latter, εἰς ὃ refers to a definite purpose unto

²⁵² On the basis of the repetition of the verb τίθημι in vv. 6 and 8, Michaels makes the argument that the only divine “appointing” being described is the raising of Christ. This single act then leads to two differing outcomes depending upon a person’s response. Michaels, *1 Peter*, 107.

²⁵³ In addition to these reasons, some scholars reject the predestinarian reading because they hold that divine predetermination is incompatible with personal responsibility (see for instance Elliott, *1 Peter*, 434). And yet, numerous examples in both the OT and the NT demonstrate that the biblical authors were quite willing to hold persons responsible for actions which had been predetermined by God. In fact, all the cases of DRA which we have explored thus far establish this point. Thus, Schreiner is accurate when he says, “Peter articulates a *common* [emphasis added] theme in the Scriptures that human beings are responsible for their sin and sin willingly, and yet God controls all events in history.” Schreiner, *1 and 2 Peter*, 119. Donelson also aptly states, “The ancient world had a different notion of human freedom. The absolute power given to human freedom in some modern theology is absent from ancient thought. God is implicated in all humans’ deeds, even those contrary to God’s word.” Donelson, *1 and 2 Peter*, 66.

²⁵⁴ Schreiner, *1 and 2 Peter*, 118; Williams, *Doctrine of Salvation*, 71; Donelson, *1 and 2 Peter*, 65–66.

²⁵⁵ In both 2 Thess 1:11 and 2:14, it is unlikely that neuter nouns in the preceding verse (namely μαρτύριον and πνεύμα) serve as the antecedents for the relative pronoun ὃ. Additionally, one could argue that 1 Tim 2:7 and 2 Tim 1:11 should be added to this list. I omit them because in each of these, the preceding verse includes a neuter noun that probably serves as an antecedent for ὃ (respectively μαρτύριον and εὐαγγέλιον). However, if these verses were deemed examples of εἰς ὃ with no neuter antecedent, then they would serve as further instances wherein the prepositional phrase crystallizes a number of concepts from the preceding argument. In this case, the two additional examples would strengthen the argument that εἰς ὃ in 1 Pet 2:8c refers broadly to what precedes.

²⁵⁶ On the indefinite use of ὃς, see Robertson and Davis, *New Short Grammar*, 323–24; Blass and Debrunner, *Greek Grammar*, 152–53.

which certain persons have been divinely appointed. More akin to this passage are those instances wherein εἰς ὃ crystallizes a number of concepts from the preceding argument.²⁵⁷ For example, in 2 Thessalonians 1:11, εἰς ὃ refers to the whole complex of eschatological events outlined in verses 9–10, which serve as the purpose, or perhaps, basis of Paul’s prayers. Similarly, in 2 Thessalonians 2:13–14, the expression εἰς ὃ is used to summarize the many blessings to which the Thessalonians had been called. Since (1) usage allows for εἰς ὃ to refer to several concepts at once, and (2) nothing in the immediate context suggests a narrow antecedent for the relative pronoun, the statement εἰς ὃ καὶ ἐτέθησαν likely refers back to all of 1 Peter 2:8ab.²⁵⁸ Second, even if it could be shown that εἰς ὃ refers only to stumbling, the predestinarian reading would still be viable. Since ἀπειθοῦντες modifies προσκόπτουσιν and not ἐτέθησαν, the verse does not say that God’s reprobating action is a response to disobedience; instead, it describes stumbling (which is divinely predetermined) to be the result of disobedience. So, if God appoints that certain people stumble, and if people only stumble as a result of disobedience, then it would seem that God must also predetermine disobedience if he is to predestine stumbling. As such, even if one could prove grammatically that προσκόπτουσιν is the antecedent of the relative pronoun, the verse would still imply negative predestination. Third, rather than suggesting the establishment of a principle, verse 8 indicates that *actual persons* were

²⁵⁷ Col 1:29 presents an ambiguous case. It is possible to take Paul’s reason for laboring (εἰς ὃ καὶ κοπιῶ) to refer specifically to his desire to help Christians mature (ἵνα παραστήσωμεν πάντα ἄνθρωπον τέλειον ἐν Χριστῷ). However, it would also make good sense if Paul’s devotion to ministry was grounded in everything said in vv. 24–28. But even if one were to argue that εἰς ὃ has a narrow conceptual antecedent in Col 1:29, it would not provide evidence that the εἰς ὃ construction in 1 Pet 2:8c should be interpreted as speaking only of stumbling. After all, Col 1:28b differs from 1 Pet 2:8ab in that the former does not have an adverbial participle modifying its main verb. Thus, it does not demonstrate that εἰς ὃ can refer exclusively to a main verb while excluding its adverbial modifiers.

²⁵⁸ Furthermore, Peter employs a similar construction in 1 Pet 2:21 and 3:9. Here, he uses the verb καλέω instead of τιθήμι and uses the demonstrative pronoun τοῦτο instead of the relative pronoun ὃ. In these examples, εἰς τοῦτο refers back to preceding thought complexes rather than to singular ideas; moreover, it is clearly specific people who have been “called” by God to fulfill certain responsibilities and experience particular blessings.

“appointed” by God to perform certain functions. This is demonstrated by Peter’s use of the plural form ἐτέθησαν along with an implied, personal subject.²⁵⁹ In other words, if Peter intended to describe the establishment of a principle by which God governs the moral universe (i.e., it is appointed that those who disobey will stumble),²⁶⁰ one would expect him to use a singular verb form together with an impersonal subject (and perhaps a content clause).²⁶¹ Instead, Peter’s language suggests that God fixed the destinies of certain persons, thereby securing their downfall.²⁶² Fourth, Peter’s use of τίθημι in 1 Peter 2:6 provides corroborating evidence that he was speaking about specific persons being assigned particular roles in 1 Peter 2:8. According to 1 Peter 2:6, God appointed (τίθημι) Christ to be the crucial cornerstone in whom every person will either find their salvation or their undoing. The occurrence of the same verbal root in 2:6 and 2:8 suggests that God performed *similar actions* when he predetermined Christ’s role in salvation history and when he predestined that certain persons stumble through disobedience.²⁶³ And since

²⁵⁹ The subject of ἐτέθησαν is the relative pronoun οἱ (Forbes, *1 Peter*, 65).

²⁶⁰ In addition, Schreiner correctly points out that the non-predestinarian interpretation would render Peter’s statement into a truism. As he says, “Some scholars argue that Peter intends to say that God has appointed that those who disobey the message of the gospel of their own accord would stumble. . . . The interpretation proposed is prosaic and obvious, and it is unlikely that it captures the full meaning.” Schreiner, *1 and 2 Peter*, 118.

²⁶¹ Ezra 6:11 can serve as an example of the kind of construction that we might expect: καὶ ἅπ μοῦ ἐτέθη γνώμη ὅτι πᾶς ἄνθρωπος, ὃς ἀλλάξει τὸ ῥῆμα τοῦτο, καθαιρεθήσεται ξύλον ἐκ τῆς οἰκίας αὐτοῦ καὶ ὠρθωμένος παγήσεται ἐπ’ αὐτοῦ, καὶ ὁ οἶκος αὐτοῦ τὸ κατ’ ἐμὲ ποιηθήσεται (“A decree has been made by me that if any person changes this word, wood will be taken from his house and he will be lifted and impaled upon it, and his house will be made mine”; see also LXX Ezra 4:19; 5:17; 6:8, 7:13). And though it uses a different verb, Heb 9:27 also serves as a clarifying contrast to 1 Pet 2:8c: ἀπόκειται τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἅπαξ ἀποθανεῖν, μετὰ δὲ τοῦτο κρίσις (“it is appointed for men that [they] die once, and after this is judgment”).

²⁶² In addition, the plural forms in v. 8bc also suggest that Peter had the fates of individuals in mind. As such, the argument that 1 Pet 2:8 should be understood *exclusively* in corporate terms is unpersuasive. For a convincing rebuttal of the exclusively corporate position, see Williams, *Doctrine of Salvation*, 245–47.

²⁶³ Contra Michaels, *1 Peter*, 107, the repetition of the verbal root need not mean that Peter was speaking of only one act of predestination in vv. 6 and 8. On the contrary, v. 6 and v. 8 cannot be speaking of a single divine “appointment”: while both verses describe God to be the subject who predestines (this is implicit in v. 8), they differ as to the objects of predestination and as to the roles to be

Peter uses *τίθημι* in 2:6 to speak about personal predestination (i.e., God predetermined for Christ to be the stone), it seems probable that *ἔτέθησαν* carries a comparable connotation in 2:8.²⁶⁴ Lastly, far from being biblically out-of-place, a Petrine reference to divine predestination would be at home within the perspective of the NT and the Bible as a whole. As I have demonstrated, the notion that God effectually influences persons towards wickedness and condemnation is an important theme throughout both the OT and the NT.²⁶⁵ Moreover, in at least some of these cases, human disobedience is not presented as the prior ground of DRA; instead, God is depicted as predetermining human sin for reasons other than retribution.²⁶⁶ Thus, the reading of 1 Peter 2:8c being proposed here would not render it inconsistent with what is found elsewhere in the Scriptures.²⁶⁷ For these reasons, I maintain that 1 Peter 2:8 does evidence negative predestination, which should be considered a kind of DRA.

I have argued thus far that, in 1 Peter 2:8, the apostle claims that God has determined for certain persons to both refuse to obey him and to stumble eschatologically

occupied by the predestined. As such, it makes little sense to speak of these as a single act.

²⁶⁴ So also Donelson, *1 and 2 Peter*, 66. Furthermore, as Räsänen observes, the verb *τίθημι* is “part of the predestinarian vocabulary of the New Testament.” Räsänen, *Idea of Divine Hardening*, 88.

²⁶⁵ I should add that the biblical authors affirm the existence and importance of DRA without denying or marginalizing God’s justice/goodness/graciousness/holiness, or the reality of human responsibility.

²⁶⁶ See Exod 3–14; Deut 2:30; 29:3; Josh 11:20; Ezek 38:16–39:20; Pss (MT) 92:8; 105:24–25; Prov 16:4; Matt 13:10–17; Mark 4:10–12; Luke 8:9–10; Rom 9–11.

²⁶⁷ Other scholars have come to similar conclusions. So for example, Achtemeier correctly posits that “the idea that God is in control of all things was a commonplace in the world of 1 Peter and was taken into Christian tradition, as was the corollary that God also establishes the evil as well as the good, a tradition also present in primitive Christian tradition.” Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 162. In addition, Best also observes that “the idea of *predestination* is also common in the N.T.” Best, “1 Peter 2:4–10,” 281. Lastly, Carson also finds that “the idea that God sovereignly remains in control of all things is common in the OT . . . and in some strands of Second Temple Judaism. . . . The commonness of this theme, combined with the Bible’s insistence on God being exclusively good and on human beings being genuinely culpable, is what generates complex theological discussion on the notion of compatibilism.” Carson, “1 Peter,” 1030.

as a result. Such an act should be regarded an instance of DRA, since God is said to exercise divine influence in order to lead certain persons to sin and to be condemned as a result. But what can be said regarding Peter’s description of God’s reprobating influence? Despite the brevity of his comment, at least four conclusions can be reached. First, by using a divine passive (*ἐτέθησαν*), Peter portrays God as having exerted influence through action rather than inaction. As such, the verse seems to refer to an active form of DRA. Second, since Peter mentions no intervening agents and since “appointing” is a kind of action that needs no intermediation, there is little reason to doubt that 1 Peter 2:8 attests to an immediate form of DRA. Third, Peter’s broader comments regarding personal eschatology and the contrast he envisions between the fates of believers and unbelievers in 1 Peter 2:7–8 suggests that the “shame” that awaits the latter group involves post-mortem, eternal judgment (cf. 1 Pet 1:4, 9; 4:5; 5:4, 10)²⁶⁸; as such, readers should detect an eternal form of DRA in 1 Peter 2:8. Finally, a non-retributive reading of 1 Peter 2:8 should be favored for at least two reasons: (1) there is the basic observation that Peter does not portray the decree in verse 8c as being a response to human sin,²⁶⁹ and (2) Peter seems to allude to God’s freedom in reprobation when he contrasts those appointed for stumbling with believers who are an “elect race” (*γένος ἐκλεκτόν*),²⁷⁰ especially since

²⁶⁸ In addition, Schreiner makes a strong argument that 1 Pet 2:4–6 alludes to Christ’s resurrection, and suggests that believers will share in Christ’s resurrection life. See Schreiner, *1 and 2 Peter*, 106–15; also see Jobes, *1 Peter*, 148. If this is correct, then the honor experienced by believers includes eternal life, which in turn suggests that the shame awaiting unbelievers includes eternal death (cf. 2:7).

²⁶⁹ While *ἀπειθοῦντες* is causal, it modifies *προσκόπτουσιν*, not *ἐτέθησαν*. As such, though disobedience is presented as the reason that unbelievers stumble, Peter does *not* say that disobedience is the ground for God’s negative influence. And while this observation does not *prove* a non-retributive reading, it does place the burden of proof on those who wish to maintain a retributive interpretation (as argued for example by Joseph, *Narratological Reading*, 92n98).

²⁷⁰ As others have noted, *ὕμεῖς δὲ* in v. 9 indicates a strong contrast between the experience of those elected for salvation and that of those designated for stumbling. As Donelson observes, “The rather emphatic *hymeis de* (but you) creates a sharp contrast with what precedes. After defining those who reject the stone, the letter addresses those who trust. . . . To be elect not only connects the recipients to Jesus and to ancient Israel; it also forms a poignant contrast to those who were placed for disobedience and

Williams is probably correct when he argues that “for Peter, election represents God’s *unconditional* choice of certain persons for salvation.”²⁷¹

Summary of DRA in the NT Letters

The preceding argument has shown that the NT letters also bear witness to the concept of DRA. While Paul provides many of the relevant passages, Peter also attests to at least one example of DRA. In addition, these NT materials supply further confirmation that the biblical authors considered DRA to be both important and complex.

With regard to its significance, DRA is presented by Paul and Peter as foundational to their understanding of soteriology and personal eschatology (cf. Rom 9:14–23; 1 Pet 2:8). Both apostles agree that God has predestined for certain persons to live in willful and continual disobedience to him so as to merit for themselves eternal condemnation. Moreover, Paul also presents DRA to be fundamental to his anthropology. In particular, he interprets the present depravity of human beings to be the result of a retributive form of DRA (Rom 1:18–32). Furthermore, Paul uses DRA as a key to understanding the outworking of salvation history, both with regard to the present and the

stumbling.” Donelson, *1 and 2 Peter*, 66. See also Best, “1 Peter II 4–10,” 276; Williams, *Doctrine of Salvation*, 72; Goppelt, *1 Peter*, 148; Davids, *First Peter*, 90.

²⁷¹ Williams, *Doctrine of Salvation*, 240–41. Election is an important component of Peter’s understanding of salvation and Christian identity (cf. 1 Pet 1:1; 2:9; 5:13). As Williams correctly points out, “The theme of election is of great significance to the author of 1 Peter . . . and serves to underscore the initiative and sovereignty of God in the believers’ salvation and the unbelievers’ damnation.” Williams, *Doctrine of Salvation*, 3–4. Some might argue on the basis of 1 Pet 1:2 that Peter understood election to be based on foreseen faith/obedience. However, when Peter claims that readers were chosen “according to the foreknowledge of God the Father” (κατὰ πρόγνωσιν θεοῦ πατρὸς), it is unlikely that he is speaking about election based on mere precognition. As others have persuasively shown, “foreknowledge” refers to God’s decision to set his covenant love upon those whom he chooses. So Schreiner is right to conclude that “when Peter says that believers are elect ‘according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, the emphasis is on God’s sovereignty and initiative in salvation. Believers are elect because God the Father has set his covenant affection upon them. . . . And thus it is unconvincing to say . . . that God chooses based on his foreknowledge of what human beings would choose.” Schreiner, *1 and 2 Peter*, 50; see also S. M. Baugh, “The Meaning of Foreknowledge,” in Schreiner and Ware, *Still Sovereign*, 195–96; Williams, *Doctrine of Salvation*, 52–54, 240–41.

future. For him, DRA explains why the nation of Israel has refused God's salvation while the Gentiles have taken refuge in the true seed of Abraham, Jesus Christ (Rom 9:30–33; 11:7–10, 25–32). In addition, DRA plays a role in Paul's expectations regarding the conclusion of history, when Israel will be renewed to saving faith (Rom 11:25–32), and when all those who hate the truth will be subjected to "the lawless one's" satanic lies (2 Thess 2:8–12). Finally, Paul also views DRA as an expression of God's glorious character (cf. Rom 11:33–36). Rather than portraying it to be something perverse, Paul's writings suggest that DRA highlights the righteous character of God's wrath (Rom 1:18–32; 2 Thess 2:8–12), the praiseworthiness of God's grace (Rom 9:14–18),²⁷² and the extent of God's rightful authority over humanity as its Creator (Rom 9:19–23).

Finally, in keeping with the results of my survey of the biblical materials, the NT letters also demonstrate that DRA is not a monolithic concept; on the contrary, the Pauline and Petrine texts evidence that God's reprobating influence takes a variety of forms and can be characterized in a number of ways. Thus, this type of divine agency can be said to take non-retributive (cf. Rom 9–11; 1 Pet 2:8) and retributive forms (cf. Rom 1:24–32; 2 Thess 2:8–12), immediate (cf. Rom 1:24–32; 9:14–23; 11:7–10, 25–26; 1 Pet 2:8) and mediate forms (cf. Rom 9:30–33; 2 Thess 2:8–12), and eternal (cf. Rom 9–11; 2 Thess 2:8–12; 1 Pet 2:8) and non-eternal forms (cf. Rom 1:24–32). And while most of these cases refer to active forms of influence, Paul's account of DRA in 2 Thessalonians 2:8–12 seems to involve active and passive elements. In addition, Paul's teaching in Romans 9:14–23 suggests that different types of DRA may be similarly characterized. Specifically, though both divine hardening (cf. Rom 9:14–18) and the "making"/"fashioning" of vessels of wrath (cf. Rom 9:19–23) refer to forms of influence that are similarly characterized (i.e., non-retributive, immediate, active, eternal), the two

²⁷² The contrast within 1 Pet 2:8–9 may also suggest that Peter uses DRA to emphasize the gracious character of God's salvation as well.

seem to be distinct forms of influence.²⁷³ Thus, the NT epistles add even more color to the already rich portrait of DRA that has been painted by other sections of Scripture.

²⁷³ See my discussion in chap. 8, s.v. “DRA in the Pauline Epistles”; “DRA in Romans”; “Romans 9–11.”

CHAPTER 9
DIVINE REPROBATING ACTIVITY
IN THE JOHANNINE CORPUS

Our biblical-theological survey of DRA concludes with an examination of the Johannine corpus. Here I argue that both the Gospel of John and the book of Revelation bear witness to the concept under consideration. Moreover, both books provide further evidence that the canon treats DRA as a significant and complex phenomenon.

DRA in the Gospel of John

The Fourth Gospel provides important testimony to the concept of DRA. Not only does the Gospel make more substantial use of the concept than most other NT books, but in addition, its overall portrait of DRA betrays a complexity that also goes beyond most other books of the NT. While the subject of DRA in John may be studied in various ways, I will approach the matter by grouping the Gospel's witness into three categories: 1) DRA as an explanation for unbelief, 2) DRA and John's account of Judas, and 3) DRA through Jesus' ministry.

DRA as an Explanation for Unbelief

The theme of faith plays a central role in John's Gospel.¹ Apart from the number of references to the act of believing,² the book is said to be written for the express

¹ Rightly Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 558–59.

² The verb πιστεύω is used ninety-eight times in John, which accounts for over forty percent of the occurrences of the verb in the NT (239x). Moreover, in addition to speaking of the matter literally, John also employs figurative language to describe the nature of true faith. For an analysis of John's ways of speaking about faith, see John Painter, "Eschatological Faith in the Gospel of John," in *Reconciliation and*

purpose of calling readers to faith in Christ (cf. John 20:30–31).³ And yet, while the beloved disciple certainly enjoins persons to trust in Christ and holds people responsible for whether or not they do, he also portrays faith to be the result of God’s own working. Furthermore, John claims on more than one occasion that unbelief can be traced to God’s own designs. He makes this point explicit in John 12:37–40, while he betrays the same perspective in more subtle fashion in the Bread of Life Discourse (John 6:26–65).

DRA in John 12:37–41. According to John’s Gospel, the Jews repeatedly refused to believe in Jesus despite the fact that he had sufficiently demonstrated his identity by performing numerous signs (cf. John 12:37).⁴ How then could Israel’s response to its Messiah be explained? In John 12:37–41, the beloved disciple provides an explanation for why Jesus was rejected by the Jewish nation at large.⁵ And while he certainly believed that theirs was a culpable response (cf. John 3:19–21, 36; 5:44; 8:24,

Hope: New Testament Essays on Atonement and Eschatology (Exeter, England: Paternoster, 1974), 36–42.

³ Watt is correct to defend both a missiological and pastoral purpose behind the Gospel. As he says, John’s Gospel “is a message of salvation to the world, but also a message of motivation to believers.” See Jan van der Watt, *An Introduction to the Johannine Gospel and Letters*, T & T Clark Approaches to Biblical Studies (New York: T & T Clark, 2007), 11.

⁴ The tense of the verb ἐπίστευον in John 12:37 probably communicates an iterative idea (so also Donald E. Hartley, “Destined to Disobey? Isaiah 6:10 in John 12:37–40,” *CTJ* 44 [2009]: 269n32; Günter Röhser, *Prädestination und Verstockung: Untersuchungen zur frühjüdischen, paulinischen und johanneischen Theologie* [Tübingen: A. Francke Verlag, 1994], 238).

⁵ Michaels rightly posits that “them” in v. 37 refers to “all [Jesus’s] interlocutors throughout his public ministry—crowds, Pharisees, and ‘Jews’ alike. . . . Those who ‘would not believe him’ (v. 37) are therefore not just one crowd at one Passover (vv. 29, 34) but all the crowds and all the Jewish leaders from the first Passover until now.” J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 707–8. On this point, also see Todd A. Scacewater, “The Predictive Nature of Typology in John 12:37–43,” *WTJ* 75 (2013): 131.

43–47; 12:42–43),⁶ John here focuses on God’s own role in engendering unbelief so that the Scriptures might be fulfilled⁷:

Although he had performed so many of his signs before them, they would not believe in him so that the word of Isaiah the prophet which he spoke might be fulfilled: “Lord, who believed our report? And to whom was the arm of the Lord revealed?” Because of this they were unable to believe, because Isaiah again said: “He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, so that they might not see with [their] eyes and they might not know with their heart and turn so I might heal them.” Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke about him. (John 12:37–41)

John here contends that a purpose stood behind Israel’s sinful response to Christ: the Jews failed to believe *so that* (ἵνα) Isaiah’s prophecy *might be fulfilled* (πληρωθῆναι).⁸ Since it

⁶ Rightly D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 447; G. R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 2nd ed., WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 216; Maarten J. J. Menken, “Die Form des Zitatus aus Jes 6,10 in Joh 12,40: Ein Beitrag zum Schriftgebrauch des vierten Evangelisten,” *BZ* 32 (1988): 209; Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 604; John Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, trans. William Pringle, 500th anniversary ed., *Calvin’s Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 1:43.

⁷ As Haenchen comments, “The marvel of disbelief seems to be so enormous to the speaker that he can only have recourse to the divine will itself, which was proclaimed already in the prophet Isaiah.” Ernst Haenchen, *John 2: A Commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 7–21*, trans. Robert W. Funk, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 101. Evans agrees when he states that “according to vv. 39–40 this unbelief is not only predicted, but is actually produced by God.” Craig A. Evans, *To See and Not Perceive: Isaiah 6.9-10 in Early Jewish and Christian Interpretation*, JSOTSup 64 (Sheffield, England: JSOT, 1989), 132. In addition, Moloney also accurately captures the significance of John 12:37–41 when he says, “[the Jews’ failure to believe] forms part of God’s design. There are no apologies for the action of God; these things happened so that the prophecy of Isaiah would be fulfilled. . . . The divine necessity of the unbelief of ‘the Jews’ is stated in a way that is without parallel in the rest of the NT. In order to fulfill the Scriptures *it was impossible for them to believe*. The Johannine use of this Isaian passage insists that God was responsible for their blindness and their hardness of heart, lest they should turn to Jesus for healing.” Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), 364, 367n40. However, Moloney mistakenly posits a contradiction between John 12:37–41 (which he claims represents a traditional Christian explanation for Israel’s unbelief) and 12:42–43 (which expresses John’s own views).

⁸ The ἵνα in v. 38 should be understood as introducing a purpose clause, thereby indicating that the Jews failed to believe *in order that* Isaiah’s prophecy might be fulfilled. As others note correctly, v. 39 makes the point explicit that the prophecies of Scripture were the very reason why the Jews could not believe (rightly Scacewater, “Typology in John 12:37–43,” 134; Carson, *John*, 447; Saeed Hamid-Khani, *Revelation and Concealment of Christ: A Theological Inquiry into the Elusive Language of the Fourth Gospel*, WUNT [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000], 312; Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John [i–xii]*, AB [New York: Doubleday, 1966], 483; Michaels, *John*, 709n10; C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* [New York: Macmillan, 1955], 359; Hartley, “Destined to Disobey,” 272; Brian J. Tabb, “Johannine Fulfillment of Scripture: Continuity and Escalation,” *BBR* 21, no. 4 [2011]: 501). Furthermore, the citation of Isa 53:1

would be dubious to suggest that the Jews meant to fulfill the Scriptures through their own unbelief (John 12:37–38), readers are already led to suspect that it was God who purposed for the Jews to reject Jesus in order that Isaiah’s word might come to pass.⁹ This suspicion finds immediate confirmation as John turns to the Isaianic passages that he believed found their fulfillment in what transpired during the ministry of Jesus.¹⁰

According to John, “the word of Isaiah” (ὁ λόγος Ἡσαΐου) which predicted Jewish unbelief is expressed in two particular passages. John first quotes Isaiah 53:1 as an Isaianic prophecy which foretold Israel’s failure to receive their Messiah.¹¹ In its

suggests that John intended to present Jesus as the Isaianic Servant of the Lord who would redeem God’s people through his death (rightly Jonathan Lett, “The Divine Identity of Jesus as the Reason for Israel’s Unbelief in John 12:36–43,” *JBL* 135, no. 1 [2016]: 163–66; Daniel J. Brendsel, “*Isaiah Saw His Glory*”: *The Use of Isaiah 52–53 in John 12*, BZNW [Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014], 113–16; Andreas J. Köstenberger, “John,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007], 477). This would then suggest that the evangelist understood the Jews’ unbelief to be part of God’s plan to crush his Servant (so also Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 268). Moreover, John’s perspective on the extent of God’s/the Son’s authority (cf. John 3:27; 5:26–27; 10:18; 17:2; 19:11) and God’s/the Son’s status as Creator of all things (cf. John 1:1–3) make it unlikely that he believed Isaiah’s prophecies could come to pass despite being contrary to the divine will (contra Torsten Löfstedt, “Who Is the Blinder of Eyes and Hardener of Hearts in John 12:40?,” *Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok* 84 [2019]: 190). On the doctrine of divine sovereignty in John’s thought, see Paul A. Rainbow, *Johannine Theology: The Gospel, the Epistles, and the Apocalypse* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014), 80–83; D. A. Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility: Biblical Perspectives in Tension* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002), 125–36.

⁹ Barrett notes that this section reveals “the predestinarian element” in John’s theology, as the apostle asserts that “this unexpected failure on the part of the people of God was in fact an element in God’s eternal purpose, and as such had been written in the Old Testament.” Barrett, *St. John*, 358–59. And though he criticizes John for holding to a “primitive” perspective, Brown rightly represents the apostle’s view when he says, “The reason for this refusal [i.e., the rejection of Jesus] lies in the Lord’s causality, for His words in the OT had to be fulfilled.” Brown, *John 1–12*, 485. Also see Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, NCB (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1972), 437.

¹⁰ Tsuchido is right to point out that John’s use of these Isaianic passages reveals his Christology. See Kiyoshi Tsuchido, “Tradition and Redaction in John 12.1–43,” *NTS* 30 (1984): 615–16.

¹¹ John’s quotation perfectly matches the LXX, which also closely follows the MT. While it is possible that John 12:38 reflects the apostle’s translation of the MT, Maarten is likely correct that the presence of *κύριε* in both John 12:38 and LXX Isa 53:1 suggests that he was citing the latter. See Maarten J. J. Menken, “The Use of the Septuagint in Three Quotations in John: Jn 10,34; 12,38; 19,24,” in *The Scriptures in the Gospels*, ed. C. M. Tuckett, BETL (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 1997), 369.

original context, the verse implies that the majority of Isaiah's audience rejected/would reject his message regarding the Servant of the Lord.¹² Additionally, Isaiah 53:1 makes the subtle suggestion that this state of affairs was in keeping with God's own purpose¹³: the verse implies that God did not allow his saving power to be revealed indiscriminately ("And to whom was the arm of the Lord revealed?").¹⁴ Because he identified Jesus with the Isaianic Servant,¹⁵ John reasons that Jewish unbelief fulfilled Isaiah 53:1 since Isaiah had already intimated that only a few would believe the good news regarding the

¹² So also Köstenberger, "John," 478; J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1993), 426–27; Brendsel, *The Use of Isaiah*, 107.

¹³ Rightly Calvin, *John*, 2:41; Köstenberger, "John," 478.

¹⁴ Motyer rightly observes that Isa 53:1 implies that "there can be no belief without prior divine revelation; on the basis of human observation alone there is no discernment of who the Servant really is." Motyer, *Isaiah*, 427. And so Schreiner is correct to suggest that John links Israel's unbelief with God's non-revelation when quoting Isa 53:1 in relation to Israel's unbelief. As Schreiner states, "John cites Isa. 53:1 in a significant text in which he sums up Jesus' public ministry and explains why so many Jews failed to believe in him. Their unbelief should not surprise, for it was predicted all along that many would not believe the proclaimed word, *that the arm of the Lord would not be revealed to them* [emphasis added]." Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 268. Meanwhile, though some understand "the arm of the Lord" to refer directly to the miracles performed by Jesus (see Carson, *John*, 448; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 216; Menken, "Jes 6,10 in Joh 12,40," 198), John may have had something slightly different in mind. Given the parallel lines within Isa 53:1, it seems warranted to assume that both rhetorical questions are intended to receive the same answer (contra Menken, "Use of the Septuagint," 386). Thus, since Isa 53:1a surely means that few people believed, readers should conclude that "the arm of the Lord" had been revealed only to a few. However, Jesus' miracles were performed in front of large crowds and were well known (cf. John 5:1–16; 6:1–15; 9:1–12; 11:38–44, 47–48); as such, John's point is probably not to assert that Jesus kept his miracles hidden. Instead, Schlatter better captures John's intent when he says that "der Jude in den Werken Jesu den Vater nicht sieht, der sie wirkt." Adolf Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Johannes: Wie er spricht, denkt, und glaubt* (Stuttgart, Germany: Calwer Verlag, 1948), 274. Thus, "the arm of the Lord" should probably not be taken to refer to Jesus' miraculous signs *per se*, but to God's saving power which was being expressed in Jesus' ministry. And as such, when John quotes Isa 53:1b, what he means to suggest is that very few Jews were granted the insight that in Jesus, God's power was at work to save his people (similarly, Calvin, *John*, 2:41).

¹⁵ As Köstenberger observes, "The hermeneutical axiom underlying John's appropriation of [Isa 53:1] is the conviction that Jesus is the Messiah, who in turn is identified with the Servant of the Lord, featured in the Isaianic Servant Songs." Köstenberger, "John," 478; see also Brendsel, *The Use of Isaiah*, 113–21; Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, *The Prophetic Gospel: A Study of John and the Old Testament* (London: T & T Clark, 1991), 166. Thus, Scacewater is probably mistaken when he argues that John used Isa 53:1 in a typological *rather than* in a "directly prophetic" sense (see Scacewater, "Typology in John 12:37–43," 136).

promised Servant of the Lord.¹⁶ Moreover, in quoting Isaiah 53:1, John already implies that the Jews' failure to believe could be explained in part by God's refusal to grant them insight into his saving power which was at work in Jesus' life and ministry.¹⁷

In addition to Isaiah 53:1, John also understands Jesus' reception as having been dictated by Isaiah 6:10 (John 12:39–40). According to John, not only did Israel choose to reject Jesus, but they *could not do otherwise*.¹⁸ The evangelist finds warrant for this radical claim in Isaiah 6:10,¹⁹ which he cites in a way that departs from both the

¹⁶ That there were some who believed is implied in the reference to “our report” (rightly Michaels, *John*, 708–9; Motyer, *Isaiah*, 427). Thus, Röhser is mistaken when he asserts that (1) a literal reading of Isa 53:1 implies that absolutely no one would believe in Jesus, and therefore (2) John's use of this passage cannot be understood at face value (see Röhser, *Prädestination und Verstockung*, 240–41).

¹⁷ Though I agree with Hartley when he cites “God's deprivation of his arm” as a reason for the Jews failure to believe in Christ, I think he is mistaken to equate this action with the blinding and hardening described in v. 40. Moreover, I am not persuaded by his claim that “the arm of the Lord” in v. 38 refers to God's power which works faith in human hearts. For his argument, see Hartley, “Destined to Disobey,” 272–74.

¹⁸ John 12:39 states explicitly that the Jews “were not able to believe” (οὐκ ἠδύναντο πιστεῦειν). And this is not an isolated statement: John claims elsewhere that the Jews who chose not to trust in Christ could not do otherwise (cf. John 6:44; 8:43–47; 10:26). As such, Bruce rejects John's plain meaning when he says, “Not one of [the Jews] was fated to be incapable of belief.” F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 271. For others who understand John as having asserted that the Jews who rejected Jesus were incapable of doing otherwise, see Brendsel, *The Use of Isaiah*, 70; Hartley, “Destined to Disobey,” 278–79; Jeffrey A. Trumbower, *Born from Above: The Anthropology of the Gospel of John*, HUT (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 4, 127–28; Heikki Räisänen, *The Idea of Divine Hardening: A Comparative Study of the Notion of Divine Hardening, Leading Astray and Inciting to Evil in the Bible and the Qur'ān*, Publications of the Finnish Exegetical Society 25 (Helsinki, Finland: Kirjapaino Oy Savo, 1972), 92–93.

¹⁹ In John 12:39, διὰ τοῦτο is probably kataphoric as it points forward to the ὅτι clause (so also Michaels, *John*, 709n10; Barrett, *St. John*, 359; Lindars, *John*, 438; Hartley, “Destined to Disobey,” 276; Scacewater, “Typology in John 12:37–43,” 137; Brendsel, *The Use of Isaiah*, 70n9). As such, John grounds the Jews' inability to believe by referring to Isa 6:10. However, an anaphoric interpretation of διὰ τοῦτο would not alter the overall sense of the passage; in either case, John is positing that both Isa 53:1 and Isa 6:10 explain why the Jews did not (and could not) trust in Christ. As Thompson correctly says, “They ‘could not’ believe, because in writing about those who could not believe, Isaiah had written of them.” Marianne Meye Thompson, *John*, NTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2015), 275.

LXX²⁰ and the MT.²¹ While explanations for John’s peculiar citation vary,²² his rendering does seem to betray John’s predestinarian theology as it highlights God’s involvement behind Israel’s fatal response to Christ.²³

According to John 12:40, Israel had been rendered dull by the actions of a third party (“He has blinded their eyes and hardened²⁴ their heart”). Interestingly, the apostle

²⁰ In the LXX, Isa 6:10 reads: ἐπαχύνθη γὰρ ἡ καρδία τοῦ λαοῦ τούτου, καὶ τοῖς ὠσίν αὐτῶν βαρέως ἤκουσαν καὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτῶν ἐκάμμυσαν, μήποτε ἴδωσιν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς καὶ τοῖς ὠσίν ἀκούσωσιν καὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ συνῶσιν καὶ ἐπιστρέψωσιν καὶ ἰάσομαι αὐτούς. John’s citation differs from LXX Isa 6:10 in several ways. First (and perhaps most importantly), John describes Israel’s hardening by using 3S active verbs (τετύφλωκεν, ἐπώρωσεν) with Israel’s senses as the direct objects of these activities (“He has blinded *their eyes*, and he hardened *their heart*”). Thus, unlike the LXX, John’s citation makes it clear that a third party was responsible for Israel’s spiritual stupefaction. Second, John cites the blinding activity before he refers to heart-hardening. Third, John does not draw attention to hearing as part of his description of Israel’s stupefaction; instead, he mentions only on Israel’s eyes and heart. Fourth, John constructs his negative purpose statement with ἵνα + μὴ rather than with μήποτε. Lastly, John’s vocabulary differs from the LXX at several points (ex. πωρόω vs. παχύνω, τυφλώω vs. καμμύω, νοέω vs. συνίημι, στρέφω vs. ἐπιστρέφω).

²¹ John 12:40 exhibits several differences from MT Isa 6:10. First, the beloved disciple refers to Israel’s stupefaction with 3S indicative verbs (τετύφλωκεν, ἐπώρωσεν) instead of 2S imperatives (וַיִּשְׁמַח, וַיִּכְבֵּד, וַיִּשְׁע), thereby suggesting that the state of affairs described by Isaiah has already been enacted (rightly Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 130). Second, John 12:40 makes no reference to the faculty of hearing. Third, by referring first to the eyes then to the heart, the evangelist inverts the order found in Isa 6:10 MT. Fourth, while MT Isa 6:10 has “his heart” function as the subject of both 3S verbs וַיִּבִּי and וַיִּשְׁע, John only relates “the heart” to the act of understanding, and he does so by using a dative of means (τῇ καρδίᾳ) together with a 3P verb (νοήσωσιν). Lastly, the evangelist refers to the (non-)possibility of healing with a 1S verb (ἰάσομαι) as opposed to a 3S verb (אָרַפּוּ).

²² For various treatments of this problem, see Andrew Montanaro, “The Use of Memory in the Old Testament Quotations in John’s Gospel,” *NovT* 59 (2017): 159–60; Ronald L. Tyler, “The Source and Function of Isaiah 6:9–10 in John 12:40,” in *Johannine Studies: Essays in Honor of Frank Pack*, ed. James E. Priest (Malibu, CA: Pepperdine University Press, 1989), 205–15; Köstenberger, “John,” 480–81; Menken, “Jes 6,10 in Joh 12,40,” 198–209; Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 129–32.

²³ Montanaro argues that John’s theology impacted the way that he remembered the Isaianic quotation. As he states, “Both Barrett and Freed say that John’s theological view necessitates his changes. Rather than necessitating it, it may well have influenced John’s memory. . . . John remembered [Isa 6:10] in a way that made sense to him.” Montanaro, “Use of Memory,” 159–60. Whether or not John’s citation of Isa 6:10 should be described as a “memory variant,” the form of the evangelist’s citation does seem to reflect his theological predilections (rightly Menken, “Jes 6,10 in Joh 12,40,” 199–200, 203; Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 132; Trumbower, *Born from Above*, 60; Brendsel, *The Use of Isaiah*, 88).

²⁴ John 12:40 presents a text critical problem: the verbs ἐπηρώσεν (אָרַפּוּ, אָרַפּוּ, אָרַפּוּ, K, W), ἐπώρωσεν (A, B*, L, Θ, Ψ), and πεπωρώκεν (B², Γ, Δ) each find attestation among the manuscript witnesses. While πεπωρώκεν probably represents an attempt to “correct” ἐπώρωσεν in light of τετύφλωκεν, the choice between ἐπηρώσεν (“he maimed”) and ἐπώρωσεν (“he hardened”) is difficult. Menken makes a

leaves the agent of hardening unnamed (“*He* has blinded their eyes”), while also distinguishing him from the speaker of the oracle (“so *I* might heal him”).²⁵ Since John 12:41 claims that Isaiah was speaking about Christ in both Isaiah 53:1 and Isaiah 6:10,²⁶ John likely understood Jesus to be one of the persons referred to in verse 40; but which one? While some have argued that John presents Jesus to be the agent of hardening,²⁷ at least two reasons make it more likely that the evangelist understood him to be the speaker who withholds healing²⁸: (1) John 12:41 suggests that Jesus is the one speaking in verse 40, since it seems to indicate that Christ was the divine King whom Isaiah encountered in his vision (cf. Isa 6:1) and who speaks in Isaiah 6:9–10²⁹; and (2) in John’s Gospel, Jesus

cogent argument for the former reading (see Menken, “Jes 6,10 in Joh 12,40,” 193–94), while the NA28, the UBS, and most commentators favor the latter (though the latter do not always expand upon their reasons; see for instance Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, vol. 2 [New York: Crossroad, 1990], 531n13; Brown, *John 1–12*, 483–84; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 205). Metzger notes that the UBS committee viewed ἐπηρώσεν to be a change introduced because it seems to be a “more suitable verb with τὴν καρδίαν.” Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart, Germany: United Bible Societies, 1994), 203; while Lindars argues that the textual witnesses to Mark 8:18, Rom 11:7, and Job 17:7 (LXX) demonstrate a scribal tendency to alter forms of πωρόω to forms of πηρόω (see Lindars, *John*, 438–39). In any event, the meaning of the passage is not significantly changed regardless of which reading is adopted.

²⁵ Michaels suggests that John’s “very free” citation of Isa 6:10 led to the “abrupt change from third to first person, as God himself intervenes to forestall any possibility that ‘I will heal them.’” Michaels, *John*, 709; see also Scacewater, “Typology in John 12:37–43,” 138. While I agree that John 12:40 probably reflects John’s own formulation as opposed to an unknown source, it seems unlikely that the apostle would have described a single agent in such awkward fashion. Thus, I think the change of person is better understood as an indication that John had in mind two different agents (rightly Löfstedt, “Blinder of Eyes,” 170; Painter, “Eschatological Faith,” 46).

²⁶ The plural form ταῦτα (“these things”) likely indicates that John understood both cited verses as being about Jesus. So also Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 133.

²⁷ See for instance Bruce, *John*, 272; J. M. Lieu, “Blindness in the Johannine Tradition,” *NTS* 34 (1988): 86. Moreover, Michaels seems to view both God and Christ as the hardening agent in v. 40 (see Michaels, *John*, 709–10).

²⁸ For others who understand Jesus to be the speaker, see Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 453n2; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 216–17; Moloney, *John*, 364; Menken, “Jes 6,10 in Joh 12,40,” 206–7; Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Johannes*, 275; Morris, *John*, 604n106; Painter, “Eschatological Faith,” 46; Röhser, *Prädestination und Verstockung*, 239; Brendsel, *The Use of Isaiah*, 90–91.

²⁹ Both the LXX and the MT present YHWH as the one whom Isaiah encountered (cf. Isa 6:1)

is portrayed as a healer (cf. John 4:47, 50; 5:8–9, 13; 9:6–7) and as one granted the authority to give life (cf. John 4:40; 5:21, 26–29; 10:18; 11:25–26, 43–44). Thus, John probably understood Jesus to be the person who speaks and withholds healing in Isaiah 6:10. This then raises the question of the identity of the agent of hardening. At least three possibilities can be entertained. First, some have suggested that Satan should be understood as the agent behind Israel’s blindness.³⁰ While possible,³¹ most interpreters

and as the speaker in Isa 6:9–10. In a move that indicates his high Christology, John 12:41 suggests that it was actually the glory of the preincarnate Son that Isaiah saw in Isa 6:1. This reading of John 12:41 is probable for at least three reasons. First, the immediate Johannine context suggests that both instances of αὐτοῦ in v. 41 refer back to αὐτόν in v. 37; as such, when John says that Isaiah “saw his glory,” τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ should be taken to refer to the glory of Christ (rightly Jörg Frey, *The Glory of the Crucified One: Christology and Theology in the Gospel of John*, trans. Wayne Coppins and Christoph Heilig, Baylor–Mohr Siebeck Studies in Early Christianity [Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2018], 245). Second, the phrase εἶδεν τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ (“he saw his glory”) in v. 41 seems to allude to Isa 6:1 (εἶδον τὸν κύριον . . . καὶ πλήρης ὁ οἶκος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ; “I saw the LORD . . . and the house was full of his glory”). Lastly, John’s language in 12:41 also recalls 1:14, where John claims to have witnessed Jesus’ glory (καὶ ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός). Thus, if John does in fact identify Jesus with the LORD whom Isaiah saw in the temple (Isa 6:1; cf. John 12:41), then it becomes likely that he understood Jesus to also be the speaker in Isa 6:9–10 (so also Menken, “Jes 6,10 in Joh 12,40,” 206–7). For others who interpret John 12:41 as indicating that Isaiah saw Christ’s glory in his temple vision, see Bultmann, *John*, 452n4; Barrett, *St. John*, 360; Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Johannes*, 276; Bruce, *John*, 272; Morris, *John*, 605; Lindars, *John*, 439; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 217; Michaels, *John*, 710; Moloney, *John*, 364; Richard Bauckham, *Gospel of Glory: Major Themes in Johannine Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 53–54; Hanson, *The Prophetic Gospel*, 167, 263; Lett, “Divine Identity,” 170; Brendsel, *The Use of Isaiah*, 70–71, 91.

³⁰ See for instance Löfstedt, “Blinder of Eyes,” 170; Painter, “Eschatological Faith,” 46–47; Hamid-Khani, *Revelation and Concealment*, 319–21.

³¹ Löfstedt builds on Painter’s work and provides the most recent defense of this position. According to Löfstedt, the following factors within the immediate context of John 12:40 suggest that the devil is the hardening agent: (1) v. 31 provides contextual warrant for viewing the hardening agent as the devil, since it refers to “the ruler of this world,” (2) the mention of “darkness” in John 12:35 leads to this conclusion since σκοτία in John is a symbolic reference to the devil, and (3) John’s use of the verb τυφλόω in John 12:40 should be understood in light the same verb’s occurrence in 2 Cor 4:4 and 1 John 2:11, where the subjects of τυφλόω are “the god of this world” and “the darkness” respectively (see Löfstedt, “Blinder of Eyes,” 176–81). While these arguments are worthy of consideration, they are not finally compelling. First of all, given the distance between v. 31 and v. 40, John would have surely provided some explicit signals if he intended to say that the “ruler of this world” was responsible for blinding and hardening (especially since the text quoted does not depict the devil as the hardening agent). Second, while he repeatedly states that Jesus is the light, John never actually identifies “darkness” with the devil. Moreover, some of John’s language makes this identification unlikely to be correct. For instance, in what sense could it be said that “the light shines in the darkness” (τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ φαίνει; cf. 1:5a) if σκοτία was another name for Satan? Third, while Löfstedt focuses on occurrences of τυφλόω, he fails to note that the verb πωρόω is not used to describe the devil’s actions in the LXX (Job 17:7) and in the NT (Mark 6:52; 8:17;

are probably correct to reject this position because it is not suggested by the immediate Johannine context or the context surrounding Isaiah 6:10.³² Second, though I am unaware of any who have made this proposal, the MT version of Isaiah 6:10 makes it theoretically possible that John saw Isaiah as the hardening agent who mediated God’s negative influence. However, such a reading is highly unlikely for at least two reasons: (1) since John frames the whole citation as Isaiah’s speech (“because Isaiah again said”; cf. 12:39), he probably would not have used third person verbs (“*he* has blinded their eyes”) within the speech if he meant to refer to Isaiah; and (2) nothing within the Gospel would explain why or how Isaiah (whether the person or the book) could play a prominent role in hardening the hearts of Jesus’ contemporaries. Thus, a third possibility seems to be the best one, which is that God is presented as the agent of hardening in verse 40.³³ Such a suggestion is compatible with both the original context of Isaiah 6:10, with John’s earlier citation of Isaiah 53:1b (which speaks of God withholding revelation), and with the apostle’s broader theological perspective.³⁴ Thus, according to John 12:40, Isaiah’s

Rom 11:7; 2 Cor 3:14). In fact, an analysis of the occurrences of *σκληρύνω*, *παχύνω*, and *πωρόω* reveals that nowhere in the canon is the devil described as the agent of heart-hardening. Finally, given the importance of Isaiah in John’s argument, John’s choice of *τυφλόω* may be explained by the influence of Isa 42:19. Thus, despite Löfstedt’s efforts, it remains improbable that John had the devil in mind as the hardener when he quoted Isa 6:10.

³² Röhser goes so far as to say that it is “entirely impossible” (*ganz unmöglich*) that the devil is the subject of hardening because of these factors. Röhser *Prädestination und Verstockung*, 194n36.

³³ For others who understand God to be the agent of hardening in John 12:40, see Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Johannes*, 275; Carson, *John*, 448–49; Brown, *John 1–12*, 486; Lindars, *John*, 438; Bultmann, *John*, 452; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 216–17; Thompson, *John*, 274; Moloney, *John*, 364; Haenchen, *John 7–21*, 101; Röhser, *Prädestination und Verstockung*, 239; Trumbower, *Born from Above*, 108; Tabb, “Johannine Fulfillment,” 502–3; Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 561; Köstenberger, “John,” 481; Montanaro, “Use of Memory,” 159; Scacewater, “Typology in John 12:37–43,” 138; Menken, “Jes 6,10 in Joh 12,40,” 203; Tyler, “Isaiah 6:9–10 in John 12:40,” 206; Brendsel, *The Use of Isaiah*, 89–90. Michaels’ view is more complex, as he first posits God as the agent of hardening, but then later claims that it was Jesus (or God working through Jesus) who had hardened the hearts of his audience (see Michaels, *John*, 709–10).

³⁴ Since John viewed faith as a gift granted by God to those whom he chooses (cf. John 1:12–13; 3:1–8; 6:44, 64–65; 10:25–26; 15:16; rightly Calvin, *John*, 2:40; Stuhlmacher, *Biblical Theology*, 701–3; Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility*, 181–92; Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*,

hardening ministry found its fulfillment in Jesus' ministry. More specifically, John here presents the Father and the Son collaborating in an effort to negatively influence persons towards unbelief and eventual condemnation³⁵: the Father stultifies Israel's spiritual senses, while the Son refrains from healing those rendered incapable of responding to him in faith.³⁶

Given these findings, it seems warranted to conclude that John 12:37–41 describes DRA.³⁷ The Gospel writer contends that Israel's deliberate rejection of Jesus was predetermined by the Scriptures (cf. Isa 6:10; 53:1).³⁸ Isaiah predicted that the Lord's

134–35; Robert W. Yarbrough, "Divine Election in the Gospel of John," in *Still Sovereign: Contemporary Perspectives on Election, Foreknowledge, and Grace*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce A. Ware [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000], 60; Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Johannes*, 274), and since he understood that not everyone responded to Christ with faith, it would not be inconsistent for the apostle to have concluded that unbelief was evidence of God's reprobating activity, whether that be in a passive (cf. John 6:60–65; 12:38) or active (cf. John 12:39–40) sense. In fact, as Thompson correctly observes of John's Isaiah citations, "These difficult utterances echo the Johannine note that no one sees or responds to Jesus unless they are taught or drawn by God, unless their eyes are opened to see." Thompson, *John*, 274. Moreover, as I have demonstrated, both the OT and the NT contain numerous examples of DRA; thus, it would not be surprising for John to have also borne witness to this type of divine activity.

³⁵ Taking God the Father as the agent of hardening and Jesus as the subject of the verb *ἰάσομαι* does not suggest that the two were at cross-purposes (contra Painter, "Eschatological Faith," 46n1). On the contrary, because the beloved disciple depicts Jesus as God's perfectly obedient Son (cf. John 5:19, 30, 36; 6:38) and because of the "oneness" that is said to exist between he and the Father (cf. John 10:31, 38; 14:8–11), readers should assume that v. 40 reflects a consonance of purpose: both the Father and the Son intended for most of the Jews to sinfully reject Christ and to refuse the salvation that had been offered through his life, death, and resurrection. Instead of being an expression of the Son's opposition to the Father's will, the statement "I would heal them" functions to show the consequences of divine hardening by describing a hypothetical scenario in which hardening did not occur. In other words, had the Father not hardened the Jews (thereby signaling his desire to save them), then the Son would have healed them. But because God did in fact harden them (thereby demonstrating that he did *not* will their salvation), Jesus did not heal them.

³⁶ Similarly Bultmann, *John*, 453n2; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 216–17.

³⁷ Räisänen goes so far as to say that "the idea of predestination is stressed" in John 12:37–40 (Räisänen, *Idea of Divine Hardening*, 92). But as with other examples of DRA, it must be borne in mind that John 12:37–41 affirms both that God had influenced the Jews towards unbelief *and* that they were guilty for refusing to trust in Jesus (rightly Frey, *Glory of the Crucified One*, 149; Brendsel, *The Use of Isaiah*, 70).

³⁸ As Bultmann states, "The result—the unbelief—is explained in both citations . . . as a necessity ordained of God; in it is fulfilled simply that which the prophet Isaiah had predicted." Bultmann,

Servant would be rejected because God would withhold revelation from the nation and would render them incapable of saving faith through his hardening influence (John 12:37–40).³⁹ Thus, John 12:37–41 can be said to describe a form of divine influence whereby God led a particular group of people to sin and condemnation.⁴⁰ But rather than evidencing fatalism or a denial of human agency, this passage seems to show that John simultaneously prioritized God’s agency while affirming the significance of human decisions. As such, Köstenberger seems justified in concluding that “John’s theodicy places human choice under the larger rubric of God’s sovereign salvation-historical purposes, carefully balancing the twin truths of divine sovereignty and human responsibility in a way that may be described as unambiguously predestinarian yet compatibilist.”⁴¹

In addition, John 12:38–41 provides sufficient detail so that readers may come to some conclusions regarding its characterization of DRA. First of all, the text probably posits a non-retributive form of DRA⁴²: John provides no indication that God’s negative

John, 452.

³⁹ “Not only did the people not believe, they *could* not believe because of what Isaiah said (in Isa 6:10): God had blinded their eyes and made their heart (= mind) obtuse in case they should see, and understand, and turn, and the Christ should heal them.” Beasley-Murray, *John*, 216. See also Michaels, *John*, 710.

⁴⁰ The Gospel of John is clear about the sinfulness of unbelief; as Watt states, “The essence of sin in the Gospel [of John] is not necessarily doing wrong things, but doing THE wrong thing, that is, not accepting Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God.” Watt, *Introduction*, 52. Moreover, John also emphasizes that divine condemnation awaits those who refuse to trust in Jesus (cf. John 3:18, 36; 8:24).

⁴¹ See Köstenberger, “John,” 482.

⁴² Hartley seems to express the same judgment (see Hartley, “Destined to Disobey,” 272, 277, 283–84). And as I have stressed elsewhere, non-retributive DRA does not refer to God negatively influencing the innocent and condemning the righteous. Thus, I can agree with Carson when he says of God’s hardening in John 12:40 that “those condemned are in any case *justly* condemned, i.e. they are rightly accountable for their unbelief. . . . They are not forced into an unbelief they do not themselves want.” Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility*, 196. However, establishing the guilt of the objects of hardening does not demonstrate that God’s influence was understood by the biblical author to have been an act of retribution. For DRA to be retributive, a biblical author must present God as having undertaken reprobating action as a means of punishing sin. Since John does not in fact present divine

influence was motivated by a desire to repay the Jews for their sins⁴³; instead, he posits that the Lord's purpose was to fulfill the Scriptures, which disclosed in advance that God's Servant would be rejected and put to death (v. 37–41).⁴⁴ Second, in light of John's broader teaching that belief leads to eternal life (cf. John 3:14–18, 36; 4:14; 5:24–29; 6:27–29, 35–40, 47–51, 54–58; 7:37–39; 8:12, 51; 10:27–28; 11:25–26; 12:49–50; 14:6; 17:1–3; 20:31), it seems reasonable to conclude that the punishment for unbelief (cf. John 3:18, 36; 5:29, 39–40; 6:53; 8:21, 24; 12:45–48; 15:6) involves eternal death.⁴⁵ If this is

hardening in this fashion and since he instead supplies a different motivation (i.e., the fulfillment of Scripture), it seems warranted to posit a non-retributive form of DRA in John 12:37–41.

⁴³ The arguments made in defense of retributive readings are not compelling. For instance, Kühschelm contends that v. 37 describes Israel's initial decision to reject Christ, while vv. 39–40 refer to God's judicial response to prior unbelief. Roman Kühschelm, *Verstockung, Gericht Und Heil: Exegetische Und Bibeltheologische Untersuchung Zum Sogenannten "Dualismus" Und "Determinismus" in Joh 12,35–50*, Athenäum Monografien (Frankfurt: Hain, 1990), 42–43. However, such an interpretation fails since v. 39 clearly presents Isa 6 as the reason (διὰ τοῦτο) for the Jews inability to believe. Additionally, Röhser argues that John must have understood hardening to have been retributive since he appeals to a passage in which God's negative influence is presented as an act of judgment (see Röhser, *Prädestination und Verstockung*, 194–95). However, his point is overly simplistic: the evidence from the NT suggests that the biblical authors used Isa 6 in different ways (on this point, see Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 81–135). So while Isa 6 likely does involve a retributive form of DRA (see my discussion in chap. 5, s.v. "DRA in the Book of Isaiah," "DRA against Israel," and "Isaiah 6"), there is no *a priori* reason to believe that NT authors could only use the text to refer to cases of retributive hardening. Moreover, John's adjustments to the language of the citation evidence his willingness to use the text in accordance with his own theology and immediate purpose. As such, John's understanding of divine hardening cannot be determined solely through recourse to the meaning of Isa 6:10 within its Isaianic context. Finally, Scacewater argues that John 12:38 raised the issue of God's justice and that the evangelist cited Isa 6:10 in order to show that God acted justly in securing Israel's unbelief (Scacewater, "Typology in John 12:37–43," 138–39). However, such a reading seems to reflect Scacewater's interests rather than the apostle's since John provides no indication that he felt the need to justify God's reprobating actions (cf. Rom 9:14–23).

⁴⁴ Though he wrongly asserts that God's hardening was retributive, Scacewater is correct when he says, "The cause that John attributes to Israel's unbelief is therefore not Israel's stubbornness, but *the necessity of the fulfillment of Scripture* [emphasis added]." Scacewater, "Typology in John 12:37–43," 134. Moreover, Evans seems to represent John's thinking accurately when he describes the hardening of the Jews as being part of God's plan to glorify the Son through his death, resurrection, and subsequent ascension (Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 134; similarly, Brendsel, *The Use of Isaiah*, 116–22).

⁴⁵ As Neyrey points out, "'Eternal life' emerges as the reward for believers, implying that 'eternal death' will be the sanction for those who refuse belief." Jerome H. Neyrey, "In Conclusion. . . . John 12 as a Rhetorical *Peroratio*," *BTB* 37 (2007): 104. Moreover, John 5:28–29 refers to a post-mortem judgment, which, in light of the rest of the NT, probably alludes to eternal condemnation.

so, then the negative influence described in John 12:37–41 should be understood as a form of eternal DRA.⁴⁶ Third, since God is most likely the implied agent in verse 40a, and since his actions are presented as directly terminating upon the hardened, readers can conclude that the evangelist used Isaiah 6:10 to describe an immediate form of DRA.⁴⁷ Finally, the apostle probably describes a form of influence that has both a passive and an active element⁴⁸: God is described both as withholding revelation (v. 38b) and as directly stupefying spiritual senses (v. 40a).⁴⁹

DRA in the bread of life discourse. While John 12:37–41 attests to DRA directly, the beloved disciple speaks of God’s negative influence in a more suggestive manner throughout John 6:36–66. In the preceding narrative, Jesus had miraculously provided food for the crowds who had been following him because of the signs they had seen him perform (John 6:2, 8–13). They then respond to this provision by attempting to enthrone Jesus as king (John 6:15) so that he might continue providing for their dietary needs (John 6:26, 30–31).⁵⁰ Jesus then directs them to stop focusing solely on matters of

⁴⁶ Brendsel argues that John 12:37–41 has an ultimately redemptive thrust, as God’s blinding of Israel “leads to the rejection and death of the Servant, which in turn leads to the healing of blindness.” Brendsel, *The Use of Isaiah*, 120–21. While Brendsel is surely correct that John views DRA to be a means of bringing about Christ’s redemptive death on behalf of those given to the Son, John 12:40 also makes clear that the healing secured by the cross is not offered to those made blind. As such, to claim that God’s reprobating agency secured the salvation of those subjected to it seems to go beyond the meaning of John 12:37–41.

⁴⁷ Contra Celsor, who argues that John means to imply that God merely abandoned unbelieving Jews with the result that they were blinded by “darkness.” Scott Celsor, “The Human Response in the Creation and Formation of Faith: A Narrative Analysis of John 12:20–50 and Its Application to the Doctrine of Justification,” *HBT* 30 (2008): 130.

⁴⁸ So also Calvin, *John*, 2:42.

⁴⁹ Contra Hartley, who argues for a completely passive form of DRA when he says that “divine *withholding* of regeneration, or not drawing or not giving that thereby perpetuates blindness and lack of salvific wisdom, aptly describes *how* God blinds and fattens.” Hartley, “Destined to Disobey,” 279.

⁵⁰ Kysar is too optimistic regarding the motives of the crowds when he claims that they “want[ed] to believe” in Jesus and that they “express[ed] an authentic quest and an openness to receive that of which Jesus [spoke].” Robert Kysar, “The Dismantling of Decisional Faith: A Reading of John 6:25-71,”

daily living but to instead consider how they might attain eternal life (John 6:26–27); moreover, Jesus discloses to them that he has been sent by God to be the source of eternal life to those who believe his testimony (John 6:27, 29, 33, 35–40, 47–51).⁵¹ But despite providing a genuine invitation to the crowds, Jesus knew that they did not and would not believe him (John 6:36; cf. 6:26). Christ then explains this state of affairs by bringing God’s own agency into the equation:

But I said to you that even though you have seen me, you still do not believe. All that (πᾶν δ) the Father gives to me will come to me, and the one who comes to me (καὶ τὸν ἐρχόμενον πρὸς ἐμὲ),⁵² I will never cast out because I have come down from heaven not to do my will but [to do] the will of the one who sent me. Now this is the will of the one who sent me, that all that he has given to me—that I not lose any from it, but that I raise it on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him might have eternal life, and that I raise him on the last day (John 6:36–40).

In these verses, Jesus implicitly grounds the unbelieving response of the Jewish crowds⁵³ in the fact of their non-membership in the group referred to as “that which the Father

in *Critical Readings of John 6*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper, BibInt (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1997), 164–65. On the contrary, Jesus’ response to them makes it clear that their motivations in following him were dubious (rightly Michaels, *John*, 374).

⁵¹ Dunn makes the insightful comment that, in John 6, the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ are crucial to his identity as the source of life. As Dunn states, “The central theme [of John 6] is that Jesus himself is the source and sustenance of eternal life. . . . It is the incarnate Jesus *only as given up to death* who is the bread of life. However essential was the incarnation to the work of redemption, for John it is not merely Jesus descended who gives life, merely as σάρξ, but rather as also ascended, when he gives himself through and in the Spirit.” James D. G. Dunn, “John VI: A Eucharistic Discourse?,” *NTS* 17 (1971): 337–38.

⁵² Michaels accurately describes the significance of John’s formulation when he says, “‘All’ is neuter and singular (literally ‘everything’) referring to all believers corporately, while the participle (‘the person who comes’) is masculine singular, focusing on any individuals who might ‘come to Jesus’ in the sense of believing in him or giving him their allegiance.” Michaels, *John*, 376–77. See also Carson, *John*, 290.

⁵³ The crowd is later identified as being Jewish (cf. John 6:41). While some argue that v. 41 introduces a new audience, I think it is more likely that the change from ὁ ὄχλος (v. 24) to οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι (v. 41) is made for rhetorical effect. John initially holds in suspense whether or not the crowd will believe, but little by little he reveals their true character until he finally exposes their settled unbelief by referring to them as “the Jews” and by comparing them to the grumbling Israelites of the wilderness generation. For a similar interpretation, see Michaels, *John*, 376, 382–83.

gives to me” (ὁ δίδωσίν μοι ὁ πατήρ).⁵⁴ Jesus is sure that all those who have been given to him will come to faith in him and will receive eternal life (John 6:37a; cf. John 17:2).⁵⁵ At the same time however, the suggestion seems to follow that some have *not* been given to him by God and that these *will fail* to receive him as the bread of life.⁵⁶ Furthermore, verse 39 seems to imply that (at least in some sense) God’s saving will is not directed

⁵⁴ Trumbower is correct to point out that John “presuppose[s] a schism” between those given by God to the Son and those who have not been given. However, the account he provides regarding the nature of this schism is unpersuasive. According to Trumbower, “In contrast to Pauline election language, where all human beings are wicked and immoral even though some have been predestined by God for grace, the Johannine view stresses the fact that believers belong to an entire realm of that which is to be saved . . . and they belonged to that realm before the coming of the savior. It is that realm, believers included, which the Father gives to Jesus.” Trumbower, *Born from Above*, 84. This is part and parcel of his broader thesis that John distinguishes believers and unbelievers principally in relation to their different “fixed origins” as opposed to God’s gracious election. Despite the initial plausibility of his suggestion, Trumbower’s argument is not finally persuasive. In my judgment, Trumbower does not do justice to the election language within John (cf. John 6:70; 13:18; 15:16, 19), or to the fact that, unlike Jesus (cf. John 3:13, 31; 6:33, 38, 50–51, 57–58, 62; 8:23), the disciples are not said to have come down from heaven/from above, or to the suggestions within the book that persons must be transferred out of the world/the darkness if they are to become disciples (cf. John 8:12; 12:36, 46; 15:19), or to the statements regarding the necessity of new birth for a person to become a citizen of God’s kingdom (cf. John 1:12–13; 3:3–8). Against Trumbower’s thesis, see Frey, *Glory of the Crucified One*, 119–20; Leander E. Keck, “Derivation as Destiny: ‘Of-Ness’ in Johannine Christology, Anthropology, and Soteriology,” in *Exploring the Gospel of John: In Honor of D. Moody Smith*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper and C. Clifton Black (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 274–84.

⁵⁵ As Haenchen says, “He whom the Father gives Jesus is destined for salvation, and of course comes to faith and will not be rejected by Jesus.” Ernst Haenchen, *John 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 1–6*, trans. Robert W. Funk, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 291; also see Trumbower, *Born from Above*, 84. Additionally, it is crucial to recognize the relationship John establishes between membership among those given to the Son and the choice to believe. According to the apostle, the divine act of “giving” precedes the human act of believing (rightly Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility*, 187). In other words, John does not say that those who come to the Son would then be given to him; instead, he asserts that those given to the Son will thereby come to him. Thus, without denying the significance of human agency, John grounds man’s ability to believe in the prior act of divine “giving” (cf. John 6:44). As Michaels puts it, “God decides who they [i.e. those who will believe] are, for they are God the Father’s gift to Jesus, and by coming to him they prove that they belong to God. . . . Both here and elsewhere in the Gospel tradition, Jesus responds to unbelief with an appeal to divine sovereignty and divine election.” Michaels, *John*, 377.

⁵⁶ Rightly C. K. Barrett, “The Dialectical Theology of St. John,” in *New Testament Essays* (London: S.P.C.K., 1972), 63; Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Johannes*, 175; Haenchen, *John 1–6*, 291–92. Thompson also seems to concede this point when she says of John 6:37–40, “Jesus’ words account for the appalling actions of those disciples who turn away from him as well as Judas’s betrayal: they have not been ‘given’ to Jesus by the Father (6:66, 70–71). These statements make God ultimately responsible for drawing people to Jesus.” Thompson, *John*, 152.

towards all; instead, it attends to those who comprise all that the Father has given to the Son.⁵⁷ As Jesus says, “Now this is the will of the one who sent me, that all that he has given to me—that I not lose [anyone] from it, but that I raise it on the last day” (John 6:39). Jesus is clear that God wills for him to guard (cf. John 17:12) and eventually raise (cf. John 5:25–29) the entirety of what has been given to him⁵⁸; however, such a statement seems to indicate that Christ’s salvific commission is somehow limited to those who comprise “all that the Father has given to [Jesus].”⁵⁹ Thus, the unbelief of the crowd cannot represent Jesus’ failure to accomplish God’s will,⁶⁰ for verse 37 indicates that God’s act of giving has predetermined who would in fact come to trust in Jesus⁶¹ and

⁵⁷ The Gospel of John characterizes the scope of God’s saving will in a complex manner. Some passages initially suggest a universal saving will in God (cf. John 3:16; 12:32); however, other passages seem to restrict God’s saving will to a particular group of persons that does not include all individuals (cf. John 10:11, 14–15, 25–29; 17:9). It is not within the scope of this project to explore this tension in any detail. However, I would argue that this “problem” cannot be legitimately solved by simply dismissing the particularistic stream of thought within John (as Frey is sometimes in danger of doing; see Frey, *Glory of the Crucified One*, 151–52; 164–65). For a discussion that treats the universalistic-particularistic tension as one of the paradoxes within John’s theology, see C. K. Barrett, “Paradox and Dualism,” in *Essays on John* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982), 113–14.

⁵⁸ Thompson makes the interesting suggestion that John 6:13–14 already signals Jesus’ commitment to save all those who have been given to him. According to her, “the gathering of the twelve baskets, with nothing ‘lost,’ symbolizes Jesus unflinching faithfulness in gathering together his own, of which none are lost.” Marianne Meye Thompson, “Thinking about God: Wisdom and Theology in John 6,” in Culpepper, *Critical Readings of John 6*, 245.

⁵⁹ Verse 40 does not undermine this reading of v. 39; instead, John 6:39–40 could be describing God’s will from two complementary vantage points. On one level, God’s will could be described as intending the salvation of those whom he had decreed would belong to the Son (v. 39). And yet on another level, it could also be said that God wills the salvation of everyone who believes in the Son (v. 40). These two perspectives need not be seen as contradictory, for John could be saying that everyone who believes the Son has been predestined to (voluntarily) do so because they have already been given to the Son by the Father (see Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility*, 184–85).

⁶⁰ Rightly Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility*, 184.

⁶¹ As others have noted, John affirms both God’s sovereignty over human faith and the meaningfulness of the human choice to believe or disbelieve. So for instance, Ladd says correctly that “some sayings in John seem to reflect a high view of predestination. . . . Side by side with such sayings are other sayings in which unbelief is due to human moral failure. . . . [John] sees no contradiction that faith is the free decision of a person’s will and at the same time the gift of God’s grace.” George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 313. Meanwhile, Brown is also right to say of John 6:36–37 that “the stress in vs. 37 that God destines men to come to Jesus does not in the

verse 39 suggests that Christ was not sent to savingly protect all men, but only that particular group of persons whom God had already designated for salvation and who will therefore “see the Son and believe in him” (cf. John 6:40).⁶²

John continues to allude to God’s non-activity as the reason for unbelief in John 6:41–45. Rather than accepting Jesus’ testimony, the audience complains that his human parentage and their familiarity with his family demonstrate the preposterous nature of his claim to be “the bread that descends from heaven” (John 6:41–42).⁶³ While Jesus rebukes them for their grumbling (v. 43),⁶⁴ he goes on to state that the ability to respond appropriately to him depends upon God’s prior activity⁶⁵: “No one is able to come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him” (John 6:44a).⁶⁶ Jesus then cites

least attenuate the guilt in vs. 36 of those who do not believe. . . . With all John’s insistence on man’s choosing between light and darkness, it would be nonsense to ask if the evangelist believed in human responsibility. It would be just as much nonsense to doubt that, like the other biblical authors, he saw God’s sovereign choice being worked out in those who came to Jesus.” Brown, *John 1–12*, 276. For a thorough and helpful treatment of this issue in John, see Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility*, 125–98.

⁶² Similarly, Carson, *John*, 290–91.

⁶³ So also Jane S. Webster, *Ingesting Jesus: Eating and Drinking in the Gospel of John*, Academia Biblica (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 81.

⁶⁴ A number of scholars note that the grumbling of the Jews recalls the grumbling of Israel in the wilderness (cf. Exod 15:24; 16:2; 17:3; Num 11:1; 14:1–6). See for instance Thompson, *John*, 152; Köstenberger, “John,” 447; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 93; Presian R. Burroughs, “Stop Grumbling and Start Eating: Gospel Meal Meets Scriptural Spice in the Bread of Life Discourse,” *HBT* 28 (2006): 73–74; John Painter, “Jesus and the Quest for Eternal Life,” in Culpepper, *Critical Readings of John 6*, 86.

⁶⁵ In fact, Kysar is correct to observe that John 6:25–71 repeatedly makes the point that faith cannot *finally* be explained through recourse to human decision. As he states, “The theme of God’s role in *originating* [emphasis added] the faith response runs through the whole discussion and is represented in the dialogue with each group of participants.” Kysar, “Dismantling of Decisional Faith,” 178. Also see Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 536.

⁶⁶ Michaels makes the insightful comment that “Jesus is not so much inviting these Galilean ‘Jews’ to ‘come to him’ as providing the *reader of the Gospel* with an explanation why they would not and could not come. They do not come to Jesus because they are not ‘drawn’ or ‘dragged’ to him.” Michaels, *John*, 385–86.

Isaiah 54:13 in order to contend that this same idea is found in the prophetic writings: “It has been written in the prophets: ‘And all will be taught of God.’⁶⁷ All who hear from the Father and learn come to me” (John 6:45). Given the fact that Jesus was rejected by many of his hearers (cf. John 6:36, 41, 64–66) and given the meaning of the statement in its original context,⁶⁸ it is improbable that Jesus’ statement “all will be taught by God” was intended to refer to all people without exception.⁶⁹ On the contrary, John 6:45 probably means that all the sons of Israel typologically considered are the ones who experience the fulfillment of Isaiah 54:13.⁷⁰ In other words, Jesus does not understand Isaiah to refer merely to those physically descended from Abraham (cf. John 8:31–40); on the contrary, by identifying those “taught by God” (i.e., the sons of Israel; cf. Isa 54:13) as those who come to him,⁷¹ Jesus redefines Israel Christologically and suggests that the true sons of

⁶⁷ In both the MT (וכל־בניך למוֹדֵי יְהוָה) and the LXX (καὶ πάντα τοὺς υἱοὺς σου διδασκτοὺς θεοῦ), Isa 54:13 refers to “your sons” and makes use of a verbless construction. However, John’s citation omits any mention of “your sons” and supplies the verb ἔσονται. While the latter feature of John’s quotation could be easily explained as being due to a desire to highlight the text’s prophetic character, the former change is more difficult to account for. Given the text’s implicit criticism of the unbelief of “the Jews” and given John’s later claim that his opponents were in fact sons of the devil (cf. John 8:44), perhaps the use of “all” without the limiter “of your sons” should be understood as a subtle yet intentional way of indicating that Isaiah’s promise applied to all those drawn to Christ rather than only to ethnic Israelites (similarly, Köstenberger, “John,” 450). In addition, the change may also signal that not all the physical sons of Jacob would experience the fulfillment of this promise. Thus, there is a sense in which Jesus widens the scope of Isa 54:13 (i.e., believing Gentiles are now included) and a sense in which he particularizes its application (i.e., unbelieving Israelites are now excluded; rightly Michaels, *John*, 386–87).

⁶⁸ In Isa 54, the prophet speaks to Israel in exile and promises a future day of restoration when God’s people will once again become a multitudinous nation that dwells in its land and is victorious over its enemies (Isa 54:1–10). Even more, that formerly defeated and exiled people would see its land made immeasurably beautiful and secure on the eschatological day of God’s blessing (Isa 54:11–12). But most importantly, Isaiah implies that these future blessings will never again be lost due to the people’s waywardness; instead, the prophet anticipates the day when God would ensure that each individual Israelite would be genuinely loyal to YHWH’s instructions (Isa 54:12–17).

⁶⁹ See especially Haenchen, *John 1–6*, 292–93.

⁷⁰ Carson rightly describes Jesus’ use of Isa 54:13 as typological: “in the New Testament the messianic community and the dawning of the saving reign of God are the typological fulfillments of the restoration of Jerusalem after the Babylonian exile.” Carson, *John*, 293.

⁷¹ When Jesus speaks about “all who hear from the Father and learn” (πᾶς ὁ ἀκούσας παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ μαθὼν), he is specifying the identity of those who are “taught by God” (διδασκτοὶ θεοῦ). And

Israel are those who receive him as the bread of life. Importantly, Jesus' explication of the prophetic citation reaffirms that faith depends upon prior divine activity: one must be taught by God in order to come to Jesus.⁷² This of course does not eliminate the significance of human activity since true Israelites are described as those who listen and learn from God.⁷³ Nevertheless, John 6:44–45 suggests that God's prior action (i.e., drawing, teaching) is the prerequisite for the exercise of genuine faith and for membership among God's true people.⁷⁴ By grounding faith in God's prior action,⁷⁵ the text also implies that any failure to trust in Jesus must be due to divine non-activity.⁷⁶ In

since all who hear and learn are said to come to Jesus (cf. v. 45b), it becomes clear that John claims that Isa 54:13 refers to Christ's disciples and that God's "teaching" brings about a person's "coming." On this point, see Köstenberger, "John," 450; Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility*, 186; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 93; Michaels, *John*, 386–87.

⁷² Rightly Haenchen, *John 1–6*, 292–93; Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility*, 186; Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 536; Augustine, "On the Predestination of the Saints," in *St. Augustine: Four Anti-Pelagian Writings*, trans. John A. Mourant and William J. Collinge, FC, vol. 86 (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1992), 233. Moreover, Barrett is correct to describe God's "teaching" here as "the inward teaching which God gives to those whom he chooses and so directs to Jesus." Barrett, *St. John*, 245.

⁷³ Webster comes to a similar conclusion on the basis of the "ingestion" metaphor used in John 6. As she points out, "While it has been argued that John emphasizes the will of the Father in the economy of salvation, that is, unless the Father draws them, they cannot come, the language of ingesting makes it clear that reception of Jesus is not passive. To the contrary, human acceptance and ingestion of Jesus is necessary for life." Webster, *Ingesting Jesus*, 88–89. Similarly, see Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 534.

⁷⁴ Similarly William Bonney, *Caused to Believe: The Doubting Thomas Story as the Climax of John's Christological Narrative*, BibInt (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2002), 118–19; Klaus Wengst, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 2nd ed., vol. 1, Theologischer Kommentar zum neuen Testament (Stuttgart, Germany: Kohlhammer, 2004), 256.

⁷⁵ As Frey correctly contends, "It can scarcely be missed that the divine activity, the drawing and giving of the Father, is consistently regarded as the ultimate cause of belief in the Fourth Gospel (6.37,44; cf. 10.29; 19.2,6, 9; etc.). In John, salvation can only be thought of as 'a radical miracle of new creation' and is entirely underivable from the human side. . . . In the Johannine view this divine activity . . . is prior to every human 'answer' and must therefore be regarded as its actual basis." Frey, *Glory of the Crucified One*, 148. In fact, if the phrase τὸ ἔργον τοῦ θεοῦ ("the work of God") in John 6:29 was intended as a subjective genitive, then the evangelist may even explicitly describe faith as a work that God himself accomplishes (for an argument in favor of this interpretation, see Sigurd Grindheim, "The Work of God or of Human Beings: A Note on John 6:29," *JETS* 59, no. 1 [2016]: 63–66).

⁷⁶ Augustine explains the logical necessity of this conclusion when he says, "What does 'Everyone that has heard from the Father, and has learned, comes to me,' mean except that there is no one

other words, a person's rejection of Jesus evidences that one has not been drawn or taught by God.⁷⁷

Finally, John presents Jesus making a similar point in John 6:64–65. After provoking further consternation among the crowd by referring to his flesh as “the bread which I will give for the life of the world” (John 6:51–52), Jesus proceeds to offend many who professed to be his disciples by claiming that one must eat his flesh and drink his blood in order to receive eternal life (John 6:53–60).⁷⁸ However, rather than being surprised at these negative responses, Jesus says that his earlier statements regarding the priority of divine agency (cf. John 6:37, 44–45) were meant to explain the phenomenon of unbelief. So John 6:64–65 states,

“But some among you are those who do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the beginning who were (εἶσιν; lit. “are”) the ones who would not believe (οἱ μὴ πιστεύοντες; lit. “the not-believing ones”) and who was (ἐστίν; lit. “is”) the one who would betray him. So he was saying, “Because of this I have said to you that no one is able to come to me unless it has been given to him by the Father.”

who hears from the Father, and learns, and does not come to me? For if everyone who has heard from the Father and has learned comes, it follows that everyone who does not come has not heard from the Father and learned, for if he had heard and learned he would have come.” Augustine, “Predestination of the Saints,” 233.

⁷⁷ Schnackenburg denies that John 6:44–45 implies that some persons are excluded from faith in advance. According to him, such an interpretation “would run counter to the πάντες in 45 and the following πᾶς, and to the tone of the following verse, with its invitation to hear and learn” (see Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:50). However, Schnackenburg's rebuttal fails to persuade. First, as argued above, it is highly unlikely that John intended πάντες and πᾶς in a universal sense. On the contrary, since Jesus is reported as knowing “from the beginning” that some persons would in fact reject his teaching (John 6:64), it seems implausible for John to have believed that *all persons without exception* would be savingly taught by God. Second, Schnackenburg wrongly assumes that the presence of a genuine invitation to faith must be at odds with divine predestination or with DRA. However, such an assumption fails to reckon with the biblical authors' ability to affirm the significance of both human responsibility and divine sovereignty. Finally, Schnackenburg himself admits that “the final explanation of unbelief lies in the mystery of God's free choice (cf. 6:64–65).” Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:52. One is hard pressed to understand how such a concession is consistent with Schnackenburg's objections to DRA in his comments on vv. 44–45.

⁷⁸ The debate regarding the alleged eucharistic character of John 6 does not impact the study of DRA. For an argument in favor of the view that the flesh and blood in John 6:51ff refers to the elements of the Lord's supper, see Bultmann, *John*, 218–19, 234–37; for an argument against, see Dunn, “John VI,” 332–37.

According to John, Jesus was aware “from the beginning” (ἐξ ἀρχῆς) not only *that* some would disbelieve, but he was aware of *who* would disbelieve.⁷⁹ In other words, Jesus foreknew the exact identities of “the not-believing ones,” so that he could even predict the defection of those who otherwise seemed to be his disciples (cf. John 6:60, 66). Such foreknowledge of people’s identities, together with John’s use of the articulated substantival participle οἱ μὴ πιστεύοντες (lit. “the not-believing ones”), implies the existence of a class of persons known to Jesus for whom faith would never be a reality.⁸⁰ In addition, to prevent his disciples (and John’s readers) from drawing the wrong conclusions from the reality of unbelief,⁸¹ John 6:65 explains that it is God who determines who believes and who does not⁸²: “Because of this [i.e., because some did not believe]⁸³ I have said to you that no one is able to come to me unless it has been given to him by the Father.” According to Jesus, the ability to exercise saving faith is something that the Father must grant.⁸⁴ Moreover, by applying this proposition to the problem of

⁷⁹ So also Michaels, *John*, 410.

⁸⁰ Similarly Trumbower, *Born from Above*, 85.

⁸¹ The unbelief of the Jews could have led some to doubt that Jesus was truly sent from God (similarly Brown, *John 1–12*, 297). Thus, Jesus (and John) referred to divine predestination in order to demonstrate that his rejection did not belie his claims but was part of God’s overall plan. As Carson observes, “Rejection by men does not spell defeat for God’s saving purposes, but victory. . . . Thus, the presentation of soteriological predestination, far from being an end in itself, is part of the framework which provides assurance concerning the inevitability of the fulfilment of God’s plan of salvation.” Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility*, 185.

⁸² Though Haenchen may wrongly downplay the importance of human agency in John’s thought, I agree with his assessment that the apostle believed that God predestined both faith and unbelief. As Haenchen states, “In the thought of the Evangelist not everyone has the possibility of hearing the Father; only those hear the Father whom the Father has given to Jesus. In other words, for the Evangelist the determination of eternal life and death does not lie with the decision of man, but with the decision of the Father, which lies beyond our conceptual powers.” And again, “Jesus knew beforehand who would not believe in him. It thus becomes unwittingly evident that man is a nonentity; it has been determined in advance who has been selected to believe and who not.” Haenchen, *John 1–6*, 293, 306.

⁸³ As Brown correctly observes, “the ‘this’ refers to the lack of faith mentioned in the first part of vs. 64.” Brown, *John 1–12*, 297. So also Carson, *John*, 302; Barrett, *St. John*, 252.

⁸⁴ So Yarbrough states, “God’s enabling activity, which involves the exercise of his elective

unbelief, Jesus strongly implies that the rejection he experienced was due to God's refusal to grant this ability to "the not-believing ones."⁸⁵

Altogether, the sixth chapter of John suggests that those who failed to trust in Jesus could not do otherwise because they had not been empowered by God to believe.⁸⁶ These persons were never given to the Son (John 6:37–39), they were not drawn or truly taught by God (John 6:44–45), and they were never granted the ability to exercise saving faith (John 6:65). In other words, these persons were not predestined for life and would therefore always remain members of "the not-believing ones" (John 6:64).⁸⁷ Because these passages present God's decided non-activity as the reason why certain persons failed to believe in Jesus, and because the gospel as a whole (1) emphasizes that rejecting

prerogative, conditions—one could even say triggers—the human decision to come to the Son." Yarbrough, "Election in John," 51. For others who come to similar conclusions, see Kysar, "Dismantling of Decisional Faith," 166; Bonney, *Caused to Believe*, 118–19; Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:74; Augustine, "Predestination of the Saints," 237–38; Carson, *John*, 302–3; Barrett, *St. John*, 249; Frey, *Glory of the Crucified One*, 148, 165.

⁸⁵ As Schnackenburg concludes, "The evangelist makes use of this idea of 'predestination' (cf. on 44 and 47) to illuminate the darkness of unbelief. After all Jesus' efforts to arouse faith in his hearers, this recourse to God's grace, which is apparently denied to those who do not believe, remains the final answer." Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:74. See also Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 536; Carson, *John*, 302–3; Barrett, *St. John*, 249; Haenchen, *John 1–6*, 306.

⁸⁶ So Bonney says of John 6, "In this instance the failure of Jesus' auditors to believe in him is attributed to their not being called [by God]." Bonney, *Caused to Believe*, 119. Wengst attempts to avoid this conclusion by arguing that John views God to be involved in bringing about faith but not unbelief. Thus, while faith is the work of both God and man, man is *solely* responsible for unbelief (Wengst, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 271–72). While Wengst is correct to emphasize that John holds people morally responsible for their response to Jesus, his argument fails for at least two reasons: (1) John elsewhere explicitly affirms God's hardening activity (cf. John 12:37–40), and (2) Wengst's view does not adequately explain why the evangelist refers to God's sovereignty over faith in order to account for the reality of unbelief (cf. John 6:64–65).

⁸⁷ Scholars have noted that John 6 reflects some form of predestinarian theology. See for instance Köstenberger, "John," 447–48; Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility*, 184; Painter, "Jesus and the Quest," 85; Barrett, "Dialectical Theology," 62–65; Trumbower, *Born from Above*, 83–86 (although he understands John to affirm predestination in terms of fixed origins; see *Born from Above*, 14–22); Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:74; Ladd, *Theology of New Testament*, 313; Frey, *Glory of the Crucified One*, 148–49, 165–66 (though he does not believe that predestination for John referred to a pretemporal decree).

Jesus is sinful (cf. John 3:18; 5:22–23; 14:24; 15:23; 16:9),⁸⁸ and (2) contends that a faith-filled response to Jesus is the only way to avoid condemnation and gain eternal life (cf. John 3:18, 36; 5:24; 8:24, 51), it seems warranted to conclude that John 6 attests to a form of passive, immediate, and eternal DRA.⁸⁹

DRA and John's Account of Judas

In addition to its explanation for unbelief, the Gospel of John also bears witness to DRA in its characterization of Judas Iscariot. Though the book depicts him to be a nefarious and devilish person who was responsible for his treachery (cf. John 6:70–71; 12:4–6; 13:18, 21–22, 30),⁹⁰ the text nevertheless states that Judas' apostasy and betrayal came about through the effectual influence of other agents. Moreover, the book

⁸⁸ Burroughs also makes the plausible argument that John 6:36ff alludes specifically to Num 11 and 14 in order to warn readers that unbelief leads to divine condemnation. See Burroughs, "Stop Grumbling," 86–90.

⁸⁹ As Michaels notes, "In [the Gospel of John] a person is not first lost and then saved (as in Lk 15:24), but either lost or saved. Both are final, not temporary, conditions. Salvation is 'eternal life,' and 'lostness' is just as eternal." Michaels, *John*, 380.

⁹⁰ As part of his attempt to rehabilitate Judas' reputation, Klassen seeks to cast doubt on the truthfulness and historicity of John's portrayal of the betrayer (see William Klassen, *Judas: Betrayer or Friend of Jesus?* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996], 137–59). According to him, John should be seen as "guilty of slandering and vilifying a fellow disciple." But despite his passionate denunciations, John's evaluation of Judas' character and actions remains much more widely accepted than Klassen's own. In part, this may be because the grounds Klassen provides for dismissing John's portrayal are highly speculative and (quite frankly) farfetched. For example, Klassen claims that John 6:70 may have based on a misinterpretation of what originally was a positive statement about Judas, wherein Jesus describes him as a legal advocate who would occupy "the position of greatest trust." However, the NT never depicts Jesus singling out Judas for praise of any kind and it never uses the word *διάβολος* as a compliment. And in separate instance, Klassen decries John 12:1–8 as "false witness, slander, and calumny"; according to him, readers should recognize that the passage is "obviously" a fictional story concocted to cover up the church's growing corruption by villainizing those who desired to use wealth to serve the poor. While Klassen certainly demonstrates creativity in this reconstruction, I fear that he has fallen into the exact behavior that he predicates of poor John. After all, is it really plausible that the Gospel that repeatedly commands believers to be willing lay down their lives out of love for others would also attempt to justify self-serving greed? In any event, Klassen's dismissal of John's description of Judas is unfounded, and his overall account is unlikely to persuade any except those most committed to the task of de-stigmatizing history's villains. For a compelling essay that demonstrates that Judas is negatively characterized in most of the early church texts that mention him, see B. J. Oropeza, "Judas' Death and Final Destiny in the Gospels and Earliest Christian Writings," *Neot* 44, no. 2 (2010): 342–61.

seems to indicate that God himself willed for Judas to be impacted by these agents so that he might fulfill a particular role within salvation history.

Judas first makes an appearance in the Gospel in connection with a passage I have already considered. In John 6:64–65, Jesus is said to have foreknowledge of the identities of those who would reject him; moreover, Jesus accounts for such unbelief through recourse to God’s sovereignty over human faith. In addition, John informs readers that Jesus was aware from the beginning of “who his betrayer [was]” (*τίς ἐστὶν ὁ παραδώσων αὐτόν*; John 6:64). By associating “the betrayer” with “the not-believing ones” and by accounting for the latter through an appeal to God’s sovereignty, John already hints at a possible explanation for Judas’ future actions. Moreover, the comment regarding Jesus’ foreknowledge of the betrayer’s identity functions both to foreshadow the bloody cross that awaits him and to suggest that Christ had more agency over his coming passion than one might otherwise suppose. This latter point is made even clearer in the verses that follow.

After the discourse with his so-called “disciples” (cf. John 6:60–65), many of whom turn away in response to his teaching, Jesus shifts his attention to “the Twelve” and asks if they too desire to forsake him (John 6:67). With Peter as their representative, the group expresses their allegiance to Christ by acknowledging his exclusive authority (“Lord, to whom will we go?”), by affirming his teaching (“You have the words of eternal life”; cf. John 6:63), and by confessing his identity as God’s representative (“We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God”; John 6:68–69).⁹¹ Jesus accepts their pledge, though with two caveats. First, he clarifies that their decision

⁹¹ Since John has just affirmed that faith ultimately depends upon God’s prior activity (cf. John 6:37, 44–45, 65), the apostle undoubtedly presents Peter’s confession as an outworking of God’s giving/drawing/teaching.

to follow him depended upon his decision to choose them,⁹² and second, he discloses that one of the Twelve was not like the others: “Jesus replied to them, ‘Did I not choose you, the Twelve? And one among you is a devil’” (John 6:70).⁹³ Here, Jesus’s foreknowledge is highlighted once again (cf. John 6:64). But interestingly, instead of arguing that Judas was not included within Christ’s election,⁹⁴ the text clarifies that Jesus chose him while knowing his devilish character all along.⁹⁵ Furthermore, John gives no indication that Judas *became* a devious person sometime after his initial inclusion among the Twelve.⁹⁶ As such, the question is unavoidably raised: why would Jesus choose Judas though he knew he would betray him? Though John does not provide an answer to this question here, he does provoke readers to suspect that the inclusion of “a devil” among the Twelve was not due to oversight on Jesus’ part. Such a suspicion finds confirmation in chapters 13 and 17.

⁹² Rightly Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility*, 130.

⁹³ Bennema contends that “the reference to Judas as a devil probably implies that he will side with the devil or that his behavior resembles that of the devil. The devil’s main occupation is to lie and kill (8:44). Similarly, Judas lies (12:5-6) and, through his betrayal, abets the killing of Jesus (John 18-19). The devil, who plants the idea of betraying Jesus, uses Judas as his instrument (13:2,27).” Cornelis Bennema, “Judas (the Betrayer): The Black Sheep of the Family,” in *Character Studies in the Fourth Gospel: Narrative Approaches to Seventy Figures in John*, WUNT (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 365.

⁹⁴ Contra Michael W. Martin, *Judas and the Rhetoric of Comparison in the Fourth Gospel*, New Testament Monographs (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2010), 124.

⁹⁵ John stresses that Judas was in fact a member of the Twelve whom Jesus chose. It does this in two ways: (1) the prepositional phrase ἐξ ὑμῶν refers unambiguously to the Twelve and therefore indicates Judas’ membership within that group, and (2) the very next verse makes the point explicit by stating that Judas was “one of the twelve” (εἷς ἐκ τῶν δώδεκα). Since Jesus states that he chose the Twelve (cf. v. 70) and since Judas is expressly included within that group, the conclusion unavoidably follows that Jesus chose Judas (cf. John 6:70).

⁹⁶ The verb ἐστίν simply designates an existing state. If John believed that Judas became “a devil” after Jesus chose him, he could have used a different verb (perhaps ἐγένετο). Moreover, in a passage that highlights Jesus’ foreknowledge, it would be counter-intuitive to assume that Jesus was expressing surprise that Judas turned out to be a villain.

In chapter 13, John provides readers with further insight into Judas’s actions while also clarifying his (lack of) standing in relation to the benefits secured by Christ’s death. While John does describe Judas as being accountable for his decision to betray Jesus (cf. John 13:10–11, 27b), the evangelist also presents this one act as the product of a complex set of agencies. For starters, in verses 2 and 27, John informs readers that Judas’ decision to betray Jesus was undertaken under the influence of the devil.⁹⁷ So John 13:2 states, “And when dinner came around, when the devil had already decided (τοῦ διαβόλου ἤδη βεβληκότος εἰς τὴν καρδίαν⁹⁸; lit. “the devil had already cast it into the heart”) that Judas of Iscariot, the son of Simon, should betray him”⁹⁹ And John

⁹⁷ Rightly Bennema, “Judas (the Betrayer),” 367–68; Bincy Mathew, *The Johannine Footwashing as the Sign of Perfect Love: An Exegetical Study of John 13:1–20*, WUNT (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 282–83; André van Oudtshoorn, “Where Have All the Demons Gone? The Role and Place of the Devil in the Gospel of John,” *Neot* 51, no. 1 (2017): 72; Adam Kubiś, “Judas or Jesus’ Other Disciples? The Old Testament or Jesus’ Word? A Mysterious Reference to the ‘Scripture’ in John 17:12,” *Biblical Annals* 9, no. 1 (2019): 137; Dave L. Mathewson, “The Devil: Murderer, Liar, and Defeated Foe,” in *Character Studies in Fourth Gospel*, 422–25; Wendy E. Sproston, “‘The Scripture’ in John 17:12,” in *Scripture: Meaning and Method*, ed. Barry P. Thompson (North Yorkshire, England: Hull University Press, 1987), 26; Margaret Davies, *Rhetoric and Reference in the Fourth Gospel*, JSNTSup (Sheffield, England: JSOT, 1992), 156; Rainbow, *Johannine Theology*, 83n30; Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Johannes*, 286. For studies examining John’s portrayal of the devil, see Oudtshoorn, “Where Have All the Demons Gone?,” 66–81; Mathewson, “The Devil,” 421–27.

⁹⁸ As many are aware, the textual witnesses behind John 13:2 diverge. For my purposes, the relevant text-critical matter has to do with whether v. 2 reads “the devil had already cast into the heart” (ϕ66 ⋈ B L Ψ) or “the devil had already cast it into the heart of Judas” (A K Γ Δ Θ). Since the latter may be an attempt to clarify an ambiguous statement and since the external evidence weighs in favor of the first reading, it seems better to assume that the text originally did not specify whose heart was under consideration. So also Brown, *John 13–21*, 550; Barrett, *St. John*, 365; Stephan Witetschek, “Der Teufel steckt im Detail: Eine Anmerkung zu Joh 13,2,” *BZ* 56, no. 2 (2012): 269–70.

⁹⁹ Scholars have disagreed regarding whether John 13:2 describes Satan’s influence on Judas or Satan’s decision to manipulate Judas. For those who argue that v. 2 suggests that the devil placed the idea of betrayal in Judas’ heart, see Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility*, 130–31; Wengst, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 2:90; Mathew, *Johannine Footwashing*, 283–85; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 229; Haenchen, *John* 2, 106. For examples of scholars who take the view that the verse refers to Satan’s decision to move Judas to betray Jesus, see Francis J. Moloney, “The Literary Unity of John 13:1–38,” in *Johannine Studies: 1975–2017*, WUNT (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 418; R. Alan Culpepper, “The Johannine *Hypodeigma*: A Reading of John 13,” *Semeia* 53 (1991): 136; Thompson, *John*, 284–85; Barrett, *St. John*, 365; Witetschek, “Der Teufel steckt im Detail,” 270–72. Though I take the latter reading, Brown is also correct to say that “there is little real import in the difference between the two interpretations.” Brown, *John 13–21*, 550.

13:27 says, “And after the morsel, Satan then entered into [Judas].¹⁰⁰ And Jesus said to him, ‘That which you are about to do, do quickly.’” These descriptions allude back to Jesus’ description of Judas as “a devil” (cf. John 6:70), suggesting that his voluntary actions (“that which *you are about to do*, do quickly”; v. 27b) were in keeping with the character of the devil (cf. John 8:44). Furthermore, these verses also indicate that the act of betrayal was more than simply the product of Judas’ own self-will; instead, John claims that Satan inspired Judas’ actions.¹⁰¹ But rather than stopping there, John adds more complexity to the picture by suggesting that Jesus had his own designs for Judas’ treachery.

After explaining the significance of the foot-washing to his disciples (cf. vv. 12–17),¹⁰² Jesus specifies that his words were not intended to apply to his betrayer¹⁰³:

I am not speaking about all of you. I know whom I have chosen, but [I chose] so that the Scripture might be fulfilled: “The one who eats my bread raised his heel against me.” From now on, I am telling you before it comes to pass so that you might believe that I am when it comes to pass. Amen, amen, I say to you, the one

¹⁰⁰ As Schnackenburg points out, the phrase “Satan entered into him” (εἰσῆλθεν εἰς ἐκεῖνον) “indicates complete mastery by Satan.” Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:31; see also Carson, *John*, 475. At the same time, Outdtshoorn is right to point out that Satan’s influence on Judas did not amount to mechanical control over him; as such, Judas is not being presented as a non-agent (see Outdtshoorn, “Where Have All the Demons Gone?,” 72).

¹⁰¹ As Mathew states, “The ultimate agent of betrayal is the διάβολος, who put the idea of betrayal into the heart of Judas.” Mathew, *Johannine Footwashing*, 285.

¹⁰² Culpepper rightly argues that “the act of footwashing . . . cannot be understood apart from Jesus’ death on the cross.” Culpepper, “Johannine *Hypodeigma*,” 138–39.

¹⁰³ Mathew fails to grasp the force of John 13:18a. In his view, the phrase “I am not speaking concerning all of you” merely “gives the sense that someone may not actualize the potential for being blessed through doing Jesus’ ὑπόδειγμα.” Mathew, *Johannine Footwashing*, 294. On the contrary, the statement *definitively* indicates that Jesus’ previous exhortation and promise were not applicable to all those present. Such a sentiment is consistent with what had already been said in vv. 10–11: “Jesus said to [Peter], ‘The one who has been washed has no need to be washed (except for the feet), but he is completely clean. And you are clean, but not all of you.’ For he knew who would betray him. Because of this he said, ‘Not all of you are clean.’” In context, it is clear that Jesus refers here to Judas. Therefore, these statements (among others; cf. John 17:12) undermine Mathew’s claim that “Judas is never presented by John as being cut off from the salvific effect of Jesus’ love” (293).

who receives whom I will send receives me, and the one who receives me receives the one who sent me. (John 13:18–20)

Since Jesus did not want the disciples to view the events of his passion as disproving his claims, Jesus tells them in advance that someone from their ranks would turn against him. In addition, Jesus also suggests that he included this person among the disciples intentionally, but only in order to bring about the fulfillment of Scripture. While some have argued that verse 18a (“I am not speaking concerning all of you”) implies that the betrayer was not among those chosen,¹⁰⁴ it seems more likely that Jesus here explains why his would-be betrayer was in fact chosen.¹⁰⁵ First of all, the statement “I am not speaking about all of you” is probably anaphoric, indicating that Jesus’ instructions and promise of blessing (vv. 12–17) were not being directed towards Judas. Second, the use of ἐξελεξάμην (“I chose”) recalls Jesus’ description of the selection of the Twelve in John 6:70. In that passage, Jesus clearly includes Judas within the ranks of those chosen while also asserting his foreknowledge of Judas’ character. Thus, it seems unlikely that John would deny Judas’ election in 13:18 while simultaneously alluding to a text that affirms his election.¹⁰⁶ And third, the clause ἀλλ’ ἵνα ἡ γραφή πληρωθῆ (“but so that the Scripture might be fulfilled”) should be understood as implying an ellipted main clause upon which it depends.¹⁰⁷ This is evidenced by the fact that John uses the ἀλλ’ ἵνα construction with an ellipted main verb elsewhere.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, ἐξελεξάμην seems to be the best

¹⁰⁴ See for instance Michaels, *John*, 739; Martin, *Judas*, 124–25; Thompson, *John*, 291.

¹⁰⁵ So also Carson, *John*, 470; Mathew, *Johannine Footwashing*, 294–95; Kubiś, “Mysterious Reference,” 141; Sproston, “John 17:12,” 27; Brown, *John 13–21*, 553; Barrett, *St. John*, 370; Wengst, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 2:99.

¹⁰⁶ Similarly Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility*, 131; Barrett, *St. John*, 370.

¹⁰⁷ Rightly Barrett, *St. John*, 370; Bultmann, *John*, 551n7. Some have suggested that the ἵνα clause should be understood in an imperatival sense: “But let the Scripture be fulfilled” (see for instance Harris, *John*, 247). However, I have found no clear examples of this use of ἵνα in John’s Gospel.

¹⁰⁸ I will provide just four examples. First, John 1:7–8: “This one came to testify, so that he might bear witness concerning the light, so that all might believe through him. That one was not the light,

candidate for the ellipted verb since it stands in closest proximity to the *ἵνα* clause and since Jesus had to explain his choice of the disciples in light of the limitation he placed on the scope of his instruction/promise. Thus, John 13:18 seems to indicate that Jesus included Judas among his disciples because he intended to bring about the fulfillment of the Scripture¹⁰⁹—specifically Psalm 41:10 (MT).¹¹⁰ Thus, by calling him to be a disciple for this specific purpose,¹¹¹ Jesus could be said to have influenced Judas towards the sin of betraying the Son of God. And given Jesus’ response to Judas’ departure (cf. John 13:31–32), it seems that these events were ultimately intended to bring glory to both the Father and the Son through Christ’s crucifixion.¹¹²

Finally, Jesus’ prayer to the Father in John 17 provides the final pieces needed to complete the portrait of DRA in the case of Judas. In this chapter, John seems to suggest that Jesus chose not to protect Judas from the influence of Satan. Moreover, the

but [he came] so that he might bear witness concerning the light” (ἀλλ’ ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός). Second, John 3:18: “For God did not send the Son into the world so that he might judge the world, *but [he sent him] so that the world might be saved through him*” (ἀλλ’ ἵνα σωθῆ ὁ κόσμος δι’ αὐτοῦ). Third, John 9:2: “Neither this one nor his parents sinned, *but [he was born blind] so that the works of God might be made manifest in him*” (ἀλλ’ ἵνα φανερωθῆ τὰ ἔργα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ). And finally, John 11:52: “And not for the nation only, *but [Jesus would die] so that he might also gather the scattered children of God into one*” (ἀλλ’ ἵνα καὶ τὰ τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ τὰ διεσκορπισμένα συναγάγῃ εἰς ἓν.) For additional examples of the ἀλλ’ ἵνα construction with an ellipted main clause, see John 12:9, 47; 14:30–31; 15:24–25. For other examples of ἵνα clauses with an ellipted main clause, see John 18:8–9, 31–32.

¹⁰⁹ Similarly Kubiś, “Mysterious Reference,” 141; Barrett, *St. John*, 370; Carson, *John*, 470.

¹¹⁰ Köstenberger is perhaps correct to argue that “the reference to a Davidic psalm at the outset of Jesus’ passion signals the fulfillment of Davidic typology in the ensuing narrative.” Köstenberger, “John,” 487.

¹¹¹ In addition, John 13:27 also depicts Jesus’ influence on Judas through his instruction to him: the latter departs only after Christ commands him to carry out his satanic intentions (cf. John 13:27b). Brown aptly comments on John 13:27 when he says, “By having Judas depart from the Supper only after Jesus has told him to leave, John stresses Jesus’ control over his destiny.” Brown, *John 13–21*, 578. So also Thompson, *John*, 294; Haenchen, *John 2*, 111; Wengst, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 104.

¹¹² As Moloney correctly observes, Jesus’ announcement that the Son of Man was about to be glorified is “chronologically and logically closely associated with the departure of Judas.” Moloney, “Literary Unity,” 409, 418–19.

text may also indicate that Judas' exclusion from Christ's protection was not accidental; instead, John seems to contend that Judas' actions and eventual perdition were predicted by the Scriptures and were in accordance with God's designs.¹¹³ As a result, John's understanding of Judas' actions seem to evidence DRA.

After recounting what he had done for "the men whom [the Father] had given [to him] out of the world" and describing their faith (cf. John 17:6–8),¹¹⁴ Jesus begins to pray to the Father exclusively on their behalf (cf. John 17:9–10). Jesus asks God to "keep them in your name" (τήρησον αὐτοὺς ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου) since Jesus was now departing from the world and would no longer be able to fulfill this function himself (cf. John 17:11–12).¹¹⁵ While Jesus was with them, "[Jesus] was keeping them in [the Father's] name" (ἐγὼ ἐτήρουν αὐτοὺς ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου) and he succeeded at his commission, though with one important caveat.¹¹⁶ As he states, "And I guarded [them], and not one of them was lost except the son of ruin, so that the Scripture might be fulfilled" (John 17:12b). Given the characterization of "the son of ruin" (ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας) as one who was among the disciples (ἐξ αὐτῶν) and whose defection fulfilled the Scriptures (cf. John

¹¹³ While Judas' actions fulfilled the Scriptures, it is important to observe that such was not his intention. What Oropeza says of the Synoptics applies equally to John's Gospel: "There is no evidence in the gospels or Acts that Judas knowingly cooperated with God in betraying Jesus, nor was he coerced to do so. It would be inappropriate, then, to claim that Judas' fulfilling of scriptures or God's purposes in having Jesus arrested somehow suggests Judas' innocence." Oropeza, "Judas' Death," 348.

¹¹⁴ Tolmie helpfully describes the theme of John 17:6–8 with the label "Jesus' task with regard to the disciples completed." D. F. Tolmie, "A Discourse Analysis of John 17:1–26," *Neot* 27, no. 2 (1993): 410. Similarly, Bultmann, *John*, 497.

¹¹⁵ Rightly Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:179.

¹¹⁶ Sproston describes the exception clause (εἰ μὴ ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας) in 17:12 as "an apparently uncalled-for digression from the theme of the chapter." Sproston, "John 17:12," 27. While I agree that John's focus is on the disciples who have been kept by Jesus, her description of the reference to Judas misses the mark. Rather than being a side-comment, the exception clause is integral to the argument of the chapter because an account of Judas' apostasy must be provided if John's readers are to trust that Jesus truly fulfilled the work given to him by the Father and if they are to have confidence that the Father's protection will in fact prevent them from committing apostasy.

13:18), there seems little reason to doubt that “the son of ruin” is none other than Judas.¹¹⁷

But how are readers supposed to understand what transpired in his case? While one might interpret the exception (εἰ μὴ ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας) to express a failure on Jesus’ part, it seems much more likely that the phrase serves to explain that Judas was excluded from the scope of Jesus’ assignment.¹¹⁸ This interpretation is supported by Jesus’ earlier claim to have glorified the Father by accomplishing the work he was given to do (John 17:4). In fact, one of John’s emphases is that Jesus is God’s obedient Son who does exactly what his Father wills for him to do (cf. John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38–39; 10:16–18; 12:27–28, 49–50; 15:10). And since God is said to have willed for him to lose none of those given to him (cf. John 6:39), Jesus could not claim to have obeyed God if Judas was in fact among that group who had been entrusted to him for safe-keeping.

But what exactly was Jesus supposed to protect the disciples from? One answer seems to come in verse 15, where Jesus asks the Father to “keep” (τηρήσης) the disciples “from the evil one” (ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ).¹¹⁹ As many have argued, the articulated noun τοῦ πονηροῦ probably designates the devil in John 17:15.¹²⁰ And since the Father’s

¹¹⁷ So also Urban C. von Wahlde, “Judas, the Son of Perdition, and the Fulfillment of Scripture in John 17:12,” in *The New Testament and Early Christian Literature in Greco-Roman Context: Studies in Honor of David E. Aune*, NovTSup (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2006), 173; Kubiś, “Mysterious Reference,” 134–37; Sproston, “John 17:12,” 28; Köstenberger, “John,” 498; Michaels, *John*, 869; Carson, *John*, 563; Calvin, *John*, 2:176; Klassen, *Judas*, 152; Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:182; Brown, *John 13–21*, 760; Barrett, *St. John*, 424.

¹¹⁸ Similarly Carson, *John*, 563.

¹¹⁹ The prayer also suggests that God is petitioned to protect the disciples from the hatred of the world (cf. John 17:14). But rather than the world posing a separate, independent threat, Beasley-Murray is right when he says that the evil one “is behind the world’s opposition to God manifest in Christ.” Beasley-Murray, *John*, 300.

¹²⁰ So also Michaels, *John*, 871–72; Rainbow, *Johannine Theology*, 120; Carson, *John*, 565; Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:184; Brown, *John 13–21*, 761; Barrett, *St. John*, 425.

“keeping” is meant to parallel Christ’s own (cf. John 17:11–12),¹²¹ the implication follows that Jesus was tasked to “keep” the disciples from “the evil one” during his earthly ministry.¹²² However, at this point in the Gospel, John’s readers are already aware that Satan successfully manipulated Judas (cf. John 13:27). This then raises the question: how could the devil have so influenced Judas while the disciples were under Jesus’ protection? John 17:12 suggests a solution to this problem: Satan was able to “enter into” Judas (cf. John 13:27a) because he was not in fact entrusted to Jesus’ safekeeping.¹²³ This would also account for Jesus’ response to Satan’s infiltration of Judas: rather than try to dissuade him from his course,¹²⁴ Jesus responds by exhorting Judas to carry out his satanic intentions quickly (cf. John 13:27b).¹²⁵ Together, these textual details suggest that Jesus did not attempt to prevent Satan from influencing Judas; instead, Jesus allowed the devil to incite Judas because the son of ruin was excluded from Jesus’ protection and was chosen to betray Christ.¹²⁶

¹²¹ As Wengst observes, “Was für die Zukunft vom Vater erbeten wurde, hat Jesus in der Vergangenheit getan.” Wengst, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 2:183–84.

¹²² Rightly Kubiś, “Mysterious Reference,” 159.

¹²³ So also Martin, *Judas*, 128–29.

¹²⁴ Contra Mathew, *Johannine Footwashing*, 307; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 238.

¹²⁵ Other scholars have accurately seen that John 13:27 presents the actions of both Judas and Satan as subordinate to Christ’s own designs. For instance, though he underplays the devil’s involvement, Culpepper rightly recognizes Jesus’ own role behind Judas’ actions: “It is not Satan that prompts Judas to leave and carry out his betrayal. Jesus’ initiative in laying down his life is maintained by his words, ‘What you are going to do, do quickly’ (v. 27).” Culpepper, “Johannine *Hypodeigma*,” 145. Rainbow goes so far as to say that “during the meal Jesus *commissioned* Judas to do his deed of treachery [emphasis added].” Rainbow, *Johannine Theology*, 205. And though he wrongly diminishes the significance of Judas’ agency, Bultmann rightly identifies Jesus as being behind Satan’s influence over the betrayer: “It is not a man who is acting here, but Satan himself, the antagonist of God and the Revealer. And yet at the same time we are shown the ultimate nothingness of this antagonist, whose illusory being is only the rebellion of the nothing. In so far as his action intervenes in the history of the Revealer, it is disposed according to the will of the latter.” Bultmann, *John*, 482. See also Haenchen, *John* 2, 111; Wengst, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 104.

¹²⁶ While Haenchen is correct to say that John’s Gospel highlights Jesus’ control over Judas’ betrayal, he is unpersuasive when he argues that a redactor sullied the original text by introducing the idea that Jesus facilitated Satan’s possession of Judas by giving the betrayer a magical piece of bread (see

How then should readers understand Jesus' actions towards Judas? John 17 provides at least two indications that Jesus did with Judas exactly what his Father willed. First, Jesus claims to have accomplished all that the Father had commanded him to do (cf. John 17:4). In light of this clear and unequivocal statement, John surely means to tell readers that everything Jesus did (and did not do) with regard to Judas was an expression of obedience to the Father. Second, John 17:12 strongly implies that the exclusion of Judas from Christ's protection fulfilled the Scriptures.¹²⁷ While John 17:12 is mainly concerned with noting that Jesus' protection of his disciples fulfilled the Scriptures,¹²⁸ it is highly probable that the exception clause ("except the son of destruction") is also being presented as a part of what the Scriptures foretold.¹²⁹ After all, John had already

Haenchen, *John* 2, 111–12).

¹²⁷ The text to which ἵνα ἡ γραφή πληρωθῆ in John 17:12 refers has been debated. Most scholars are of the opinion that John 17:12 refers back to 13:18, and therefore to the fulfillment of Ps 41:10 (see for instance Köstenberger, "John," 498; Carson, *John*, 564; Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:182; Brown, *John* 13–21, 760; Thompson, *John*, 354; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 299; Barrett, *St. John*, 425; Wengst, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 2:184). However, Wahldt argues that John is alluding back to Prov 24:22 (LXX), while both Moloney and Sproston believe that the apostle is speaking of the fulfillment of Jesus' own words (cf. John 6:39; 10:28; 18:9) rather than of any particular OT texts (see Francis J. Moloney, "The Gospel of John as Scripture," *CBQ* 67 [2005]: 461; Sproston, "John 17:12," 31–32). My own view is that John 17:12 refers to the fulfillment of a number of passages rather than to a single verse (so also Michaels, *John*, 870; Johannes Beutler, "The Use of 'Scripture' in the Gospel of John," in Culpepper and Black, *Exploring Gospel of John*, 156; Kubiś, "Mysterious Reference," 170). For a helpful overview of the different positions, see Kubiś, "Mysterious Reference," 134–70.

¹²⁸ While I agree with those who see a connection between John 17:12 and John 13:18, it is unlikely that Ps 41:10 finds its fulfillment in Jesus' protection of those who remained faithful to him. As such, it is probably not the case that the fulfillment formula in John 17:12 refers *exclusively* to Ps 41:10; instead, John may have had multiple passages in mind. This may be the reason for John's peculiar use of ἵνα ἡ γραφή πληρωθῆ in John 17:12. This particular formula is used only four times in John (John 13:18; 17:12; 19:24, 36). With the exception of John 17:12, the formula always introduces a (sometimes loose) quotation taken from the OT (in order, John seems to refer to MT[LXX] Ps 41[40]:10, Ps 22[21]:19, and Exod 12:10,46/Ps 34[33]:21). Why then does John depart from this pattern in John 17:12? Perhaps John 17:12 omits a specific quotation because the apostle here refers to different realities (i.e., the protection/fidelity of the disciples and the exclusion/defection of Judas) which fulfilled a number of OT texts. Finally, if Beutler is correct when he argues that "John is convinced that scripture as a whole bears witness to Jesus" and that "it is of secondary importance how individual passages of scripture contribute to this conviction" (Beutler, "Use of 'Scripture'," 158), then a broad reference to the OT in John 17:12 would be in keeping with the apostle's general approach to the fulfillment of the Scriptures.

¹²⁹ Contra Sproston, who argues that the exception clause is unconnected to the fulfillment

described how the OT had been fulfilled by the defection of Judas (cf. John 13:18); as such, it seems unlikely that he would have discussed Judas' exclusion *and* the fulfillment of Scripture in such close proximity *without* intending to link the two together. Furthermore, if John did not mean for the fulfillment formula to include the exception clause, then why would he even raise the matter of Judas' apostasy at this point in the argument? As a mere digression, the exception clause seems to undermine John's depiction of Christ by implying that Jesus fulfilled the Scriptures *except* in the case of Judas. Thus, John 17:12 likely speaks of the Scripture's fulfillment in two ways: (1) Jesus protected those given to him by the Father so that they were not misled by the devil and did not ruin themselves through apostasy; and (2) Jesus excluded "the son of perdition" from his safekeeping, thereby ensuring that he would commit apostasy under the devil's influence.¹³⁰ Since John likely understood the Scriptures to express God's will,¹³¹ it follows that Christ's exclusion of Judas also accorded with God's purposes.¹³² Together, these details suggest that Jesus' "failure" to prevent Judas' apostasy was not a deviation from God's plan, but was in fact in accordance with the divine will.

In summary, John suggests that Judas' apostasy and betrayal could be explained on multiple levels.¹³³ First, they were a sinful expression of his own wicked

formula and is merely a digression from the main argument ("John 17:12," 31).

¹³⁰ For others who argue that John 17:12 refers to Scripture's fulfillment in the safekeeping of the disciples *and* the apostasy of Judas, see Wahlde, "Judas," 174–75; Kubiś, "Mysterious Reference," 170.

¹³¹ Rightly Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Johannes*, 322.

¹³² In addition, the designation "son of ruin" may itself indicate that Judas was understood by John to have been predestined by God to experience eschatological ruin. As Carson argues, "Whether or not this expression itself [i.e. the son of perdition] implies that Judas was destined for perdition, its context *requires* that view [emphasis added]." Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility*, 132. For others who interpret the expression similarly, see Brown, *John 13–21*, 760; Michaels, *John*, 869; Bultmann, *John*, 504; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 299; Calvin, *John*, 2:176; Oropeza, "Judas' Death," 353–54.

¹³³ So also Rainbow, *Johannine Theology*, 83n30.

character.¹³⁴ Second, they were inspired by Satan. Third, they were undertaken because Jesus knowingly chose Judas and because Jesus did not protect him from the enticements of “the evil one.” And lastly, they came about because God willed for Judas to fulfill the Scriptures through his apostasy and eschatological ruin.¹³⁵ Altogether, John’s portrait of Judas betrays a complex form of DRA that can be further described. First of all, God’s reprobating influence is presented as having been mediated through Jesus and through Satan. Second, God’s influence against Judas is probably best understood as having both active and passive elements. Through Jesus, God actively chose Judas to be among the disciples; yet, he also withheld his protection so as to allow Satan to effectively tempt him towards his own ruin. Third, the use of the ἀπόλλυμι word group (ἀπώλετο, ἀπωλεία) to describe Judas’ fate (cf. John 17:12) and his failure to exhibit the faith which leads to eternal life (cf. John 6:64–65, 68–71) seems to indicate an eternal form of DRA.¹³⁶ Finally, the apostle indicates that God subjected Judas to DRA so that the Scriptures might be fulfilled (cf. John 13:18; 17:12), and so that the Father and the Son might be glorified through the death of Christ (cf. John 13:31–32); significantly, nowhere does he claim that Judas was being punished for previous sins. As such, John probably describes a non-retributive form of DRA.

¹³⁴ Oropeza accurately captures John’s perspective when he says, “Even though Judas’ betrayal seems inevitable, there is no indication that he was coerced to do it, and he is still held responsible for his act.” Oropeza, “Jesus’ Death,” 354. In fact, John seems to highlight the sinfulness of Judas’ betrayal when he claims that Judas was guilty of a greater sin than Pilate (John 19:11). For an analysis of John’s characterization of Judas, see Bennema, “Judas (the Betrayer),” 364–72.

¹³⁵ There is no evidence that John uses predestinarian theology to excuse Judas or cast moral blame on God. As Carson correctly points out regarding John’s perspective, “Divine ultimacy operates in some mysterious way so that human responsibility is in no way mitigated, while the divine being is in no way tarnished. In particular, Judas is responsible even when Satan is using him; but over both stands the sovereignty of God.” Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility*, 132. So also Köstenberger, “John,” 498; Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Johannes*, 322.

¹³⁶ For others who argue that John presents Judas as being eternally lost, see Martin, *Judas*, 129; Oropeza, “Judas’ Death,” 354.

DRA through Jesus' Ministry

The final way in which John's Gospel bears witness to DRA is through its description of the effects of Jesus' ministry. In two passages, John seems to suggest that, through exposure to Jesus, certain persons were made further resistant to the truth and were made increasingly guilty. First, as the conclusion to the episode involving Jesus' healing of the man born blind (cf. John 9:1–41),¹³⁷ John records the following:

And Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world,¹³⁸ so that those who could not see might see and those who could see might become blind."¹³⁹ Those with him who were from the Pharisees heard these things and they said to him, "We are not also

¹³⁷ According to Painter, John 9 is "a parable, or narrative symbol, based on a miracle story" wherein the man born blind is actually "everyman" and John's point is to claim that "all men are blind from birth and everyman is in the darkness until Jesus gives him light." John Painter, "John 9 and the Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel," *JSNT* 28 (1986): 42–43. While I believe Painter's theological point is consistent with John's teaching overall, I do not believe there is much textual evidence for taking John 9 as a parable. On the contrary, vv. 1–7 clearly set the story within the (historical) narrative that runs through the Gospel. Furthermore, the claim that the blind man symbolizes humanity's universal blindness is inconsistent both with the distinction John makes between the blind and the seeing and with the reversal of fortunes that concludes the story (vv. 39–41). In other words, if John's point in chap. 9 is to describe all humanity as blind, then how could he also claim that those who do see will be made blind?

¹³⁸ Some tension exists between texts like John 3:17 and 12:47 on the one hand, and 9:39 on the other. However, such seems par for the course, as John's theological perspectives are often somewhat paradoxical (see Barrett, "Paradox and Dualism," 98–115). Moreover, the notion that Jesus' coming entailed judgment is not first introduced in John 9:39; on the contrary, John 3:17–19 already demonstrates the complex dynamics of Jesus' mission. Finally, as other scholars have noted, the tension between the two streams of John's thought need not be understood as an actual contradiction. So for instance, Carson attempts to resolve the matter by claiming that Christ must judge some to save others (Carson, *John*, 377). Similarly, Beasley-Murray addresses the issue by making a distinction between Christ's primary saving purpose versus "an unavoidable concomitant of God's will to save." Beasley-Murray, *John*, 160. Meanwhile, Schnackenburg argues that the difference is simply a matter of focus: passages like John 3:17, 8:15, and 12:47 highlight God's saving purpose, while texts like John 9:39 make the point that the rejection of Jesus leads to judgment (Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:255). On this tension between the two sides of Christ's mission, see also Hamid-Khan, *Revelation and Concealment*, 385–86.

¹³⁹ I agree with Schnackenburg when he argues that the purpose clause in v. 39 implies that God wills to bring about this reversal of fortunes. As he states, "The final thrust of the saying is its statement that the paradoxical reversal of the situation is [*sic.*] to divine decree (*ἴνα*). What appears in 3:19 ff as an ordinary fact resulting from human guilt is here declared to be the divine will. The same event can be looked at, as it were, both from below, in terms of human nature, and from above, as the result of God's ordinance. Both, for John, are insuperably and inextricably combined." Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:255. Brown makes essentially the same point, though he needlessly criticizes the Gospel writer for having an "oversimplified outlook which attributes everything that happens to God's purpose." Brown, *John 1–12*, 376.

blind, are we?” Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now you say ‘we see!’; your sin remains.” (John 9:39–41)

Then again in the middle of the farewell discourse Jesus is presented as saying,

If I did not come and speak to them, they would not have sin. But now they have no excuse concerning their sin. The one who hates me also hates my Father. Had I not done the works among them which no one else did, they would not have sin. But now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father. But [this came about] so that the word which is written in their law might be fulfilled:¹⁴⁰ “They hated me without cause.” (John 15:22–25)

In both these passages, John suggests that Jesus did not intend for his teaching and his works to bring about an equally positive result for every member of his audience.¹⁴¹ On the contrary, Jesus’ coming could be described as a form of judgment which was meant to render certain persons incapable of recognizing the truth about God and his agent of salvation (John 9:39).¹⁴² In other words, by shining as the light of the world (cf. John 9:5), Christ intentionally gave his opponents the occasion to express their commitment to darkness (cf. John 3:19) through their unbelieving and murderous responses to him.¹⁴³ In so doing, Jesus knowingly provoked to sin those who were unduly confident in themselves (John 9:40) and were hostile to God (John 15:23).¹⁴⁴ Since John depicts Jesus,

¹⁴⁰ For others who posit an ellipted clause upon which the $\text{\textit{\nu}\alpha}$ -clause depends, see Bultmann, *John*, 551n7; Barrett, *St. John*, 402; Köstenberger, “John,” 493.

¹⁴¹ According to Schlatter, Christ’s ministry itself demonstrates the sovereignty of God in both granting light to some and in leaving others in darkness. See Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Johannes*, 232.

¹⁴² That Christ’s ministry was intended to have this effect is made clear in two ways. First, $\epsilon\text{\textit{\iota}\varsigma}\ \chi\rho\text{\textit{\iota}}\sigma\mu\alpha$ likely denotes the purpose of Christ’s coming. Second, the $\text{\textit{\nu}\alpha}$ -clause in John 9:39 should be taken as a purpose clause. Thus, Jesus is said to have come with the intention of blinding a certain segment of his audience. As such, Barrett is justified in claiming that John 9:39 reflects “the awful purpose of [Christ’s] mission.” Barrett, *St. John*, 293. For others who see John 9:39 as describing the purpose of Christ’s ministry, see Röhser, *Prädestination und Verstockung*, 234–35; Carson, *John*, 377; Schnackenburg, *John 2*, 2:255; Matthias Rein, *Die Heilung Des Blindgeborenen (Joh 9): Tradition Und Redaktion*, WUNT (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 247–48.

¹⁴³ “The coming of Jesus makes possible the ultimate and unmistakable manifestation of sin, which is disbelief in him (16.9); accordingly it passes judgement on the world.” Barrett, *St. John*, 401. See also Thompson, *John*, 333; Bultmann, *John*, 341–42.

¹⁴⁴ So Carson rightly states, “By coming and speaking to them Jesus incited the most central and controlling of sins: rejection of God’s gracious revelation, rebellion against God, decisive preference

God's perfectly obedient Son (cf. John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38–39; 10:16–18; 12:27–28, 49–50; 15:10), to be intent upon inducing spiritual incomprehension and sinful responses from certain persons with the result that they are found guilty before God,¹⁴⁵ it seems warranted to conclude that these passages bear witness to a mediated form of DRA.¹⁴⁶ In addition, John addresses the matter of God's motives on two levels. On the one hand, John 9:39–41 suggests that Christ's coming was an act of judgment upon those characterized as prideful and as unwilling to receive divine revelation.¹⁴⁷ This suggests

for darkness rather than light." Carson, *John*, 526.

¹⁴⁵ The fact that Jesus leaves them without excuse (cf. John 15:22) and mired in their sin ("your sin remains"; cf. John 9:41) indicates that his ministry results in divine condemnation for his opponents. Moreover, as Röhser correctly points out, the divine act of judgment (i.e., consignment to spiritual blindness) described in John 9:39–41 is said to be irreversible. Röhser, *Prädestination und Verstockung*, 234–35.

¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, when read in light of the Gospel as a whole, readers should also conclude that John describes Jesus' ministry as an active and eternal form of DRA. On the one hand, John repeatedly claims that Jesus was sent by the Father. Since it is precisely Jesus' coming that negatively impacts his opponents, the divine sending can then be described as an active form of negative influence (similarly Röhser, *Prädestination und Verstockung*, 235). On the other hand, in light of the apostle's testimony regarding the eternal consequences of one's decision for or against Jesus (cf. John 3:36; 8:24), it seems reasonable to posit that those blinded and provoked by Christ were influenced towards eternal condemnation.

¹⁴⁷ When Jesus chides the Pharisees for claiming to see, he seems to be indicting them for their arrogance and their deluded confidence in their presumed state of knowledge. At the same time, Jesus' implicit attribution of sight to the Pharisees need not be taken as an ironic statement (contra Calvin, *John*, 1:390). Instead, Jesus may be alluding to the fact that the Pharisees had genuine access to divine revelation through the Mosaic Law and could therefore be said to "see" in some sense (rightly Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:256). Thus, the reversal of fortunes described through the narrative of John 9 may be intended to describe an *actual reversal*: the Jewish leaders were those who could see because they had been entrusted with the Torah; yet, because of their pride, God blinded them through Christ's ministry by causing them to understand less of the Scriptures which they claimed to know. In this sense, John may be making a similar point as passages like Matt 13:11, 25:29, Mark 4:25, and Luke 19:26. Or as Holleran states regarding John 9:31, "There is a common ground in the knowledge [the Pharisees] do share with the man born blind [i.e. the Torah], and he moves to it as the basis for his final appeal to suasion. . . . The common ground of οἴδαμεν threatens to dissolve into uncommon ground if the authorities refuse to acknowledge the teachings of the tradition they share with the man born blind. In that eventuality they will end up rejecting not only belief in Jesus but their own beliefs as well! And that, of course, is what the implied author would have the reader recognize." J. Warren Holleran, "Seeing the Light: A Narrative Reading of John 9," *ETL* 69, no. 4 (1993): 375–76.

that God's negative influence upon Jesus' opponents was a matter of retribution.¹⁴⁸ But on the other hand, John 15:24–25 states that the hatred Jesus inspired was itself intended to fulfill the Scriptures (cf. John 12:37–41).¹⁴⁹ This may indicate that God's negative influence cannot be grounded entirely through recourse to retribution; instead, John may have also believed that God ensured the negative responses to Jesus because he desired to bring his word to pass.¹⁵⁰

DRA in the Book of Revelation

Appropriately enough, our survey of DRA within the canon comes to a close with the last book of the Bible. The book of Revelation attests to the concept in what are perhaps its two most difficult chapters.¹⁵¹ In Revelation 13, John alludes to God's reprobating influence as the reason Satan's beasts are able to win the worship of all who are not written in the Lamb's book of life.¹⁵² And in Revelation 17, readers are told that

¹⁴⁸ See especially Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:256; Röhser, *Prädestination und Verstockung*, 234–36.

¹⁴⁹ Several commentators argue that the statement “they hated me without reason” alludes to MT Ps 69:5 (LXX 68:5) rather than to Ps 35:19 (see Brown, *John 13–21*, 698; Carson, *John*, 527; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 276; Köstenberger, “John,” 493; Tabb, “Johannine Fulfillment,” 503–4). Furthermore, both Carson (*John*, 527) and Köstenberger (“John,” 493) contend that the citation is based on Davidic typology.

¹⁵⁰ Wengst captures an implication of John 15:25 when he says, “Indem der Jesus treffende Hass als Erfüllung der Schrift gedeutet wird, gilt er nicht als ein blindes Schicksal, dem er hilflos ausgeliefert wäre. Sein Weg – und was ihm auf diesem Weg widerfährt – entspricht dem Willen Gottes.” Wengst, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 2:151. Since it is the hatred directed towards Jesus that is *meant* (ἵνα) to bring about the fulfillment of Scripture, it seems to follow that God was the one who intended for Jesus to garner such a reception (rightly Francis J. Moloney, “The Structure and Message of John 15.1–16.3,” *Australian Biblical Review* 35 [1987]: 41–42). As such, Tabb is correct when he says that John 15:25 “draws attention to the deeper purpose underlying the world's hatred [of Christ].” Tabb, “Johannine Fulfillment,” 503.

¹⁵¹ In addition, Beale makes the provocative argument that the book of Revelation as a whole may have been intended to have a hardening function similar to that of the parables in the ministries of the prophets and of Jesus himself. For his argument, see G. K. Beale, “The Purpose of Symbolism in the Book of Revelation,” *CTJ* 41 (2006): 57–65.

¹⁵² While I assume the traditional perspective regarding Revelation's authorship, the issue of “John's” identity (cf. Rev 1:1) does not impact the book's characterization of DRA, nor does it make a

the kingdoms of the world wage a doomed war against Christ because of God's influence upon them.

DRA in Revelation 13

As part of his description of Satan's war against God's people (cf. Rev 12:13–18), John recounts a vision of the arrival of two demonic beasts who serve the ancient serpent by leading humanity into idolatrous worship (Rev 13:1–17).¹⁵³ The first of these beasts came forth from the sea (cf. Dan 7:3) and had the appearance of an amalgamation of the monstrosities portrayed in Daniel's prophetic vision (Rev 13:2a; cf. Dan 7:4–7).¹⁵⁴

difference to the overall argument of this study.

¹⁵³ Some have argued that Rev 13 describes the end-time coming of the Antichrist to persecute the worldwide church (see for instance George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972], 176). While possible, it seems more likely that Koester is right to describe the chapter as a "satirical critique" of Roman rule. See Craig R. Koester, "The Number of the Beast in Revelation 13 in Light of Papyri, Graffiti, and Inscriptions," *Journal of Early Christian History* 6, no. 3 (2016): 8. John's beasts probably signify Rome because (1) Rev 17 refers back to the sea beast and seems to associate the monster closely with the Roman empire; (2) apocalyptic literature often used symbolic language to speak about realities contemporary to the author (rightly Thomas Witulski, "Die Zeit Im Bild: Bemerkungen Zum Geschichtswert Der Darstellung Im Apokalyptischen Hauptteil Der Johannesapokalypse [Apk 4–22]," *NovT* 62 [2020]: 277–90; David A. deSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods and Ministry Formation* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004], 887–89); and (3) the call to endurance in Rev 13:9–10 would make more sense if John was speaking about realities that were immediate to his readers. That being said, John may present Rome as also typifying other ungodly human kingdoms/governments as well as an eschatological evil that will arise prior to Christ's return (so also G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999], 684–86, 691).

¹⁵⁴ Rightly Steven J. Friesen, "Myth and Symbolic Resistance in Revelation 13," *JBL* 123, no. 2 (2004): 308; Craig R. Koester, *Revelation*, AB (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 531; Beale, *Revelation*, 683; Ulrich B. Müller, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, ÖTK (Würzburg, Germany: Echter-Verlag, 1984), 249; M. Eugene Boring, *Revelation*, IBC (Louisville: John Knox, 1989), 155; Wilfrid J. Harrington, *Revelation*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1993), 140. Meanwhile, Strømmen suggests that the picture of the scarlet beast/sea beast is taken from the Roman arena, wherein different kinds of animals were made to fight for the entertainment of the masses. Hannah Strømmen, "The Politics of the Beast: Rewiring Revelation 17," *Relegere: Studies in Religion and Reception* 7 (2018): 157–59. While it is possible that Rev 13 draws from such practices, the imagery from Dan 7:1–8 clearly serves as a far more important source for John's depiction of the beast. Furthermore, it is almost certain that Strømmen reads contrary to John's intentions when she suggests that the imagery of "the vulnerable, victimized, exploited bodies of the hunted, captive animals in the brutalising arena" could generate sympathy for the beast (Strømmen, "Politics of the Beast," 159, 161).

Like the dragon it serves, the sea-beast has ten horns and seven heads¹⁵⁵; however, unlike its master, it has ten diadems upon its horns instead of seven on its heads (Rev 13:1). The dragon supplies the beast with power and authority (Rev 13:2b); perhaps as a result, the beast manages to recover from a fatal blow dealt to one of its heads (Rev 13:3).¹⁵⁶ The inhabitants of the world marvel at such power, recognizing that no earthly force is able to wage war against the sea-beast.¹⁵⁷ As such, they turn to worship both it and its serpentine

¹⁵⁵ Koester views the beast as an incarnation of the devil. As he states, “Just as the Lamb embodies the power and authority of God, the beast incarnates the power and authority of Satan.” Koester, *Revelation*, 579–80; so also Müller, *Die Offenbarung*, 249.

¹⁵⁶ The significance of the beast’s “resurrection” is debated. First, some have posited that Rev 13:3 alludes to the *Nero Redivivus* myth, which alleged that the emperor who was thought to have been dead had actually survived and would return with the Parthians in order to raze Rome (see Victorinus of Petovium, “Commentary on the Apocalypse,” in *Latin Commentaries on Revelation*, Ancient Christian Texts [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011], 18; Koester, *Revelation*, 570–71; Harrington, *Revelation*, 140; Boring, *Revelation*, 156; Müller, *Die Offenbarung*, 250; Hans-Josef Klauck, “Do They Never Come Back? *Nero Redivivus* and the Apocalypse of John,” *CBQ* 63 [2001]: 691–93; Konrad Huber, “Imagery in the Book of Revelation,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Book of Revelation*, ed. Craig R. Koester [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018], 61). While it may be the case that John’s writing was informed by the legend, Rev 13:3 departs from the myth in an important respect: John describes a miraculous recovery from death while the traditions surrounding Nero claim that he did not actually die (cf. Tacitus, *Histories*, sec. 2.8.1; Dio Chrysostom, *Discourse 21*, sec.10; Sibylline Oracles, sec. 4.119–39). Thus, if John did in fact make use of the Nero myth (which not all scholars accept; see especially Sigve K. Tonstad, “Appraising the Myth of Nero Redivivus in the Interpretation of Revelation,” *AUSS* 46, no. 2 [2008]: 178–99), he must have significantly transformed the tradition in order to accommodate the comparison he was drawing between Christ and the Roman empire (cf. Rev 5:6; 13:3; also see Koester, *Revelation*, 570–71; Klauck, “*Nero Redivivus*,” 692). Second, some argue that the wound in Rev 13:3 symbolizes the effects of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. So for instance, Schreiner posits that the wound refers the impact the cross had on Rome’s authority: since Christ’s death and resurrection brought about the inauguration of the kingdom of God, the empire of Rome could be said to have been done away with by Christ even though it continued to exist in another sense (Thomas R. Schreiner, *Revelation*, BECNT [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, forthcoming], 446–47, 560–61; see also Beale, *Revelation*, 687–89). Schreiner’s Christological interpretation of the wound may be correct; nevertheless, the passage *also* seems to speak of the near collapse of the Roman empire. As others have argued, John may have had in mind the conflicts over regnal succession that took place after Nero’s suicide (see Harrington, *Revelation*, 138; G. B. Caird, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine*, 2nd ed., BNTC [London: A & C Black, 1984], 164–65; J. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation*, AB [New York: Doubleday, 1975], 221).

¹⁵⁷ As mentioned earlier, I agree with those scholars who argue that the sea-beast symbolizes Rome’s imperial rule. For others who adopt a similar position, see Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, New Testament Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 35; Brown, *Introduction*, 792; Koester, *Revelation*, 581, 601; Caird, *Revelation*, 162; Ford, *Revelation*, 218; Müller, *Die Offenbarung*, 248; Schreiner, *Romans*, 351, 378; Beale, *Revelation*, 684; Harrington, *Revelation*, 138; Boring, *Revelation*, 155; Hermann Lichtenberger, *Die Apokalypse*, Theologischer Kommentar zum neuen Testament (Stuttgart, Germany: Kohlhammer, 2014), 185; R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical*

master (Rev 13:4). John reveals that “a mouth was given [to the beast] even to speak great blasphemies and authority was given to him to act for forty-two months” (Rev 13:5; cf. Dan 7:8, 11).¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, “it was given to him to wage war against the saints and to conquer them, and authority was given to him over every tribe and people and tongue and nation” (Rev 13:7). As a result of the power it received, the beast won the worship of all who dwell upon the earth—that is, those whose names were not written in the Lamb’s book of life (Rev 13:8–9; cf. Rev 3:5, 8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27).¹⁵⁹ But despite

Commentary on the Revelation of St. John, vol. 1, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1920), 345; David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 729; Friesen, “Myth and Resistance,” 310; Steven J. Scherrer, “Signs and Wonders in the Imperial Cult: A New Look at a Roman Religious Institution in the Light of Rev 13:13–15,” *JBL* 103, no. 4 (1984): 599; Huber, “Imagery,” 60; Paul Henry Yeates, “Blaspheming Heaven: Revelation 13:4–8 and the Competition for Heaven in Roman Imperial Ideology and the Visions of John,” *NovT* 59 (2017): 31, 42; Jörg Frey, “The Relevance of the Roman Imperial Cult for the Book of Revelation: Exegetical and Hermeneutical Reflections on the Relation between the Seven Letters and the Visionary Main Part of the Book,” in *The New Testament and Early Christian Literature in Greco-Roman Context: Studies in Honor of David E. Aune*, ed. John Fotopoulos, NovTSup (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2006), 236–37; Heather Macumber, “The Threat of Empire: Monstrous Hybridity in Revelation 13,” *BibInt* 27 (2019): 120; David A. deSilva, “The ‘Image of the Beast’ and the Christians in Asia Minor: Escalation of Sectarian Tension in Revelation 13,” *TJ* 12 (1991): 203. Tonstad’s criticisms of this view fail to persuade. First, he wrongly implies that the theme of cosmic conflict is inconsistent with viewing the beast as the Roman empire. On the contrary, John seems to be making the point that Rome was aligned with the devil in the latter’s war with God; as such, Christians within the empire needed to be willing to endure hardship and even death if they were to remain faithful to Christ their king. Second, while Tonstad rightly calls attention to the overall narrative of Revelation, he does not pay sufficient attention to the epistolary character of the book; perhaps as a result, he overlooks how John’s audience would have been served by warnings about the true nature of Roman rule. Third, Tonstad overemphasizes the similarities between Revelation and the Synoptic Apocalypse (cf. Matt 24:1–51; Mark 13:1–37; Luke 21:5–36) while he overlooks the considerable differences between the two. Finally, while Tonstad presents a considerable case against the claims that Rev 13:3 and 13:18 allude to the *Nero redivivus* myth, a Rome-centric interpretation of Rev 13 does not depend upon such a reading of vv. 3 and 18. For Tonstad’s argument against identifying the first beast with the Roman empire, see Tonstad, “Appraising the Myth,” 175–99.

¹⁵⁸ Yeates makes the plausible argument that John viewed the Roman imperial ideology as being blasphemous because it deified its emperors, it viewed Rome’s actions as being authorized by heaven, and it claimed that Roman rule extended into heaven. See Yeates, “Blaspheming Heaven,” 43–51.

¹⁵⁹ Koester makes a helpful observation regarding the nature of the Lamb’s book of life. As he states, “Readers have learned that people worship the beast because of its seemingly invincible power (Rev 13:4). But Revelation also says that their names have not been written in the Lamb’s scroll of life, which identifies those who have the hope of resurrection to life in New Jerusalem (13:8; 20:15; 21:27). Since people are inscribed in the scroll ‘from the time the world was made,’ they do not obtain this status as a reward for their faithfulness (13:8; 17:8). Their names are placed in the scroll because God wants them

possessing such great might, the beast would not be allowed to exercise its malevolent power in perpetuity; on the contrary, it was only granted authority for a period of forty-two months (Rev 13:5; cf. Rev 11:2; 12:6, 14).¹⁶⁰

After providing a terrifying portrait of the first beast, John turns to the emergence of a second beast (Rev 13:11–17).¹⁶¹ This beast arose from the earth and it possessed two horns like that of a lamb (cf. Dan 8:3), though it spoke with the voice of the dragon (Rev 13:11). This land-beast acted with all the authority of the sea-beast, and it used the power granted to it to make those on the earth worship its predecessor (Rev 13:12).¹⁶² It performed great miracles before humanity, including calling for fire to come

there; it is an act of divine grace.” Koester, *Revelation*, 587.

¹⁶⁰ This period of time is not intended literally; instead, it probably refers to the period between Christ’s death/resurrection and Christ’s future return (see also Koester, *Revelation*, 585; Schreiner, *Revelation*, 388; Beale, *Revelation*, 695). Moreover, Friesen captures the significance of a time period being assigned to the beast’s rule. In his words, “John cast the time of Roman rule in mythic terms—but not positive ones. Rather than accepting the dominant mythology of eternal Roman rule accompanied by prosperity, Revelation portrays Roman hegemony as a limited time of oppression and opposition to God that will bring judgment.” Friesen, “Myth and Resistance,” 308–9. In fact, the allusions to Dan 7 may also serve to highlight the temporal limits on the reign of the beast since Dan 7:11–12 envisions the fourth beast being put to death while the remaining beasts are dethroned and only continue living for a limited time. Thus, while John highlights the ferocity of the beast of the sea through the imagery from Dan 7, the allusion also implicitly assures readers that this Satanic force is destined to be defeated by the Ancient of Days.

¹⁶¹ Many believe the two beasts are being likened to the OT mythical monsters Leviathan and Behemoth (see for instance Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 728; Müller, *Die Offenbarung*, 248; Schreiner, *Revelation*, 438–39; Koester, *Revelation*, 579–80; Friesen, “Myth and Resistance,” 304–7). However, Dyer denies that John means to forge a connection between the two beasts and Leviathan/Behemoth. See Keith Dyer, “Beastly Hybridity: Leviathan, Behemoth, and Revelation 13,” *St. Mark’s Review* 239 (2017): 99. In my judgment, Rev 13 probably does make use of Leviathan-Behemoth imagery, though not to such a degree that readers must recognize the allusions to properly understand John’s meaning.

¹⁶² Scholars have come to a variety of positions regarding the referent of the second beast. For instance, Oecumenius posits that this “third beast” (in addition to the dragon and the sea beast) is the antichrist (see “Commentary on the Apocalypse,” in *Greek Commentaries on Revelation*, Ancient Christian Texts [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011], 60). Beale takes the symbol to refer to anything that leads others to worship the state; moreover, while he acknowledges that the second beast can refer to the state itself, Beale seems to emphasize that false teachers within the church are also manifestations of this demonic agent (Beale, *Revelation*, 707–10). Somewhat similarly, Boring proposes that the land-beast is a general symbol for all who promote cultural religion (see Boring, *Revelation*, 157). On the other hand, Ford suggests that the beast has its counterpart in Flavius Josephus (Ford, *Revelation*, 227). Meanwhile, De Waal believes that the land-beast is an eschatological false prophet who would arise from within the church.

down from heaven (cf. 1 Kgs 18:36–49; Dan 7:10).¹⁶³ Through these displays, the land-beast deceives mankind and calls them to respond by fashioning an idol for the sea-beast. In fact, the land-beast was even given the ability to breathe life into the image of the beast and to make it speak and act (Rev 13:15a).¹⁶⁴ However, this second beast would not perform such feats on the basis of its own might; instead, the beast “deceiv[ed] the inhabitants of the earth because of the signs which were given to him to perform before the beast” (Rev 13:14). And while both beasts were limited in the sense of being dependent on some external source for their power, their exercise of authority over the peoples of the earth was extensive. In fact, the two would tolerate no dissent: those who

Kayle B. de Waal, “The Two Witnesses and the Land Beast in the Book of Revelation,” *AUSS* 53, no. 1 (2015): 165–69, 174. Though these varied proposals have their merits, the second beast probably signifies those who promoted the Roman imperial cult since it is described as calling for the worship of its predecessor, the Roman empire (so also Huber, “Imagery,” 61; deSilva, *Introduction*, 917–18; Harrington, *Revelation*, 145; Müller, *Die Offenbarung*, 253–54). This position may perhaps be described as the dominant one within scholarship, though its proponents can be further divided by whether they believe that John refers specifically to wealthy families that sponsor emperor worship (Friesen, “Myth and Resistance,” 310; Koester, *Revelation*, 589, 601), to the priests of the Roman imperial cult (Brown, *Introduction*, 792–93; Bauckham, *Theology*, 38; Schreiner, *Revelation*, 460; Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 756; Charles, *Revelation*, 1:333), or to local officials who regulated the religious practices of their constituents (deSilva, “Sectarian Tension,” 204–5; Caird, *Revelation*, 171). However, Macumber may be correct when she concludes that Rev 13 does not allow for a more specific identification of the land-beast beyond positing a reference to those involved in supporting the Roman imperial cult (Macumber, “Threat of Empire,” 124–25). For an argument that the book of Revelation as a whole is significantly influenced by and concerned with the Roman imperial cult, see Frey, “Roman Imperial Cult,” 231–55; for helpful descriptions of the Roman imperial cult, see deSilva, “Sectarian Tension,” 187–97; Helmut Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament*, vol. 1, *History, Culture, and Religion of the Hellenistic Age*, 2nd ed., (New York: de Gruyter, 1995), 350–56.

¹⁶³ The reference to miraculous feats is probably purely symbolic; as such, Scherrer goes astray when he tries to provide a historical explanation for why John believed that practitioners of the imperial cult could perform supernatural acts (see Scherrer, “Signs and Wonders,” 601–10). Meanwhile, Treiyer is also unlikely to be correct when he argues that the act of calling down fire from heaven portrays the second beast as performing its own Pentecost. Enrique B. Treiyer, “Ap 13:11–18: Feu du Ciel et Marque de la Bete,” *AUSS* 37, no. 1 (1999): 78–80. While the proposal is intriguing, the presentation of Pentecost in Acts 2 differs significantly from Rev 13:13 in that the former passage does not describe fire being called down from heaven.

¹⁶⁴ Koester argues that Rev 13:15 depicts the second beast as practicing sorcery, which was a practice that would have been condemned by the book’s readers (see Koester, *Revelation*, 593).

refused to worship the image of the sea-beast were put to death,¹⁶⁵ and those who refused the mark of loyalty to the beast were forbidden from participating in commercial life (Rev 13:15b–17).¹⁶⁶

As is readily apparent, Revelation 13 is full of symbolic imagery and allusions to the OT¹⁶⁷; perhaps as a result, interpreters have long debated the meaning of many of its details. However, for the purposes of this study, it is important to focus specifically on two clues within Revelation 13 that seem to point to the presence of DRA. The first is John’s use of the verb ἐδόθη in what Beale calls the “authorization clause”¹⁶⁸ (cf. Rev 13:5, 7, 14–15); the second is John’s reference to the Lamb’s book of life (Rev 13:8; cf. 3:5; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27).

First of all, the occurrences of ἐδόθη (“it was given”) in Revelation 13 may indicate that it was God who enabled the beasts to win the worship of the earth-dwellers. Readers are told by John that the two beasts were granted the ability to perform a variety of deeds such as speaking blasphemies (v. 5), acting for forty-two months (v. 5), putting saints to death (v. 7), ruling over all peoples (v. 7), performing deceptive miracles (v. 14), and giving breath to an idol (v. 15). Moreover, these activities are said to have caused

¹⁶⁵ Even if official persecution of Christians would not have been rampant at the time of Revelation’s composition, John’s Apocalypse confirms that at least some disciples were put to death on account of their faith (cf. Rev 2:10–13). These instances may have led John to anticipate more martyrs at the hands of Rome. As deSilva posits, “John is sure that Antipas is about to become the firstborn of many brethren, as he sees in Antipas the shape of things to come.” deSilva, “Sectarian Tension,” 200. Moreover, John may have described the beasts in such bloody terms (cf. Rev 13:15) in order to unveil Rome’s true nature. As Koester puts the matter, “Through his parody, John magnifies the instances when Jesus’ followers faced death threats for refusing to venerate the gods of the empire. By magnifying the threat, he wants readers to see that this danger is not an aberration but an essential characteristic of a system in which imperial authority is made absolute.” Koester, *Revelation*, 604.

¹⁶⁶ Rightly Schreiner, *Revelation*, 467.

¹⁶⁷ For a helpful article on the imagery within John’s Apocalypse, see Huber, “Imagery,” 53–67.

¹⁶⁸ Beale, *Revelation*, 699.

many people to give their allegiance to the dragon—an act which is clearly depicted as a sin worthy of eternal condemnation (cf. Rev 14:9–11). So the question must be asked: who gave the beasts the ability to perform such misleading acts? Or in other words, who is the implied agent behind the verb ἐδόθη in these verses? While the use of ἔδωκεν in verses 2 and 4 points in the direction of the dragon as the agent of the passive verb (cf. Rev 13:2, 4),¹⁶⁹ other reasons exist for understanding God as the acting subject.¹⁷⁰ To begin with, the passive form of δίδωμι typically refers to divine agency throughout the book of Revelation.¹⁷¹ Thus, the use of the construction in Revelation 13 may have been intended to prompt readers to see an allusion to divine activity. But perhaps more importantly, Revelation 13:5b states that “[the beast] was given authority to act *for forty-two months*” (καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτῷ ἐξουσία ποιῆσαι μῆνας τεσσαράκοντα [καὶ] δύο). If the beast was given authority by the dragon, why would the latter set a time limit for his underling? The inclusion of a time frame would make more sense if God was being presented as sovereign over the beast’s (brief) reign of terror.¹⁷² For these reasons, it seems somewhat more probable that God is being presented as the agent who gives the beasts the ability to manipulate unbelievers into worshipping Satan.

¹⁶⁹ See Tonstad, “Appraising the Myth,” 183–84. Tonstad additionally argues that viewing ἐδόθη as a divine passive undercuts the cosmic conflict John intends to depict. However, this argument could only be maintained if one could demonstrate that John understood God’s sovereignty over the beasts to be incompatible with the presence of a genuine cosmic conflict. But Rev 17:12–17 definitively demonstrates such not to be the case. Instead, what Rev 13 and 17 seem to portray is a cosmic conflict without the existence of cosmic dualism (rightly Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 743).

¹⁷⁰ For proponents of this position, see Schreiner, *Revelation*, 450; Beale, *Revelation*, 695; Koester, *Revelation*, 572; Harrington, *Revelation*, 138; Ford, *Revelation*, 222–23; Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 743, 760; Caird, *Revelation*, 167.

¹⁷¹ For the passive forms of δίδωμι in Revelation, see Rev 6:2, 4, 8, 11; 7:2; 8:2–3; 9:1, 3, 5; 11:1–2; 12:14; 13:5, 7, 14–15; 16:8; 19:8; 20:4. Schreiner may in fact be right to argue that the verb ἐδόθη (presumably along with ἐδόθησαν) is always a divine passive in the book of Revelation (see Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 620).

¹⁷² Rightly Beale, *Revelation*, 695.

Second, Revelation 13:8 may suggest that those excluded from the book of life were predestined to succumb to the sea-beast's Satanic influence.¹⁷³ As the verse states, "And all who dwell upon the earth will worship him, that is, everyone whose name has not been written in the book of life of the lamb who was slain from the foundation of the world." The first half of the verse describes a group of individuals (i.e., "all those who dwell upon the earth") surrendering to the first beast's lordship. John then provides a second way of describing this same group in verse 13b: they are those whose names are not found in the book of life (cf. Rev 17:8). John here appears to divide humanity into two groups. First, there are those whose names are written in the book of life. These individuals will refuse to accept the beast's authority, even at the cost of their earthly lives.¹⁷⁴ Later on, John also reveals that those whose names are inscribed in the book are welcomed into the new Jerusalem (Rev 21:27). Second, there are those whose names are not written in the book of life. These, and only these, will choose to serve the beast who emerges from the sea (Rev 13:8; 17:8). Moreover, these persons will not be welcomed into the new heavens and the new earth, but will instead be cast into the lake of fire as punishment for their deeds (Rev 20:11–15). Since those who worship the beast are limited to those who have not been written in the book of life (cf. Rev 13:8; 17:8), it is clear that John forges a relationship between succumbing to the beast and being excluded from the book¹⁷⁵; but what is the nature of that relationship? While it is possible for John

¹⁷³ Everything that is said about DRA in Rev 13:8 also applies to Rev 17:8; in order to avoid unnecessary redundancy, I will not include a separate discussion of the latter verse. For an illuminating study regarding the meaning of "the book of life" within its canonical context, see Charles R. Smith, "The Book of Life," *Grace Theological Journal* 6, no. 2 (1985): 219–30.

¹⁷⁴ Schreiner accurately observes that John's statements about the book of life attest to both divine sovereignty and human responsibility. See Schreiner, *Revelation*, 174.

¹⁷⁵ Frey helpfully describes the other side of this relationship when he says, "The most dangerous aspect of the Roman influence is not its military power, its economic influence, or even its hostility against Christians, but rather the fact that all humankind is seduced or even compelled to worship the beast, so that also the Christians are in danger of falling. If they can remain steadfast, *this can only be explained by divine protection or predestination in the book of life from the beginning of the world*

to have presented one's relation to the book of life to depend on a person's response to the beast,¹⁷⁶ two factors suggest that John understood the opposite to be the case. First, the verb tenses in Revelation 13:8 present God's prior action (or non-action) to be the basis for human future action. According to John, the earth-dwellers' future decision (προσκυνήσουσιν; "they will worship") is dependent upon a state of affairs that has been brought about by God's prior decision (οὐ γέγραπται; "it has not been written"). And second, while Revelation 13:8 is ambiguous regarding when the book of life was penned, Revelation 17:8 is not: the book of life was written "from the foundation of the world."¹⁷⁷ These observations lend credibility to the argument that, in Revelation, exclusion from the book of life predetermines that a person will *voluntarily* worship the beast. In other words, God's decision *not* to write someone's name in the book of life is akin to negative predestination.¹⁷⁸ For this reason, Revelation 13:8 (and 17:8) probably describe a form of DRA.

[emphasis added]." Frey, "Roman Imperial Cult," 239. Thus, Frey rightly points out that, according to John, inclusion in the book of life is what predetermined that one would be enabled to endure the demonic influence of the Roman empire without capitulation.

¹⁷⁶ See for instance Hubert Ritt, *Offenbarung des Johannes*, Die neue echter Bibel (Würzburg, Germany: Echter Verlag, 1986), 71.

¹⁷⁷ Some have questioned whether the phrase "from the foundation of the world" (ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου) modifies "it has been written" (γέγραπται) or "who was slain" (τοῦ ἐσφαγμένου) in Rev 13:8. While a decision is difficult, the word order makes it more likely that John means to affirm that the lamb was (somehow) slain "from the foundation of the world" (so also Schreiner, *Revelation*, 455; Charles, *Revelation*, 1:354). Nevertheless, the importance of this syntactical decision is relativized by Rev 17:8 since this latter verse clarifies that the book of life was in fact written "from the foundation of the world." Thus, even though it may focus on the foreordination of Christ's death, Rev 13:8 should also be understood to refer to a metaphorical act of writing that took place before creation (see also Smith, "Book of Life," 226).

¹⁷⁸ Rightly Beale, *Revelation*, 700–703 (perhaps also Müller, *Die Offenbarung*, 252). On the other hand, Caird denies that exclusion from the book of life amounts to an act of reprobation. His rejection is grounded in three arguments: (1) John stresses human responsibility to the same extent that he does the gracious nature of salvation; (2) Rev 3:5 implies that names may be removed from the book of life; and (3) the presence of other books at the judgment seat (cf. Rev 20:12) demonstrate that the book of life does not predetermine salvation (see Caird, *Revelation*, 168). However, none of Caird's arguments stand up to scrutiny. First, as my study of DRA has repeatedly demonstrated, the biblical authors did not view human responsibility as being incompatible with divine sovereignty. Second, Rev 3:5 does not in fact teach the

The preceding analysis suggests the presence of two instances of DRA in Revelation 13. First, God is depicted as granting Satan’s beasts the ability to win the worship of a definite set of persons. Second, God is also shown to negatively influence individuals by excluding them from the book of life, which is akin to an act of negative predestination. These two examples of DRA are not independent of one another; on the contrary, the former seems logically dependent upon the latter since the beasts are enabled to mislead only those who have already been excluded from the Lamb’s book of life. Though related, the two examples of DRA also differ from one another in some respects: God’s influence through the beasts seems to refer to a mediated, active type of reprobating influence,¹⁷⁹ while the act of excluding some from the Lamb’s book of life should probably be described as an immediate, passive form of DRA.¹⁸⁰ And yet, both examples share similar features as well. Both should be understood as forms of eternal DRA since they clearly have eternal punishment as their outcome (cf. Rev 14:9–11;

removal of people’s names from the book of life; on the contrary, it is a strong guarantee that God will never remove the names of overcomers from the book of life (so also Smith, “Book of Life,” 226–29). The verse is intended as a promise rather than a warning. Moreover, even if a warning was implied, it would not necessarily suggest that apostasy leads to *erasure* from the book of life; instead, the warning could just as easily be taken to mean that apostasy indicates *exclusion* from the book of life (cf. Rev 13:8, 17:8). Finally, Rev 20:12 seems to intentionally distinguish an unnamed set of *books* (βιβλία, τοῖς βιβλίῳ) from “another book . . . which is [the book] of life” (ἄλλο βιβλίον . . . ὃ ἐστὶν τῆς ζωῆς). In the plural set of books are inscribed the works for which people are ultimately judged (cf. Rev 20:12). But what purpose does the book of life serve in this context? The likely possibility is that the book of life symbolizes those who have been excluded from the judgement that proceeds according to what is written in *the books*. In other words, those inscribed in the book of life are spared from the condemnation that befalls those who have been excluded and who are therefore judged solely in accordance with their works (cf. Rev 20:15). In any event, Caird fails to persuasively rebut the notion that the book of life symbolizes God’s act of (double) predestination.

¹⁷⁹ Rev 13:5, 14–15 attests to a mediated form of DRA since the beasts are here empowered by God to influence those who dwell on the earth towards sin and condemnation. And though this form of influence is described with a verb in the passive voice (ἐδόθη), these verses should be understood to portray an active form of DRA since God is the agent who gives the beasts their nefarious abilities.

¹⁸⁰ One could describe Rev 13:8 (and 17:8) as an act of preterition: God “passes over” certain persons when he chooses not to include them in his book of life. In other words, God ensures that the earth-dwellers would sin and be condemned by withholding from them the grace that would have led them to true and enduring faith.

20:15). Finally, though Revelation 13 does not explicitly explain the grounds for God's reprobating influence, a non-retributive reading of both cases seems slightly more likely for the following reasons: (1) neither the empowerment of the Satanic beasts nor the exclusion from the book of life are said to have been a punishment for sin; (2) God's act of predestination (i.e., inclusion or exclusion from the book of life) takes place before the objects of predestination are able to perform any actions for which they might be judged (cf. 17:8); (3) instead of being determined by human actions, the contents of the book of life appear to determine what persons will voluntarily choose to do (cf. Rev 13:8; 17:8); and (4) since only those excluded from the book of life are allowed to succumb to the beasts' influence and since God's determination to exclude persons from the book of life appears to be non-retributive, it seems sensible to assume a similar, non-retributive basis for the decision to allow Satan's beasts' to deceive those excluded from the book of life.¹⁸¹

DRA in Revelation 17

The seventeenth chapter of Revelation seems to provide the book's third (and the Bible's final) example of DRA. The chapter opens with one of the seven bowl-angels¹⁸² telling John that he is about to be shown a vision of the judgment of "the great

¹⁸¹ It must be acknowledged that it is *theoretically* possible to posit different grounds for the two forms of DRA in Rev 13. For instance, one could argue that the chapter should be read with the following scheme in mind: (1) God predetermined who would be excluded from the book of life on a non-retributive basis, (2) those excluded were thereby predestined to commit a number of sins, and (3) God then empowered the beasts as a means of punishing those excluded from the book for the sins they inevitably committed. While such a formulation is logically possible (and perhaps even theologically sound), the question to be answered is whether or not the text of Rev 13 provides evidence that this is what John had in mind. In my estimation, it seems unlikely that John did since he does not actually portray God's empowerment of the Satanic beasts as having been a punishment for sins. Thus, it seems that the two most plausible alternatives are either (1) the text is underdetermined with regard to whether or not God empowered the beasts as a means of punishment, or (2) the non-retributive characterization of divine predestination (i.e., exclusion from the book of life) was intended to also apply to God's influence extended through the agents of Satan. While one could plausibly argue for either of these, I tentatively lean towards the latter as providing the simpler and more elegant explanation of the text.

¹⁸² As others have posited, Rev 17–18 should be understood in relation to the bowl judgments

whore”¹⁸³ who has made the inhabitants of the earth drunk with her immorality (Rev 17:1–2). John is then shown Babylon, “the mother of immoralities and of the abominations of the earth,” sitting upon the scarlet beast and intoxicating herself on the blood of Christ’s martyrs (Rev 17:1–6).¹⁸⁴ He then receives an interpretation of the vision from the same angel (Rev 17:7–18): the beast’s seven heads refer to seven mountains and seven kings, and the beast’s ten horns signify ten kings who would give their authority to the beast and would wage war against Christ, only to be defeated by him who is the lord of lords and king of kings (Rev 17:8–14; cf. Rev 19:11–21). However, presumably before

described in Rev 16. See for instance Peter J. Leithart, *Revelation 12–22*, International Theological Commentary on the Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testaments (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2018), 169; Koester, *Revelation*, 670; Beale, *Revelation*, 847–48; Brian K. Blount, *Revelation*, NTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 311.

¹⁸³ Glancy and Moore have persuasively argued that the imagery John uses to describe Rome has its background in the world of street workers and brothels rather than in the world of high-society courtesans. Moreover, since most of the prostitutes in the Greco-roman world were slaves, John’s depiction of the city as a πόρνη carries connotations of both sex work and slavery (so also Kendra Haloviak Valentine, “Cleopatra: New Insights for the Interpretation of Revelation 17,” *EvQ* 87, no. 4 [2015]: 312–14). However, the two authors also recognize complexity in John’s depiction of Rome in that it is also pictured as a royal figure (Rev 18:7; see also Koester, *Revelation*, 671). They explain this paradox by noting that Roman authors also used the trope of the “whore-empress” and the “pimp-emperor” to criticize the greed and violence of empires and royal figures. In light of this practice, Glancy and Moore contend that the allegory in Rev 17–18 functions similarly in condemning the Roman empire for its abuses of power. While I believe their article provides insight into the meaning of Rev 17–18, Glancy and Moore fall short of providing a fully persuasive interpretation because they overlook the ways in which the OT serves as the background to John’s depiction of Rome as a harlot. See Jennifer A. Glancy and Stephen D. Moore, “How Typical a Roman Prostitute Is Revelation’s ‘Great Whore’?,” *JBL* 130, no. 3 (2011): 551–69.

¹⁸⁴ A number of scholars have suggested that John’s depiction of Rome in Rev 17 alludes to historical or religious figures from the Greco-roman period. For instance, Valentine suggests that John’s portrait is based on the legend of Cleopatra, as he turned Rome’s infamous enemy into a picture of Rome itself (Valentine, “New Insights,” 327–29). Meanwhile, Schedtler believes that the whore in Rev 17 is modeled after the Goddess Cybele, who was known as “the great mother” (ἡ μεγάλη ἡ μήτηρ; cf. Rev 17:5) throughout the Roman world. Schedtler argues that John inverted positive depictions of Cybele and used the negative portrait of the Goddess as a proxy for the Roman Empire (see Justin Jeffcoat Schedtler, “Mother of Gods, Mother of Harlots: The Image of the Mother Goddess behind the Depiction of the ‘Whore of Babylon’ in Revelation 17,” *NovT* 59 [2017]: 62–67). On the other hand, Glancy and Moore suggest that literary depictions of the Roman empress Messalina may perhaps serve as the closest analogue for Revelation’s great whore (Glancy and Moore, “Roman Prostitute,” 562–69). Finally, others forward the idea that Rev 17 presents a caricature of the goddess Roma (Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 925–27; Koester, *Revelation*, 685; Boring, *Revelation*, 179). While such suggestions are plausible, none of them is explicitly supported by the text and none is essential to understanding the meaning of Rev 17.

their defeat at the hands of the Lamb,¹⁸⁵ the beast and his ten kings would turn against the whore Babylon so as to strip her naked, plunder her completely, and set her ablaze (Rev 17:16).¹⁸⁶ Then in verse 17, it is revealed to John that these events would take place on account of God's influence upon the ten kings. As the text states, "For God set it upon their hearts to do his purpose and to accomplish one purpose and to give their kingdom to the beast until the words of God will be fulfilled" (Rev 17:17).¹⁸⁷ Finally, the angel tells John that the woman represents the great city that rules over the kings of the earth (Rev 17:18).

As many have noted, Revelation 17 is highly cryptic and it poses a number of difficulties for interpreters.¹⁸⁸ First, scholars have disagreed regarding the identity of the

¹⁸⁵ Rightly Beale, *Revelation*, 883; Harrington, *Revelation*, 175; Charles, *Revelation of St. John*, 1:54–55; Blount, *Revelation*, 322.

¹⁸⁶ Glancy and Moore make the provocative suggestion that John depicts the beast as Babylon's pimp. As they state, "The story of Babylon's demise is the story of a great many sex workers in every age, including our own. She is the victim of deadly violence on the part of her clients and, we have suggested, her pimp, the beast." Glancy and Moore, "Roman Prostitute," 568.

¹⁸⁷ So Beale says, "Just as God ultimately causes the persecution of the saints throughout history (e.g., 6:1–11; 13:5–10) and at the end of time (Ezek. 38:4–13; Zech. 14:2), so he will cause the political forces of evil to attack and destroy Babylon. God executes his will through the 'hearts' of both the righteous and the unrighteous. This must be construed not as mere divine 'permission' but as divine causation." Beale, *Revelation*, 887.

¹⁸⁸ Ulrichsen criticizes two extreme positions in the interpretation of Rev 17. The first is a purely historicist approach, which is based on the mistaken assumption that John's Apocalypse was written *solely* to testify to historical realities known to him and his audience. He describes the second as an "eschatological or timeless interpretation" (Die eschatologisch-überzeitliche Auslegung), which is grounded upon the premise that Revelation does not speak to or about the historical realities facing John and his audience. Ulrichsen rightly argues that both these extremes lead to misinterpretations since Revelation speaks prophetically while also alluding to the historical realities. See Jarl Henning Ulrichsen, "Die sieben Häupter und die zehn Hörner zur Datierung der Offenbarung des Johannes," *ST* 39 (1985): 2. Likewise, Witulski demonstrates that apocalyptic literature could use figurative language to refer to historical realities. As such, the symbolism within Rev 17 should not be seen as evidence that the text does not refer to history. Thomas Witulski, "Die Zeit im Bild: Bemerkungen zum Geschichtswert der Darstellung im apokalyptischen Hauptteil der Johannesapokalypse (Apk 4–22)," *NovT* 62 (2020): 277–90.

great whore, Babylon.¹⁸⁹ Some have argued that Babylon refers to Jerusalem/Israel,¹⁹⁰ or to members of “the apostate pseudo-church” who “outwardly appear or claim to be part of the Christian church but are inwardly and spiritually apostate,”¹⁹¹ or to abstract, ungodly societal systems.¹⁹² However, since the city of Rome was said to have been founded upon seven mountains and was known during the time as “the city of seven hills,” it seems likely that John had Rome primarily (though perhaps not exclusively) in mind when he referenced the “woman sitting upon [the seven mountains].”¹⁹³ Revelation

¹⁸⁹ For a brief overview of the history of interpretation, see Koester, *Revelation*, 637–41.

¹⁹⁰ See for instance Leithart, *Revelation*, 169–86; Ford, *Revelation*, 285–86; D. Holwerda, “Ein neuer Schlüssel zum 17. Kapitel der johanneischen Offenbarung,” *EstBib* 53 (1995): 396.

¹⁹¹ Louis A. Brighton, *Revelation*, ConcC (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1999), 436–37 (though he also claims that the Harlot during John’s time was Rome).

¹⁹² Beale states that “the woman must represent that part of the ungodly world that works together with the state, such as the social, cultural, economic, and religious aspects of the world. In this context the work that they agree to do together is that of persecuting Christians.” Later, he says more specifically that “the description of the woman confirms that she represents worldly economic forces in collusion with the state in persecuting Christians.” Beale, *Revelation*, 853–54.

¹⁹³ Thus, Blount is probably right when he says, “As surely as any contemporary American reader would recognize Philadelphia as ‘the city of brotherly love’ or Chicago as ‘the windy city,’ a first-century Greco-Roman would have immediately understood a reference to ‘the city on seven hills’ as a reference to Rome.” Blount, *Revelation*, 319. For others who identify the harlot with Rome, see Victorinus of Petovium, “Commentary on the Apocalypse,” 17; Oecumenius, “Commentary on the Apocalypse,” 73; Bill T. Arnold, “Babylon,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 394; Schreiner, *Revelation*, 464; Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 930–31; Koester, *Revelation*, 683–84; Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, rev. ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 308; Harrington, *Revelation*, 173; Blount, *Revelation*, 309–10; Boring, *Revelation*, 179; Charles, *Revelation of St. John*, 2:55; Brown, *Introduction*, 793–94; deSilva, *Introduction*, 907; Bauckham, *Theology*, 35–36; Valentine, “New Insights,” 315; Glancy and Moore, “Roman Prostitute,” 551; Klauck, “*Nero Redivivus*,” 693; Frey, “Roman Imperial Cult,” 236–38; Ulrichsen, “Die sieben Häupter,” 4; Schedtler, “Mother of Gods,” 66–70; G. B. Caird, *New Testament Theology*, ed. L. D. Hurst (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 101. Scholars at times disagree as to whether “Babylon” in Rev 17 refers to Rome in a primary or secondary sense. For instance, Ladd argues that the image of Babylon is fundamentally eschatological (i.e., it refers to “the final manifestation of the total history of godless nations”) though it also refers to Rome as “a historical manifestation” of this evil (see Ladd, *Revelation*, 221–22). Meanwhile, Beale believes the whore symbolizes ungodly economic/societal forces that oppress Christians together with the state; yet, he also posits that Revelation’s original readers would have seen Rome as fitting that description (Beale, *Revelation*, 854). In my judgment, it is more likely that the image of Babylon was intended to depict Rome most immediately (so also Koester, *Revelation*, 683–84), even as the book invites the application of this symbol to other godless human governments that rise

17:18 seems to confirm this interpretation, as the verse refers to the woman as “the great city which has dominion over the kingdoms of the earth.”¹⁹⁴

A second disputed matter involves the identity of the scarlet beast (cf. Rev 13:1–10). Interpreters differ as to whether this monster refers to a historic person,¹⁹⁵ the Antichrist,¹⁹⁶ or perhaps the Roman empire and its imperial might.¹⁹⁷ Given what has been said about the harlot, it seems as though this last interpretation has more in its favor than the previous two. However, since Revelation 17:10–17 suggests that the beast

up against Christ and his people.

¹⁹⁴ While Villiers correctly argues that Rev 17 should not be read according to a purely historicist hermeneutic, he is too skeptical of the claim that Rev 17 speaks about the Roman empire (see Pieter G. R. de Villiers, “Rome in the Historical Interpretation of Revelation,” *Acta Patristica et Byzantina* 13, no. 1 [2002]: 127–36). For starters, Villiers mistakenly posits that the “seven mountains” in Rev 17:9 should not be taken a reference to Rome since such a reading would evidence a kind of literalism that does not account for the symbolism that litters the chapter. However, Villiers here misunderstands what “literal” means: a literal reading of Rev 17:9 would posit an actual woman sitting upon seven physical landmasses. Obviously those who view the “seven mountains” as a reference to Rome do not read Rev 17:9 this way; instead, they view “the woman on the seven mountains” to symbolically stand for the city of Rome, not in terms of its topography, but in terms of it as a societal, political, economic, ethical, and religious entity. Moreover, when Villiers complains that such a reading of Rev 17 would contradict more positive depictions of Rome found elsewhere in the NT, he assumes that the biblical authors could only speak of complex realities simplistically and univocally. Finally, even if the persecution of Christians was sporadic during the time of Revelation’s composition (which may not have been the case if the book was written during Domitian’s reign), modern readers may underestimate the impact that “isolated” instances of such violence may have had on the author of Revelation. After all, the author himself may have been the victim of persecution (cf. Rev 1:9) and he may have known (whether personally or by reputation) persons martyred for their faith (cf. Rev 2:13). Additionally, the indictment of Rome as being “drunk from the blood of the saints” (cf. Rom 17:6) may not have been intended to refer literally to rampant martyrdoms; instead, John may have used evocative language to make the point that the city’s immoral and idolatrous practices, along with its sporadic targeting of Christians, were indicative of Rome’s fundamental opposition to Christ and the church (similarly, Warren Carter, “Revelation and Roman Rule in First-Century Asia Minor,” in Koester, *Oxford Handbook of Revelation*, 138).

¹⁹⁵ For instance, Holwerda argues that the beast is a depiction of John of Gischala (see Holwerda, “Ein neuer Schlüssel,” 393–94). Others argue that the beast portrays the emperor Nero (Harrington, *Revelation*, 145, 172; Ulrichsen, “Die sieben Häupter,” 4; Victorinus of Petovium, “Commentary on the Apocalypse,” 17–18).

¹⁹⁶ Ladd, *Revelation*, 223.

¹⁹⁷ Koester, *Revelation*, 580–81, 687; Schreiner, *Revelation*, 471; Strømmen, “Politics of the Beast,” 150, 158. Leithart says that the scarlet beast “is Rome *fully* possessed by Satan, Satanic from the outer skin down to the core.” Leithart, *Revelation 12–22*, 189.

survives (and even brings about) the fall of Rome, it seems insufficient to equate the beast with the Roman empire; instead, the beast seems to symbolize the Satanic power at work behind, in, and through Rome's imperial might.

While identifying the great harlot and the beast is challenging, more perplexing still is the matter of the beast's seven heads (Rev 17:3, 7–11).¹⁹⁸ In his interpretation of John's vision, the angel states that the seven heads represent both seven mountains and seven kings,¹⁹⁹ five of whom died, one of whom was currently ruling, and one of whom was still to come (Rev 17:9–10). But then, the angel adds that the beast itself was an eighth king and was “from the seven” (Rev 17:11).²⁰⁰ These statements have baffled

¹⁹⁸ Some scholars claim that these verses reflect the Nero *redivivus* myth. See for instance Larry Kreitzer, “Hadrian and the Nero Redivivus Myth,” *Zeitschrift Für Die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft Und Die Kunde Der Älteren Kirche* 79 (1988): 92–95; Klauck, “Nero Redivivus,” 694–98; Koester, *Revelation*, 677; Charles, *Revelation of St. John*, 2:67; Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 950.

¹⁹⁹ Koester explains the dual nature of the imagery by saying that “in a geographical sense the bejeweled city sits atop its mountains, but in a political sense it rests on its rulers.” Koester, *Revelation*, 690.

²⁰⁰ Scholars have come to different explanations for how the beast has seven heads/kings and yet is an eighth king who is “from the seven.” Most take Rev 17:11 to mean that the beast both is an eighth king and is also one of the seven kings earlier described. For instance, Ladd believes that the verse depicts the beast as the anti-Christ who embodies himself most particularly in two of the seven kings: Antiochus Epiphanes and the coming anti-Christ (Ladd, *Revelation*, 230–31). Hoskins claims that the beast is the seventh king of Rev 17:9, though he can be described as an eighth king because “he is and has always been the power behind the seven kings, his seven heads.” Paul M. Hoskins, “Another Possible Interpretation of the Seven Heads of the Beast and the Eighth King (Revelation 17:9–11),” *BBR* 30, no. 1 (2020): 102. While the cryptic nature of apocalyptic language make these proposals possible, they give rise to two awkward ideas: (1) there are seven kings, and yet there is also an eighth king who is actually one of the seven, and (2) the entirety of the beast can be identified with one of his heads. These problems may be the reason why some scholars maintain a sharper distinction between the beast and the seven kings. For instance, Mounce argues that the beast is not “one of the seven,” but is “of the seven.” In other words, the beast is like the kings in that he “plays the same sort of role as his earthly predecessors.” Mounce, *Revelation*, 318; see also Blount, *Revelation*, 321. Furthermore, by describing the beast as “an eighth [king],” Rev 17:11 may also reflect an implicit mockery of the beast (cf. Rev 17:8). By characterizing the beast as one who is “from the seven,” John may suggest that the beast shares both the character and the fate of these “seven.” Moreover, the description of the beast as an eighth king highlights the failure of his seven heads: five have already fallen, and though one rules currently, he and his successor will soon fall. Thus, the beast must take matters into his own hands as an eighth king; but ironically, rather than ensuring his reign, the beast's coming only serves to bring about his own demise (καὶ εἰς ἀπώλειαν ὑπάγει). For other possible connotations of the number eight in Rev 17:11, see Beale, *Revelation*, 875–76.

many students of John's Apocalypse.²⁰¹ While many have understood "the seven heads" to be specific Roman kings,²⁰² empires,²⁰³ or even Jewish commanders,²⁰⁴ the ambiguities of the text make it impossible to ascertain with confidence who or what John may have had in mind if he indeed intended for the "seven heads" to designate particular historical figures or empires. In addition, Mucha and Witetschek are right to question whether such an approach makes sense of Revelation as a text written to a first-century audience in Asia Minor. The two pose a helpful rhetorical question: how would it serve John's audience for him to write in coded fashion about matters of common knowledge?²⁰⁵ Because of these problems with a historicist approach to the seven kings,²⁰⁶ a more

²⁰¹ Schreiner probably captures the experience of an untold number of readers when he says, "Interpreters have torn their hair out trying to unravel what John tells us here." Schreiner, *Revelation*, 465.

²⁰² See for instance Victorinus of Petovium, "Commentary on the Apocalypse," 17; Oecumenius, "Commentary on the Apocalypse," 75; David M. May, "Counting Kings (Revelation 17:10): A Novel Approach from Roman Imperial Coinage," *RevExp* 114, no. 2 (2017): 239–46; Charles, *Revelation of St. John*, 2:69–70; Ford, *Revelation*, 290; Ulrichsen, "Die sieben Häupter," 7–10; Klauck, "Nero Redivivus," 696–97.

²⁰³ Leithart, *Revelation 12–22*, 193; Andrew of Caesarea, "Commentary on the Apocalypse," in *Greek Commentaries on Revelation*, 178.

²⁰⁴ Holwerda, "Ein neuer Schlüssel," 393–95. Holwerda's suggestion is highly unlikely since the OT clearly distinguishes between generals and kings (cf. 2 Sam 2:8–10; 8:15–16), and since Holwerda presents no evidence that the Jewish commanders in the first Jewish-Roman were ever called "kings." Moreover, his objections against identifying the great harlot of Rom 17 with the city of Rome are unpersuasive.

²⁰⁵ In addition, Mucha and Witetschek argue that a comparison between Rev 17 and 4 Ezra 11–12 also reveals the weaknesses of a historicist approach to the former passage. They argue that the latter text signals its interest in codifying historical figures by providing extensive explanations to guide its readers. In contrast, readers of Rev 17 are left with almost no information which would help them determine the identities of the seven heads. Mucha and Witetschek therefore conclude that, unlike the author of 4 Ezra, John must not have been attempting to identify specific individuals through the imagery of the beast and its seven heads. See Robert Mucha and Stephan Witetschek, "Das Buch ohne Siegel: Zur zeitgeschichtlichen Referentialität der Johannesapokalypse," *Early Christianity* 4 (2013): 104, 120–23.

²⁰⁶ Villiers goes so far as to say that the attempt to identify the seven heads with particular kings "runs into insurmountable problems." Villiers, "Rome in Revelation," 131. Hoskins agrees with this assessment, as he concludes that "the quest to name seven specific emperors or seven specific kingdoms is probably a misguided quest." Hoskins, "Seven Heads," 88–89. For others who reject historicist approaches to the interpretation of the seven kings, see Schreiner, *Revelation*, 477–81; Matthew Charles Baines, "The Identity and Fate of the Kings of the Earth in the Book of Revelation," *RTR* 75, no. 2 (2016): 77; Koester,

fruitful course may be to take “the seven kings” as a depiction of the entire period during which Rome exercised its demonically empowered rule.²⁰⁷

Finally, the beast is also said to have ten horns (cf. 17:3), and these are said to represent ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but would be granted authority as kings alongside the beast (Rev 17:12). What does this mean? Charles suggests that, as far as John’s source text is concerned, the ten horns referred to Parthian kings who were expected to ally themselves with Nero²⁰⁸; however, Charles also believed that, within the context of Revelation, the figures may refer to demonic powers.²⁰⁹ Leithart disagrees and posits that the ten horns refer both to the beast as “an idolatrous system of worship” and to the first ten Roman kings considered as a unit.²¹⁰ Holwerda speculates that John may have been speaking of ten subcommanders in John of Gischala’s army.²¹¹ Meanwhile, Ladd argues that “the ten kings are purely eschatological figures representing the totality of the powers of all nations on the earth which are to be made subservient to Antichrist.”²¹² Schreiner agrees that the ten kings are both symbolic and

Revelation, 678, 691; Mounce, *Revelation*, 317; Beale, *Revelation*, 869; Blount, *Revelation*, 320; Boring, *Revelation*, 183; Brighton, *Revelation*, 449; Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 948.

²⁰⁷ Hoskins contends that “the seven kings are more likely to present a scheme for summarizing the complete history of the beast’s rule, which includes a past (five kings), a present (one king), and a future (one king; 17:10).” Hoskins, “Seven Heads,” 88–89. However, because Rev 17:11 refers to an eighth king and because vv. 12–14 speak of ten kings who submit to the beast, it seems inaccurate to say that the seven kings “summarize the complete history of the beast’s rule.” Instead, the seven heads may represent the complete period of Roman rule as being demonic; meanwhile, the beast’s reappearance as an eighth king signifies the extension of Satan’s influence past the fall of Rome.

²⁰⁸ Similarly Ulrichsen, “Die sieben Häupter,” 15.

²⁰⁹ Charles, *Revelation of St. John*, 2:71–72.

²¹⁰ Leithart, *Revelation 12–22*, 201–2.

²¹¹ Holwerda, “Ein neuer Schlüssel,” 396.

²¹² Ladd, *Revelation*, 231–32; so also Mounce, *Revelation*, 319.

eschatological²¹³; in addition, he posits that they should be identified with “the kings of the earth” who are mentioned throughout Revelation (cf. Rev 1:5; 6:15; 17:1, 18; 18:3, 9; 19:19).²¹⁴ However, Koester questions the importance of this line of inquiry altogether; according to him, “the issue is not whether readers can identify the kings, but whether they identify *with* them. The purpose of the vision is to shape the readers’ commitments by contrasting the destructive consequences of allegiance to the beast with the life-giving outcome of allegiance to the Lamb.”²¹⁵ While this last approach has its merits, interpreters still must account for what John means when he says that “the ten horns . . . are ten kings.” Broadly speaking, I agree with those interpreters who understand Revelation 17:12–14 to be both symbolic and eschatological. As such, I do not think the “ten horns” are to be identified with ten historical rulers; instead, “ten” probably symbolizes completeness,²¹⁶ so that the ten horns/ten kings refers to human kingdoms that align themselves with the beast from the time of Rome’s fall up until the coming of Christ.²¹⁷ Moreover, the transfer of authority from the ten kings to the beast may also explain why the latter is described as an eighth king (cf. Rev 17:11): after the demise of his seven heads (i.e., the Roman empire), the ten kings/the kings of the earth enthrone Satan’s representative once more and join him in his war against Christ (cf. Rev 17:13, 17). In other words, Revelation 17:12–14 may symbolically describe how godless kingdoms throughout the church age will continue to submit themselves to Satan and

²¹³ Schreiner, *Revelation*, 466, 482.

²¹⁴ Schreiner, *Revelation*, 482. So also Beale, *Revelation*, 878;

²¹⁵ Koester, *Revelation*, 692.

²¹⁶ As Bede notes, “the number seven and the number ten often are used to indicate universality.” Bede, “The Exposition of the Apocalypse,” in *Latin Commentaries on Revelation*, Ancient Christian Texts (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 168.

²¹⁷ This may explain why John says that the ten kings had not received their power at that time: Revelation was written while the Roman empire was still the dominant world power.

contend against Christ until the day comes when the Lamb wins the final victory over all his enemies.

Revelation 17 is a difficult text, and as such, it is unlikely that interpreters will agree upon the meaning of all its details. Nevertheless, the text seems to plainly attest to God's influence upon the beast's "ten kings" as the reason for their wicked actions.²¹⁸ According to Revelation 17:15–17, the ten kings unwittingly do God's bidding when they swear fealty to the beast and savage Rome.²¹⁹ In addition, Revelation 17:17 seems to indicate that the reason these kings wage war against Christ (cf. Rev 17:13–14) is because they will be divinely influenced to do so.²²⁰ This reading is likely for at least two reasons. First of all, Revelation 17:17 alludes to verse 13 in order to provide another perspective on the events described in verses 12–14. Verse 17 does this (1) by repeating the phrase "one purpose" (*μίαν γνώμην*; cf. Rom 17:13), and (2) by mentioning the kings' submission to the beast. Thus, by recalling verse 13, verse 17 clarifies that God would be the one to bring about the very factors that lead the ten kings to march against Christ. Second, Revelation 17:17 specifies that the ten kings would be made to carry out God's purposes "until the words of God will be fulfilled." This suggests that God's influence over the kings would continue until he had accomplished all that he had revealed. And

²¹⁸ While it's possible that John includes the beast itself among those whom God subjected to his influence, it seems more likely that Rev 17:17 refers specifically God's sovereignty over the hearts of the kings. So also Schreiner, *Revelation*, 486n409; David L. Mathewson, *Revelation: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 235. The referent of *αὐτῶν* is likely the same in both *εἰς τὰς καρδίας αὐτῶν* ("into their hearts") and *δοῦναι τὴν βασιλείαν αὐτῶν τῷ θηρίῳ* ("to give their kingdom to the beast"). Since the pronoun clearly excludes the beast in the latter instance, "their heart" likewise probably does not include the heart of the beast.

²¹⁹ Charles accurately captures one implication of v. 17 when he says, "Even the wrath of men is made to praise Him. There is no real dualism in the universe. The very powers of evil ultimately subserve the purposes of God and are then destroyed." Charles, *Revelation of St. John*, 2:73. See also Ford, *Revelation*, 292.

²²⁰ Rightly Mounce, *Revelation*, 321; Beale, *Revelation*, 880; Blount, *Revelation*, 321; Charles, *Revelation of St. John*, 2:73.

since verses 12–14 reveal the final, eschatological war against the Lamb, readers are warranted to assume that “the words of God” include this event.²²¹

If the reading offered here is correct, then Revelation 17 describes God influencing certain figures (i.e., the ten kings) towards wicked behavior (i.e., violence against Babylon, submission to the beast, war against Christ) which then guarantees their final destruction (i.e., the Lamb’s victory over them; cf. Rev 16:14–16; 17:14; 19:11–21).²²² Such a form of influence falls within the bounds of DRA. Moreover, since verse 17 portrays God acting upon the hearts of the ten kings directly, the verse should be understood to describe an active, immediate form of DRA. Furthermore, given Revelation’s overall description of the final end of Christ’s enemies (cf. Rev 14:9–11, 19–20; 19:15, 21; 20:11–15),²²³ John probably intended for readers to intuit that the “ten kings” would experience eternal condemnation as a result of their (divinely inspired) fealty to the beast and opposition to the Lamb.

Summary of DRA in Johannine Literature

The Johannine corpus provides a rich testimony to the concept of DRA. While it is most frequently attested in John’s Gospel, the book of Revelation also bears witness

²²¹ Similarly Charles, *Revelation of St. John*, 2:73.

²²² As Blount states, “Just as God had once hardened Pharaoh’s heart so that God could initiate judgment against Egypt, so now God drives these kings to a decision that will trigger their destruction.” Blount, *Revelation*, 321. Baines provides three reasons for concluding that the kings of Rev 17 are “destined for ultimate judgment”: (1) the kings are associated with Babylon and can expect to receive the judgment meted out to her, (2) the kings are also associated with the beast and can expect the same punishment, and (3) the temporal limitations on their power suggest the motif of judgment. Baines, “Kings of the Earth,” 79. In addition, it seems likely that John describes the same end-time war against the Lamb elsewhere (cf. Rev 16:14–16; 19:11–21). Since these other texts have in mind the same event, it seems reasonable to allow them to inform one’s understanding of Rev 17:14.

²²³ On the basis of Rev 19:21, one could argue that the kings who wage war on Christ were simply put to death; however, Rev 20:13–15 indicates that all the dead who opposed Christ would be raised and cast into the lake of fire. Moreover, Rev 14:9–11 states in graphic terms that eternal punishment would be meted upon any who bow down (*προσκυνέω*) to the beast; such an act of subservience seems comparable to what the ten kings do when they give their authority to the beast (cf. Rev 17:13, 17).

to this divine activity. And, in keeping with my previous findings, these two NT books portray DRA to be a significant and multifaceted concept.

John's writings attest to the importance of DRA in at least three ways. First of all, in John's Gospel, DRA sets the stage for the glorification of the Father and the Son through the latter's exaltation on the cross. In accordance with God's will (cf. John 13:18; 17:4, 12), Jesus included Judas among the twelve despite knowing his devilish character (cf. John 6:70–71; 13:18); moreover, Jesus also refused to protect him from Satan's wiles (cf. John 13:2, 17). John explains that both these decisions were intended to bring about the fulfillment of Scripture (cf. John 13:18; 17:12) by ensuring that Judas might play his predestined role in salvation history (cf. John 17:12): as the son of perdition, Judas was predestined to betray the Son of God into the hands of sinners. And through this divinely orchestrated act of betrayal, Judas would pave the way for Christ to be glorified as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (cf. John 1:29; 13:31–32). Second, the book of Revelation posits that Christ's final victory over all his enemies depends upon DRA. In highly figurative language, John seems to claim that after the fall of Rome (cf. Rev 17:16), the kingdoms of men would continue to submit themselves to Satan and would volunteer for the devil's end-time war against Christ (cf. Rev 17:13–14). While the "ten kings" would be responsible for these wicked decisions (cf. Rev 17:14; 19:19–21), John also reveals that God "set it on their hearts to carry out his purpose" (*ἔδωκεν εἰς τὰς καρδίας αὐτῶν ποιῆσαι τὴν γνώμην αὐτοῦ*): unbeknownst to them, these kingdoms would align themselves with the beast as a result of divine influence. And through his reprobating influence, God ensures the victory of Christ (cf. Rev 17:17), thereby paving the way for the final judgment (cf. Rev 19:20–21; 20:11–15) and the recreation of the cosmos (cf. Rev 21–22). Finally, Johannine literature emphasizes the significance of DRA by presenting it as the explanation for the reality of unbelief. For John, Israel's refusal to trust in Christ could only be explained through recourse to God's reprobating activity (cf. John 12:37–41). Furthermore, the reason Satan is able to use the power of the

state to influence persons towards unbelief is because God grants him the ability to do so (cf. Rev 13:5, 7, 14–15). And more fundamentally still, the Johannine corpus suggests that all unbelief is rooted in God’s decision to refrain from blessing certain persons with the grace necessary for the exercise of true and enduring faith (cf. John 6:36–40, 44–46, 64–65; Rev 13:8; 17:8).

In addition to corroborating the theme’s importance, the Johannine writings also demonstrate that DRA cannot be understood as a monolithic concept. Though these texts consistently describe DRA as leading to eternal condemnation, they also provide multiple characterizations of God’s reprobating influence. These writings include both retributive (cf. John 9:39–41) and non-retributive (cf. John 12:37–41; 13:18; 17:12; Rev 13:5, 7, 8, 14–15; 17:8) forms of influence. They portray instances of God’s negative influence as active (cf. John 9:39–41; 15:22–25; Rev 13:5, 7, 14–15; 17:17), passive (cf. John 6:36–66; Rev 13:8; 17:8), or as mixtures of active and passive elements (cf. John 12:37–41). John speaks of both mediated (cf. John 9:39–41; 15:22–25; Rev 13:5, 7, 14–15) and immediate (cf. John 12:37–41; Rev 13:8; 17:8, 17) types of DRA.²²⁴ In providing a variegated portrait of reprobating influence, John stands in continuity with the rest of the Scriptures and he provides a fitting conclusion to the Bible’s testimony to DRA.

DRA in the NT: Summary of Findings

The examination of DRA in the NT has revealed substantial similarities with the OT’s witness, along with one key difference. With regard to the unity between the two testaments, this investigation has found that the NT also portrays DRA as a non-trivial, multifaceted concept. And with regard to distinct view of the latter testament, it focuses much more attention on eternal forms of DRA.

²²⁴ The case of Judas is particularly complex, as God’s influence is said to be mediated through both Jesus and through Satan.

First of all, much like the OT, DRA is portrayed as a significant concept throughout this section of the canon. The concept is attested within a number of NT works (Matt, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Peter, Revelation) and is present in every NT genre (narratives, epistles, apocalyptic literature). Several of these passages claim that the exercise of reprobating agency was in keeping with what had been promised or foreshadowed in the Scriptures (Matt 13:10–17; Mark 4:10–12; Luke 8:10; John 12:37–41; 13:18–19; 15:22–25; 17:12; Rom 9:14–18; 30–33; 11:7–10; 1 Pet 2:6–8). Furthermore, the NT authors suggest that DRA explains several key aspects of the unfolding of salvation history, including Israel’s unbelief before, during, and beyond the time of Christ’s earthly life (Matt 11:25–27; 13:10–17; 23:29–36; Mark 4:10–12; Luke 8:9–10; 10:21–22; 11:49–51; Acts 7:39–43; John 9:39–41; 12:37–41; 15:22–25; Rom 9:14–18, 30–33; 11:7–10, 25–26), humanity’s general hostility to God’s revelation in this present age (Rom 1:18–32), and certain events leading up to the conclusion of history (2 Thess 2:18–12; Rev 17:13–14, 17). Perhaps most surprisingly, John explicitly depicts DRA as being the means by which God kept his promise to save his people through Christ’s death and resurrection (John 12:37–41; 13:18–19), while Paul argues that God’s negative influence was his wise and praiseworthy way of ensuring that the elect within both Israel and the Gentiles would be brought to salvation (Rom 11:25–27; cf. 11:33–36). In addition to its role in salvation history, some NT passages also make a more general affirmation that DRA plays a role in personal eschatology (Rom 9:19–23; 1 Pet 2:8): that is to say, both Paul and Peter posit that God predestines for certain persons to willingly disobey God’s word so as to stumble eternally (cf. 1 Pet 2:8) and so as to fulfill their roles as vessels of wrath prepared for destruction (cf. Rom 9:19–23). In these different ways, the NT highlights the importance of DRA, following and furthering the pattern set in the OT.

Second, the NT also resembles the OT in its display of the rich complexity of DRA. Like the OT, the NT includes retributive and non-retributive, active and passive,

mediated and immediate, eternal and non-eternal characterizations of DRA.²²⁵ In addition, both the OT and the NT attest to examples of DRA that combine some of these polarities. Both the OT and the NT describe instances wherein DRA has both a mediated and an immediate element (cf. Isa 19:1–14; 29:9–14; Ezek 14:9–11; Matt 11:25–27; Luke 10:21–22). Moreover, in both testaments, God is sometimes said to employ multiple mediating agents to accomplish his reprobating purpose (cf. 1 Kgs 22:19–23; John 13:2, 18–19; 17:12). However, unlike the OT, the NT sometimes describes God’s reprobating influence as having both an active and a passive component (cf. Matt 13:10–17; Mark 4:10–12; Luke 8:9–10; John 12:37–41; 13:2, 18–19; 17:12; 2 Thess 2:8–12). In this way, the NT seems to add even further nuance to the already variegated portrait of DRA found in the OT.

While a great deal of unity exists between the OT and the NT with respect to their descriptions of DRA, there is at least one obvious difference: the OT almost always depicts cases wherein DRA leads to non-eternal condemnation, while eternal forms of DRA are predominant in the NT. Such a difference is not altogether unexpected since the OT speaks sparingly regarding the issues of individual eschatology and the eternal state.²²⁶ Moreover, this distinction between the OT and NT is in keeping with the covenantal structure of the Bible, as the blessings and curses of the Old Covenant do not explicitly refer to the eternal salvation or eternal condemnation of individual Israelites,

²²⁵ For a categorization of all the cases of DRA discussed in this study, see appendix 1.

²²⁶ So also Paul R. Williamson, *Death and the Afterlife: Biblical Perspectives on Ultimate Questions*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018), 161; Philip S. Johnston, *Shades of Sheol: Death and Afterlife in the Old Testament* (Leicester, England: Apollos, 2002), 16–18; Robin Routledge, *Old Testament Theology: A Thematic Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 302–309; Reinhard Feldmeier and Hermann Spieckermann, *God of the Living: A Biblical Theology*, trans. Mark E. Biddle (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011), 478–79; Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. J. A. Baker, vol. 2, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), 509–15; Charles H. H. Scobie, *The Ways of Our God: An Approach to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 674, 926; Brevard S. Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 245–46.

while the NT authors understood the New Covenant to promise everlasting life to all who believe in God's Son. Moreover, it also seems to be the case that the NT authors understood non-eternal examples of DRA in the OT to typologically point towards eternal forms of DRA (cf. Matt 13:10–17 and parallels; John 12:37–41; Rom 9:14–23; 11:7–8).

Finally, though a full discussion of the subject would go beyond the scope of this project, it may be apposite to make three comments regarding the NT's use of the OT within the context of the former's witness to DRA. First, as has already been mentioned, the NT authors often claim that God's reprobating agency fulfills the OT. Often, the authors seem to have understood DRA to function within a typological structure. For instance, it seems probable that various NT authors understood Isaiah 6 to typologically foreshadow the impact Christ's teaching would have on his hearers (cf. Matt 13:10–17; Mark 4:10–12; Luke 8:9–10; John 12:39–40). Such an interpretive move makes sense in light of Israel's (divinely intended) response to Isaiah's prophetic ministry (Isa 6:9–10), their rejection of God's prophets in general (cf. Matt 23:29–31; Acts 7:51–52), and the NT's presentation of Jesus as the prophet greater than Moses (Matt 13:57; 17:1–6; Acts 3:22–26; 7:37; cf. Deut 18:15–19). Similarly, the NT's portrayal of Jesus as the Son of David and the King of Israel (cf. Matt 1:1; 20:29–34; 21:4–5, 9; Luke 1:69; John 19:19–21) may explain John's typological uses of (MT) Pss 41:10 and 69:5 (cf. John 13:18; 15:25). However, while it should be accepted that the NT authors understood DRA in light of typological patterns, it may be the case that they also viewed God's reprobating actions as directly fulfilling certain prophecies from the OT (cf. John 12:38; Rom 9:32–33; 1 Pet 2:7–8). Second, the NT authors also drew general principles from DRA-texts in order to make broad theological assertions about God's ways. This seems especially evident in Paul's use of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart to explain his freedom in election and reprobation (cf. Rom 9:14–18). Third, the NT authors at times ground their descriptions of reprobating agency with texts that attest to DRA of a different kind. So for example, they regularly use cases of non-eternal DRA as the grounds for depictions of

examples of eternal DRA.²²⁷ In addition, they at times use examples of retributive DRA to refer to God’s non-retributive influence.²²⁸ While one *could* interpret this observation as evidence that the NT authors did not respect the intentions of their OT counterparts, such a conclusion would only follow if the former were in fact attempting to unpack the meaning of the various DRA-texts to which they refer—a conclusion which seems very unlikely given the contexts within which the relevant NT passages occur. Instead, it seems more plausible that the NT’s use of DRA-texts should be understood in two ways. On the one hand, they used OT texts within a typological framework that is normally characterized by some form of escalation.²²⁹ In cases of DRA, the escalation involves both a movement from non-eternal to eternal condemnation and a movement from retributive to non-retributive DRA. And on the other hand, the NT authors appear to have recognized an underlying conceptual core that unified the variegated, individual instances of this phenomenon. In other words, in appealing to DRA-texts, the writers of the NT were willing to overlook certain differences in details in order to make the point that God’s actions in their day were fundamentally consistent with actions he had taken in the past: that is, in both OT times as well as in their present day, God was influencing certain persons towards wicked behavior so that he might justly condemn them for it (cf. Rom 9:14–18; 11:7–10).

²²⁷ To provide just one example, see Paul’s use of the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart in Rom 9:14–18.

²²⁸ This is true of the uses of Isa 6 by each of the Gospel writers.

²²⁹ See Stephen J. Wellum, “Editorial: Thinking about Typology,” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 21, no. 1 (2017): 8; Douglas J. Moo and Andrew David Naselli, “The Problem of the New Testament’s Use of the Old Testament,” in *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 726; Richard M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical Τύπος Structures*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1981), 416–17; Leonhard Goppelt, *TYPOS: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, trans. Donald H. Madvig (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 199.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

In what has preceded, I conducted a biblical-theological examination of the concept of Divine Reprobating Activity (DRA), which can be defined as *any exercise of divine agency intended to efficaciously influence responsible creatures towards behavior that merits divine condemnation, so that they do in fact experience God's judgment*. By using three criteria derived from this definition, I attempted to identify and analyze every occurrence of this theme throughout the Protestant canon. My investigation has demonstrated that *the Christian canon does not present DRA as an insignificant or monolithic concept; instead, the biblical authors showcase both the significance and complexity of DRA in a variety of ways*.

After discussing my overall aims and methodology in the introductory chapter, I provided an overview of research related to the subject of DRA in chapter 2. Because very little work has been conducted on the subject itself, I surveyed biblical and theological studies on five topics that are intertwined with DRA: (1) divine hardening, (2) predestination, (3) election, (4) divine and human agency, and (5) Romans 9. After summarizing a variety of works on these subjects, I came to three conclusions. First, there was a need for a biblical-theological study of DRA. Second, many theologians and scholars deny non-retributive, eternal instances of DRA, despite the existence of (1) texts that seem to provide face-value attestation to this form of DRA, and (2) a continuous stream of theologians within church history who affirm the doctrine of reprobation. Third, little has been done to account for both the diversity and the unity of biblical perspectives on DRA.

In chapter 3, I began my biblical-theological study of DRA by examining the testimony of the Torah. First, I analyzed the hardening of Pharaoh's heart in Exodus. Despite the popularity of viewing divine hardening as an act of retribution, I argued that God's influence upon Pharaoh is presented as a *non-retributive*, active, immediate, non-eternal form of DRA. Second, I examined the handful of different examples of DRA that are attested within the book of Deuteronomy. These include the hardening of Sihon and Og (Deut 2:24–35; 3:1–3, 21), God's refusal to grant Israel the ability to obey the stipulations of the covenant (Deut 29:3), and God's promise to destroy the nations he would use as his instruments to punish Israel (Deut 28:49; 32:32–35). After surveying all the relevant material from the first five books of the Bible, I concluded that the Torah testifies to the significance of DRA in at least two ways: (1) by portraying the concept as having a crucial function within Israel's salvation history, and (2) by presenting reprobating influence as the means by which God has chosen to reveal his own character. In addition, the examples from Deuteronomy provide the first indications that the biblical concept of DRA is multifarious, since the book attests to both active and passive characterizations of DRA.

In chapter 4, I examined the various passages from the Former Prophets that meet the criteria for DRA. I found that this section of the OT provides rich attestation to DRA, as Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings each describe episodes that allude to the concept. Joshua refers to DRA in his description of God's influence upon the Canaanites (Josh 11:20). The book of Judges describes two examples of reprobating influence, including God's decisions (1) to leave the Canaanites in the land of promise (Judg 2:1–5), and (2) to send an evil spirit to turn Abimelech and the lords of Shechem against one another (Judg 9:23–24). Meanwhile, the book of Samuel offers multiple examples of the concept. It recounts how Eli's sons refused to repent because God desired to put them to death (1 Sam 2:22–25). It also reports that God used the persuasive speech of David's servant, Hushai, to lead Absalom to a sinful and self-destructive course of action (2 Sam

17:14). And the book concludes with the disturbing account of God commanding David to take up a sinful census so that Israel might be punished for their sins (2 Sam 24:1). Finally, the book of Kings also testifies to the concept of DRA in two instances: first, the book alludes to DRA when it posits that Baasha was punished by God for doing that which the Lord had raised him up to do (1 Kgs 16:1–7), and second, it explicitly describes God’s reprobating influence against Ahab (1 Kgs 22:19–23). After examining all these passages in some detail, I concluded that the Former Prophets portray DRA as a multifarious and significant concept. With respect to its complexity, this section of Scripture attests to multiple characterizations of DRA. As for its importance, the Former Prophets present DRA as playing a key role in Israel’s salvation history; in addition, the concept is also used in this section of Scripture in order to disclose or highlight certain aspects of God’s character.

The next chapter was dedicated to tracing DRA through the Latter Prophets. Much like preceding sections of the OT, the Latter Prophets also provide ample testimony to the concept of DRA. The book of Isaiah provides multiple cases of DRA which can be divided into three categories: DRA against Israel (Isa 6:9–10; 8:14–17; 29:9–14; 63:7–64:11), DRA against Assyria (Isa 10:5–19), and other cases of DRA (Isa 19:1–14; 44:18). Jeremiah makes a more modest contribution to the study, as the book only refers to DRA in relation to God’s use of Babylon as his instrument to punish Israel (Jer 25:8–14). Meanwhile, the book of Ezekiel refers to the concept of DRA as the explanation for Israel’s exile (Ezek 20:25–26) and as the basis for Israel’s hope for salvation (Ezek 14:9–11; 38:1–39:29). Finally, the book of the Twelve attests to a familiar form of DRA: God’s instrumental use of nations followed by his judgment of those same nations (Joel 2:1–11; Mic 4:9–13; Hab 1:5–11; Zech 1:1–6; 14:1–3). All told, the books of the Latter Prophets provide a robust portrait of DRA that is consistent with the testimony of the Torah and the Former Prophets. To be more specific, this section of Scripture also (1) attests to various configurations of DRA, (2) posits DRA as being a crucial means by which God works out

his purposes in history, and (3) makes use of DRA in order to demonstrate God's character.

Chapter 6 concluded the analysis of the OT's witness to DRA by attending to the concept within the Writings. I discussed the three examples of DRA that are found within the Psalter (MT Pss 81:12–13; 92:7–8; 105:25), including the OT's only example of eternal DRA (Ps 92:7–8). While Psalm 81:12–13 and Psalm 105:25 follow the OT precedent of presenting the outworking of Israel's history as being dependent upon DRA, the Psalter also applies the concept to a new arena: it employs God's reprobating influence as part of a general defense of God's justice in the face of the prosperity of the wicked (Ps 92:7–8). Likewise, the book of Proverbs goes beyond describing events in Israel's history in relation to God's reprobating influence; instead, it appeals to DRA in order to provide a theological explanation for (1) the existence of the wicked (Prov 16:4), and for (2) why some men succumb to the seductions of the immoral woman (Prov 22:14). Meanwhile, in a way that resembles cases of DRA in Deuteronomy and in the Latter Prophets, the book of Lamentations describes God's reprobating influence against non-Israelite nations which would be destroyed for their acts against Israel *after* the Lord first uses them to punish his people. Finally, the book of Chronicles repeats the account of God's reprobating influence upon King Ahab (2 Chr 18:18–22), while also attesting to DRA in the case of King Amaziah (2 Chr 25:15–20). As with prior sections of the OT, the Writings also testify to the complexity and the importance of DRA; in fact, they even introduce novel characterizations of DRA while also deploying the concept in new ways.

After examining the witness of the OT in chapters 3 through 6, I began exploring DRA in the NT. In chapter 7, I sought to determine how the Synoptic Gospels and the book of Acts contribute to a biblical-theological study of DRA. On the one hand, each of the Synoptic Gospels bears witness to DRA as the reason for Jesus' use of parables (Matt 13:10–17; Mark 4:10–12; Luke 8:9–10). In addition, Matthew and Luke portray DRA when they describe God as having concealed the identity and work of Christ

from “the wise and the intelligent” (Matt 11:25–27; Luke 10:21–22) and when they posit that the prophets and apostles were sent in order to provoke Israel’s leaders to acts of violence so that they might be held liable for murdering God’s servants (Matt 23:29–36; Luke 11:47–51). Finally, the book of Acts adds one more example of DRA to consider: in its record of his speech, Stephen is described as having claimed that God punished Israel’s wilderness generation by leading them to commit acts of idolatry so that they might incur the penalty of exile (Acts 7:42–43). Altogether, the various DRA-passages in the Synoptics and Acts provide further corroboration for the thesis that DRA is an important and complex concept. First, these passages demonstrate that DRA plays an important role in the theology of these NT books. Not only do they present DRA as depicting God’s glory and as having an explanatory role in Israel’s past, but the Synoptics even depict Israel’s rejection of Christ as having taken place because of DRA; in so doing, these gospel writers intimate that DRA was involved in determining both the climax of salvation history (i.e., Christ’s death) and the eternal fate of particular persons (i.e., unbelieving Israelites). And second, these NT books provide a variety of characterizations of DRA, as they include both retributive and non-retributive examples, immediate and mediated examples, active and passive examples, and eternal and non-eternal examples.

Having surveyed DRA in the Synoptics and Acts, I then shifted my attention to the witness of the Letters of the New Testament. I found that both Paul and Peter referred to various types of DRA (i.e., retributive and non-retributive, immediate and mediated, active and passive, eternal and non-eternal) to explain issues of fundamental theological importance. For instance, the apostle Paul argues that humanity’s propensity towards sin is to be explained as a form of retributive, non-eternal DRA (Rom 1:18–31). Thus, Paul’s general anthropology and hamartiology can only be understood in relation to DRA. More radical still are his claims regarding God’s role in ordaining unbelief. Not only does Paul claim that God had intentionally prevented the majority of Israelites from coming to faith

in Christ (cf. Rom 9:14–23, 30–33; 11:7–10, 25–27), but he even suggests that God has created certain persons who are predestined for eternal condemnation and that he has done so in order to demonstrate the glory of his power, justice, and wrath for those predestined for mercy (Rom 9:19–23). And rather than being a Pauline idiosyncrasy, the apostle Peter makes a similar contention when he states that certain persons were divinely appointed to disobey the word and stumble into eternal condemnation (1 Pet 2:7–8).¹ Lastly, the Pauline corpus contains an additional case of DRA in 2 Thessalonians, wherein Paul reveals that the events immediately preceding Christ’s return will unfold on the basis of God’s reprobating influence (2 Thess 2:8–12). Thus, these different examples provide warrant for the conclusion that the letters of the NT also portray DRA as a multifarious and significant concept.

Finally, I concluded my study of DRA by turning to the Johannine corpus. I argued that both the Gospel of John and the book of Revelation provide support for my contention that DRA is a variegated and important concept within the Christian canon. First, John’s Gospel attests to different forms of DRA (i.e., retributive and non-retributive, immediate and mediated, active and passive) in contending that God (1) prevented Israel from accepting the testimony of Jesus (John 12:37–41); (2) withholds from certain persons the grace necessary to come to saving faith (John 6:36–66); (3) appointed Judas as the son of perdition so that salvation history might reach its climax with the death and resurrection of Jesus (John 6:70–71; 13:18–20, 27; 17:12); and (4)

¹ While these claims are shocking and may even seem blasphemous to many, neither Peter nor Paul present negative predestination as calling into question the reality of human responsibility or the goodness of God’s character. With respect to the former, given the repeated exhortations and warnings that litter their writings, it seems implausible to conclude that Paul and Peter would have denied the significance or the reality of human choices. And with respect to the latter, Paul even contends that God’s sovereignty over human unbelief *demonstrates God’s righteousness* in the face of Israel’s refusal to turn to Christ and be saved. Moreover, Paul sees God’s exercise of DRA as the means by which he extends salvation to the Gentiles and displays his glory to vessels of mercy from among both Jews and Gentiles. Thus, for Paul, DRA functions to *display* God’s righteousness, mercy, and goodness, even though he clearly understood that this demonstration would be at the expense of the reprobate and for the benefit of the elect.

sent Jesus to be a form of judgment upon Israel and its leaders (John 9:39–41; 15:24–25).² Second, the book of Revelation also portrays the complexity of DRA (i.e., mediated and immediate, active and passive) when it depicts God (1) as having worked through the Satanic power of the Roman empire in order to lead persons away from loyalty to Christ (Rev 13:5–17); (2) as having excluded certain persons from the book of life, thereby predestining them to give their allegiance to the beast and to be eternally condemned as a result (Rev 13:8; 17:8); and (3) influencing human kingdoms to wage war against Christ when he returns (Rev 17:17). As these different DRA-passages show, the Johannine corpus provides further support for the contention that DRA functions as a multifarious and significant concept within the Christian canon.

While I hope to have made a contribution to the field of biblical theology through this investigation of DRA, I certainly do not expect this project to be the last word on the subject. On the contrary, there continues to be many possibilities for further research related to the concept. For instance, it would be fruitful for a biblical theologian to explore Paul's theology of the Law in relation to the concept of DRA. And by providing insight into Paul's understanding of the Sinai Covenant, such an investigation may in fact shed light on discussions related to Covenant Theology and Dispensationalism. In addition, NT scholars could use the concept of DRA in comparative studies of divine and human agency; in particular, they could explore the use of DRA in extra-biblical Jewish texts of the Second Temple period so as to facilitate a comparison with the portrait of DRA found in the NT. Furthermore, systematicians could use the findings of this study in their explorations of various theological *loci* and in their formulations of doctrines. While DRA has relevance for theology proper and for

² Of course, in no way do I intend to deny or diminish John's central claim that Jesus was sent by God as the Savior of the world (cf. John 4:42). Nevertheless, the Gospel of John demonstrates that Jesus' ministry was intended by God to have a disparate impact on differing groups of people.

theological anthropology, the doctrine of predestination may be the subject most directly impacted by a study of DRA. Proponents of double predestination will find support for their position given my findings regarding the existence of non-retributive, active, immediate, eternal DRA; at the same time, systematicians could add precision to the doctrine of double predestination by (1) by reflecting on the various types of DRA in order to determine whether or not the decree of reprobation should be understood as having different aspects (i.e., negative vs. positive reprobation),³ and by (2) providing a wholistic account of how the various forms of DRA might be interconnected as God brings his negative decree to pass. Thus, while I believe I have shown that DRA is a multifarious and significant concept within the Bible, many avenues of study remain open to those who wish to explore this strange and awesome activity of God.

³ For a recent discussion of the aspects of the decree or reprobation, see Peter Christopher Sammons, “The Decree of Reprobation and Man’s Culpability: The Role of God’s Use of Secondary Causality” (PhD diss., The Master’s Seminary, 2017), 129–33.

APPENDIX 1

Table A1. Index of DRA in the Bible

Reference†	Retributive/Non-Retributive	Mediated/Immediate	Passive/Active	Eternal/Non-eternal
Exod 3–14	Non-retributive	Immediate	Active	Non-eternal
Deut 2:24–35	Non-retributive	Immediate	Active	Non-eternal
Deut 3:1–3, 21	Non-retributive	Immediate	Active	Non-eternal
Deut 29:3*	Non-retributive	Immediate	Passive	Non-eternal
Deut 32:32–35*	Underdetermined	Immediate	Active	Non-eternal
Josh 11:20*	Non-retributive	Immediate	Active	Non-eternal
Judg 2:1–5	Retributive	Mediated	Passive	Non-eternal
Judg 9:23–24	Retributive	Mediated	Active	Non-eternal
1 Sam 2:22–25	Retributive	Underdetermined	Underdetermined	Non-eternal
2 Sam 17:14*	Retributive	Mediated	Active	Non-eternal
2 Sam 24:1	Retributive	Immediate	Active	Non-eternal
1 Kgs 16:1–7*	Underdetermined	Immediate	Active	Non-eternal
1 Kgs 22:19–23	Retributive	Mediated	Active	Non-eternal
Isa 6:9–10	Retributive	Mediated	Active	Non-eternal
Isa 8:14–17	Retributive	Mediated	Passive	Non-eternal
Isa 10:5–19*	Underdetermined	Immediate	Active	Non-eternal
Isa 19:1–14	Retributive	Immediate/Mediated	Active	Non-eternal
Isa 29:9–14	Retributive	Immediate/Mediated	Active	Non-eternal
Isa 44:18	Underdetermined	Immediate	Active	Non-eternal
Isa 63:7–64:11	Underdetermined	Immediate	Active	Non-eternal
Jer 25:8–14*	Underdetermined	Immediate	Active	Non-eternal
Ezek 14:9–10	Retributive	Immediate/Mediated	Active	Non-eternal

Table A1 continued

Reference†	Retributive/Non-Retributive	Mediated/Immediate	Passive/Active	Eternal/Non-eternal
Ezek 20:25–26	Retributive	Immediate	Active	Non-eternal
Ezek 38:1–39:29	Non-retributive	Immediate	Active	Non-eternal
Joel 2:1–11*	Underdetermined	Immediate	Active	Non-eternal
Mic 4:9–13*	Retributive	Immediate	Active	Non-eternal
Hab 1:5–11*	Retributive	Immediate	Active	Non-eternal
Zech 1:1–6*	Underdetermined	Immediate	Active	Non-eternal
Zech 14:1–3*	Underdetermined	Immediate	Active	Non-eternal
Ps 81:12–13	Retributive	Immediate	Active	Non-eternal
Ps 92:7–8	Non-retributive	Underdetermined	Underdetermined	Eternal
Ps 105:25	Non-retributive	Immediate	Active	Non-eternal
Prov 16:4	Non-retributive	Immediate	Active	Underdetermined
Prov 22:14	Retributive	Mediated	Underdetermined	Underdetermined
Lam 2:21–22*	Underdetermined	Immediate	Active	Non-eternal
2 Chr 18:18–22	Retributive	Mediated	Active	Non-eternal
2 Chr 25:15–20	Retributive	Underdetermined	Underdetermined	Non-eternal
Matt 11:25–27	Retributive	Immediate/Mediated	Underdetermined	Eternal
Matt 13:10–17	Non-retributive	Mediated	Active/Passive	Eternal
Matt 23:29–36	Retributive	Mediated	Underdetermined	Eternal
Mark 4:10–12	Non-retributive	Mediated	Active/Passive	Eternal
Luke 8:9–10	Non-retributive	Mediated	Active/Passive	Eternal
Luke 10:21–22	Retributive	Immediate/Mediated	Underdetermined	Eternal
Luke 11:47–51	Retributive	Mediated	Underdetermined	Eternal
John 6:36–66	Underdetermined	Immediate	Passive	Eternal
John 9:39–41	Retributive	Mediated	Active	Eternal
John 12:37–41	Non-retributive	Immediate	Active/Passive	Eternal
John 15:24–25	Non-retributive	Mediated	Active	Eternal
John 17:12*	Non-retributive	Mediated	Active/Passive	Eternal
Acts 7:42–43	Retributive	Immediate	Active	Non-eternal
Rom 1:18–32	Retributive	Immediate	Active	Non-eternal

Table A1 continued

Reference†	Retributive/Non-Retributive	Mediated/Immediate	Passive/Active	Eternal/Non-eternal
Rom 9:14–18	Non-retributive	Immediate	Active	Eternal
Rom 9:19–23	Non-retributive	Immediate	Active	Eternal
Rom 9:30–33	Non-retributive	Mediated	Active	Eternal
Rom 11:7–10	Non-retributive	Immediate	Active	Eternal
Rom 11:25–27	Non-retributive	Immediate	Active	Eternal
2 Thess 2:8–10	Retributive	Mediated	Active/Passive	Eternal
1 Pet 2:4–8	Non-retributive	Immediate	Active	Eternal
Rev 13:5*	Non-retributive	Mediated	Active	Eternal
Rev 13:8*	Non-retributive	Immediate	Passive	Eternal
Rev 17:12–18	Underdetermined	Immediate	Active	Eternal

Note: †All Old Testament references are taken from the Masoretic Text

*These verses do not attest to DRA on their own; instead, they have been listed as placeholders for an example of DRA that is disclosed by the biblical authors in a more complex manner. Thus, these verses must be read in relation to other passages from the same canonical book in order to appreciate their contribution to a biblical author's depiction of DRA.

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ABSTRACT

VESSELS OF WRATH: A BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL STUDY OF DIVINE REPROBATING ACTIVITY

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Divine Reprobating Activity (DRA) may be defined as any exercise of divine agency intended to efficaciously influence responsible creatures towards behavior that merits divine condemnation so that they do in fact experience God's judgment. In this study, I argue that *the Christian canon does not present DRA as an insignificant or monolithic concept; instead, the biblical authors showcase both the significance and complexity of DRA in a variety of ways.*

In chapter 1, I provide an overview of my research aims as well as a description of the approach I take in exploring the concept of DRA. Chapter 2 comprises a history of research in which I selectively summarize scholarship on subjects such as divine hardening, predestination, election, divine and human agency, and interpretations of Romans 9.

In chapters 3–6, I explore the theme of DRA within the OT. Beginning with the Torah and concluding with the Writings, I examine cases of DRA section by section throughout the OT. After analyzing over thirty examples, I conclude that the OT attests to DRA's significance by grounding Israel's salvation history in God's exercise of reprobating agency and by depicting the revelation of YHWH's character as a function of DRA. Moreover, I also demonstrate that the OT authors characterize DRA in a multiplicity of ways, including retributive and non-retributive forms, active and passive

forms, and immediate and mediated forms. In addition, though the vast majority of OT examples refer to non-eternal punishment, Psalm 92:8 may bear witness to eternal DRA.

I turn to instances of DRA in the NT in chapters 7–9. In keeping with the OT, these biblical books also treat DRA as crucial to understanding salvation history and the very character of God. Moreover, several NT examples highlight the concept's importance by suggesting that DRA determines the eschatological destinies of persons consigned to divine judgment. In addition, the NT continues to bear witness to the complexity of DRA, as it provides multiple characterizations of the concept.

Finally, in chapter 10, I summarize the results of my study and make suggestions for further research.

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