BOOK REVIEW ESSAY

WHAT MAKES A "CONSERVATIVE EVANGELICAL" COMMENTARY ON DANIEL? A CONSIDERATION OF TWO RECENT PUBLICATIONS

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JOE M. SPRINKLE, *Daniel*. Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary. Bellingham: Lexham, 2020. Pp. xix + 470. Hardback. US$49.99.

J. PAUL TANNER, *Daniel*. Evangelical Exegetical Commentary. Bellingham: Lexham, 2020. Pp. xxii + 803. Hardback. US$49.99.

Some scholars who identify as "evangelical" follow, or at least are sympathetic to, what I have called the "mainstream" approach to Daniel.[1] Other evangelical scholars are characterised by their rejection of major parts of the mainstream approach to Daniel. Given this divide, it seems misleading to describe this second approach as simply "evangelical." Hence I will here use the abbreviation "E2" to designate evangelicals of the second type, i.e., those who reject mainstream scholarly positions on Daniel.[2] Most academic commentaries that follow the E2 approach are in series that do not aim to give a lot of high level

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[1]   See Ian Young and Thomas J. Elms, "Avoiding the Apocalypse in the Book of Daniel," in *Misusing Scripture: What Are Evangelicals Doing with the Bible?* (ed. Mark Elliott, Kenneth Atkinson and Robert Rezetko; Routledge New Critical Thinking in Religion, Theology and Biblical Studies; London: Routledge, 2023) 200–25. Well known examples of such evangelical commentaries on Daniel sympathetic to the mainstream approach include John Goldingay, *Daniel* (rev edn; WBC 30; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019) and Ernest Lucas, *Daniel* (ApOTC 20; Leicester: Apollos, 2002). My co-author of the mentioned chapter, Thomas Elms, is another evangelical who is in line with those evangelicals like Goldingay and Lucas in following the mainstream approach to the Book of Daniel. I would like to thank both Thomas Elms and Robert Rezetko for their helpful comments improving a previous draft of this article, although they cannot be held responsible for its remaining shortcomings.

[2]   Both commentaries under review are in series with "evangelical" in the title, and the endorsements of both describe the works as "evangelical." Tanner consistently refers to his group as either "conservative evangelical" (e.g., page 1) or simply "evangelical" with no further qualification (e.g., page 2). Interestingly Sprinkle prefers to designate his position as "traditional conservative," rather than "evangelical" (e.g., pages 6–7), perhaps in acknowledgement of those evangelicals who follow the mainstream approach. Both designate their opponents as "critical scholars," holding "the critical view." This seems to be used rhetorically in the sense of "attacking" rather than in the normal scholarly sense of using reason to argue a case which, despite the limitations in what conclusions they can reach, is what E2 scholars are also engaged in.

technical information on issues such as language and text.[3] As the endorsement by Randall Price of Tanner's book notes: "Critical evangelical commentaries on this book are rare."[4] It is interesting to see, then, two works of a more technical nature (although, to different degrees) come out in the same year and indeed from the same publisher. The only other recent E2 technical commentary that I am aware of is that of Steinmann from 2008.[5] All three of these are extensive works, Sprinkle at 489 pages, Steinmann at 676 pages, and Tanner at a monumental 825 pages.[6]

Both Sprinkle and Tanner's commentaries fit in with the second, E2 type of evangelical commentary on Daniel. In this review of these works I hope to give a general impression of each work, but particularly to focus on what it is that characterises them as specifically E2 commentaries on Daniel while also making some suggestions how a work that takes an E2 approach can be of benefit to mainstream scholars on Daniel.[7]

Despite their similarities as E2 commentaries on Daniel, there is an evident difference of purpose between Sprinkle's and Tanner's commentaries. Tanner aims to produce a comprehensive technical commentary that can serve as the ultimate resource for evangelical readers (see further below). Sprinkle certainly has comments on many technical matters also, both on matters dear to E2 readers, but also, as we shall mention, many good comments on the meaning of the Hebrew and Aramaic. However, Sprinkle's verse by verse commentary is also concluded by an extensive section summarising the "Biblical and Theological Themes."

The balance of Sprinkle's book is: pages 1–44 (44 pages, 10.19% of the book) are the Introduction, 45–341 (296 pages, 68.52%) the verse-by-verse commentary, and 343–432 (89 pages, 20.60%) the section on Biblical and Theological Themes. From this it can be seen that the commentary proper forms

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3   For a recent example see Dale Ralph Davis, *The Message of Daniel: His Kingdom Cannot Fail* (BST; Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2013).

4   J. Paul Tanner, *Daniel* (Evangelical Exegetical Commentary; Bellingham: Lexham, 2020) i.

5   Andrew E. Steinmann, *Daniel* (Concordia Commentary; Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2008), see my detailed review on https://www.sblcentral.org, or via https://sydney.academia.edu/IanYoung. I find it striking that while Steinmann wrote one of the endorsements for Sprinkle's book and is cited a number of times therein, Steinmann's commentary is only mentioned in Tanner's "Commentary Bibliography" and is *never* cited that I can discover, even though some of his other publications are cited occasionally on specific points.

6   Large mainstream technical commentaries on Daniel tend to be in the range of 400–500 pages. Tanner's is the largest commentary on Daniel that I own, with Steinmann's in second place and the second edition of Goldingay, *Daniel*, in third place, having expanded from 404 to 624 pages in the revision.

7   For a general introduction to "evangelical" biblical scholarship, see Robert Rezetko, Mark Elliott and Ken Atkinson, "*Introducing Misusing Scripture*: *What Are Evangelicals Doing with the Bible?*" in *Misusing Scripture* (ed. Elliott, Atkinson and Rezetko) 3–75.

the bulk of Sprinkle's book, even though he has a substantial section reviewing the themes.

The balance of Tanner's book is: pages 1–122 is the Introduction and 123–722 is the verse-by-verse commentary. The Introduction breaks down into the headings (the book's table of contents is very limited in detail): General Introduction (1–2), Place in the Canon (2–3), Texts and Versions (3–21, with subheadings: The Hebrew-Aramaic Composition [discussing the two languages; 3–5], The Question of an Aramaic Original [5], Presence of Foreign Loanwords [6–8], Fragments from Qumran [8–11], Greek Translations [11–18], and a Bibliography [18–21]), Unity and Literary Structure (22–36), Date and Authorship (37–85; which primarily includes sections on Objections to the Traditional Date and Authorship of Daniel, and A Defense of the Traditional Date and Authorship of Daniel), The Historical Context for the Book of Daniel (85–106), The Religious Context of the Babylonian Exile (106–13), Purpose and Message of the Book (113–14), An Outline of the Book of Daniel (114–19), and a Commentary Bibliography (119–22). After a brief introduction to each chapter and a description of its structure, the commentary proper is structured with the following sections: textual notes, a translation with notes, commentary, Biblical theology comments, and application and devotional implications. Tanner is to be commended for the large amount of information he has assembled. Throughout the work, for example, the bibliographical coverage is very impressive. That said, I found Tanner's approach rather peculiar in a number of features. For example, he often discusses a topic in several places, presenting different information. Or, his style is very much based on the use of many quotations from scholars, so much so that some sections are almost totally made up of quotes.[8]

What are the distinctive features that mark the commentaries by Sprinkle and Tanner as E2 commentaries? How can scholars who, like me, work within the mainstream approach to the Book of Daniel, engage with and profit from reading such commentaries? I would argue that there are two main driving forces that shape an E2 commentary on Daniel. On the one hand there is a set of theological presuppositions such as the belief that the Bible is inerrant and that inerrancy involves exact accuracy in both historical details and in literal fulfillment of apocalyptic imagery. On the other hand, details of Daniel that seem to fit poorly with these theological positions are typically explained as being in line with them using arguments from possibility, i.e., that it is possible (even if unlikely) that a certain explanation of the difficulty could be right, and therefore the inerrancy of the Bible (as understood by E2 scholars) has not been conclusively undermined.

Therefore, the first E2 characteristic of these commentaries is that both works are explicitly inerrantist: the Bible does not contain untrue information. As mentioned, this is a foundational theological presupposition. The introduction to the

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[8] For an example, see below, note 29.

Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary series in which Sprinkle's book is found states that "Authors … all affirm the inerrancy and inspiration of Scripture."[9] The introduction to the Evangelical Exegetical Commentary series in which Tanner's commentary is found also situates the work firmly in an inerrantist framework: "Each of the authors affirms historic, orthodox Christianity and the inspiration and inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures … keeping in mind that these books, produced by human authors, come from the very mouth of God (2 Tim 3:16)."[10] Immediately, on page 1, Tanner makes clear that this means that his "traditional conservative evangelical" approach is prominently involved in "defending" the Book of Daniel, since it has been and is "under heavy attack by critical scholars who dispute its trustworthiness and contradict the very teachings in it that the church has traditionally believed."[11] Mainstream scholars can appreciate this clear indication of orientation, and can be reminded to be honest about their own presuppositions.

Second, another foundational theological presupposition held by E2 authors is that inerrancy is tied to complete historical accuracy. Major problems with understanding the events of Daniel as historical include the dating of an exile led by the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar "in the third year of the reign of King Jehoiakim of Judah" (Dan 1:1–2); the presentation of Belshazzar in Dan 5 as king, and son of Nebuchadnezzar, with no mention of his actual father Nabonidus; and the figure of Darius the Mede who, in Dan 6, reigns between Belshazzar the Babylonian, and Cyrus the Persian. Sprinkle indicates his position on such historical issues already on page 1 where he mentions that the "exile of Daniel and his friends occurred some years before the exile of other Jews to Babylon" and that the stories and prophecies "cover a period of time from Daniel's exile through the fall of Babylon to Darius the Mede."[12] The disputing that Daniel contains "alleged historical errors" covers pages 27–40, 14 of the 44 pages of Sprinkle's Introduction. Tanner too, and more explicitly than Sprinkle, quickly situates the historical accuracy of the events mentioned in Daniel at the centre of the approach of the commentary. He does this by implying that the belief that there are historical inaccuracies in the book is the main reason why mainstream scholars date its final primary stage of composition to the second century BCE.[13] In fact, the clear focus of the second half of the book on the persecution by Antiochus IV Epiphanes in the 160's BCE is a much more obvious reason for the mainstream dating of Daniel. In my opinion, a date considerably later than the time of the setting of Daniel is a reasonable explanation for any historical inaccuracies, although not the only one. A lack of historical

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9   Joe M. Sprinkle, *Daniel* (Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary; Bellingham: Lexham, 2020) xv.
10 Tanner, *Daniel* xiii.
11 Tanner, *Daniel* 1.
12 Sprinkle, *Daniel* 1.
13 Tanner, *Daniel* 2, citing a mainstream scholar M. Nel.

accuracy, sometimes very obviously intentional, can be argued to be character-
istic of Jewish novellas of the Second Temple period.[14] Tanner's section "Al-
leged Historical Inaccuracies" stretches from page 39 to page 65 (27 pages) of
his 122 page Introduction, and aims to demonstrate that "the accusation of his-
torical inaccuracies does not hold up to a careful examination of the evidence,
and the second-century BC Antiochene theory of the book (and the resulting
interpretation imposed on the text) fails in the light of careful exegesis."[15]

The approach taken by E2 scholars to the historical difficulties of the book is
founded on the conviction that since the Bible is inerrant, and since inerrancy
prominently includes historical accuracy, therefore no matter how large the his-
torical difficulty, there simply must be a solution. Thus, for example, it is known
from contemporary and later documents that Cyrus the Persian captured Baby-
lon from the Babylonians. So who is Darius the Mede who is said to be king
between the Babylonian and Persian periods in Daniel Chapter 6? As Sprinkle
puts it, for an E2 scholar, the question is: "how can this be explained without
assuming Daniel is in error?"[16] E2 scholars have exercised themselves to answer
this question. Sprinkle reviews the suggestions made that Darius is a throne
name for an officer of Cyrus named Gubaru, before favouring the idea that Da-
rius the Mede is simply another name for Cyrus the Persian: "Cyrus may have
taken a Median throne name of Darius … Although later sources continued to
use Cyrus' original name, Daniel for some reason prefers to call Cyrus by his
Median regnal name, though on occasion he gives him his other name 'King
Cyrus of Persia' (10:1)."[17] Dan 6:28 therefore should be translated as not that
Daniel prospered in "the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian," but
as "Darius, that is, Cyrus."[18] Sprinkle honestly admits that this proposal "is spec-
ulative and cannot be proven," but it "is the most promising one for those who
wish to affirm Daniel's historicity."[19]

In line with the greater scope of his work, Tanner spends more time on the
discussion and reviews more theories. He squashes the theory that Darius is an-
other name for Cyrus, noting such weighty objections as that Darius in Daniel
is said to be "the son of Ahasuerus" (Dan 9:1), otherwise unknown as a desig-
nation for Cyrus' father.[20] Like Sprinkle, Tanner rejects the various Gubaru

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[14] For the classification of works such as Daniel's narratives, Tobit, Esther, Judith, and
      Joseph and Asenath as "novels," see Lawrence M. Wills, *The Jewish Novel in the
      Ancient World* (Eugene, OR.: Wipf & Stock, 1995), and see, for example, page 3 for
      the suggestion that in these works the "historical interest is … playfully undermined
      by a cavalier approach to dates and personages." See, for example, the opening verse
      of Judith which sets the action in "the twelfth year of Nebuchadnezzar, who ruled over
      the Assyrians in the great city of Nineveh."
[15] Tanner, *Daniel* 1–2.
[16] Sprinkle, *Daniel* 28.
[17] Sprinkle, *Daniel* 27–33, at 31.
[18] Sprinkle, *Daniel* 31.
[19] Sprinkle, *Daniel* 33.
[20] Tanner, *Daniel* 50–51.

theories before opting for the theory that "Darius the Mede was a throne name for Cyaxares II, a Median king who continued to rule over Babylon until he died roughly a couple of years after Babylon's fall in 539 BC."[21] Apart from obvious questions, such as why he is called Darius and not Cyaxares, Tanner honestly admits that there are other problems, such as that traditions about Cyaxares do not make any connection between him and Babylon, let alone as ruling king of Babylon.[22] It can be seen that for E2 evangelicals, what matters in such cases of historical difficulty is demonstrating that it is not absolutely impossible that the Book of Daniel is inerrantly historical. The one possibility that cannot be entertained is that details in it are not historical. These E2 arguments can serve mainstream scholars as a stimulus to continue to investigate the historical background of events in the text and not to be complacent about consensus positions. Mainstream scholars should also not be content merely with deciding that a figure such as Darius the Mede is unhistorical, but must continue to ask good questions about what the inclusion of non-historical details might tell us about the nature and purpose of the book.

A third E2 characteristic of these commentaries, and tied to the equation of inerrancy with total historical accuracy, is that such statements as the introduction to Daniel Chapter 8 that "in the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared to me, I, Daniel" (Dan 8:1) are held to necessitate that the Book of Daniel was written by Daniel, an individual who lived in the sixth century BCE. Sprinkle notes: "The second half of the book appears to be autobiography."[23] Tanner states: "Yet the book clearly portrays the sixth-century BC Daniel as its author. The phrase 'I, Daniel' occurs in several places."[24] Mainstream scholars have often been guilty of poor understanding of the function of pseudonymity in Daniel and other contemporary apocalypses, such as those from the collection labelled the First Book of Enoch. It has been implied that the purpose was to give authority to the work in question by pretending that it is of greater antiquity than it really is, stealing the authority of an authoritative author from an earlier age. E2 authors rightly consider such a strategy to be deceptive.[25] In fact both earlier mainstream scholars and their evangelical critics are viewing authorship attributions anachronistically. More recent mainstream scholarship has come to a clearer understanding of authorship attribution in ancient Judaism

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21   Tanner, *Daniel* 45–60, at 58.
22   Tanner, *Daniel* 59 n.159.
23   Sprinkle, *Daniel* 13.
24   Tanner, *Daniel* 38. Note that Sprinkle has a more moderate view that "it seems simpler to say that the third-person narration comes from a biographer and that only the autobiographical part (Daniel 7–12) … comes directly from the hand of Daniel," Sprinkle, *Daniel* 6.
25   See Sprinkle, *Daniel* 13–14 for a strong statement of such a view. I find no such discussion of pseudonymous authorship in Tanner, although I would expect him to agree with Sprinkle's views on this, see Tanner, *Daniel* 75: If Daniel was "a second-century BC work by an author attempting to disguise the book as written in the sixth century BC," it would not have been allowed in the canon.

as primarily a genre marker indicating participation in a particular discourse, rather than a claim to authorship in a modern sense.[26] Mainstream scholars can be encouraged by the anachronistic assumptions of E2 scholars to be clearer and to continue to invest more energy in the study of the functions of ancient authorship attributions.

Fourth, arising out of their belief that the book is making a historical claim for authorship by a historical Daniel in the sixth century BCE, E2 scholars will "defend" this dating of the book against the mainstream scholarly approach, which sees the decisive formative moment for the known versions of Daniel in the second century BCE with the addition of the four visions of Dan 7–12 to a story collection. Note the balance of Sprinkle's introduction with only four and a half pages given to the mainstream ("critical") view, while the "Case for the Early Date and Historicity of Daniel" covers 28 pages (8–13 and 13–40 respectively). For his part Tanner does not have a separate section for the mainstream view, but rather deals with a list of objections to the E2 view while going into detail to refute them (pages 37–71), before turning to add some further arguments in favour of the E2 view (pages 71–80). I have to confess that in the views that are being "refuted" I recognize only dim echoes of arguments that I myself might use, as a "mainstream" scholar, when explaining why I date the decisive moment of the production of the known versions of Daniel in the mid second century BCE.[27] However, reading E2 scholarship can encourage mainstream scholars to constantly review their settled opinions, and to strive to be clearer in explaining how they understand the way that the Book of Daniel was constructed in order to communicate its message in its ancient context.

Fifth, as part of their "defence" of a sixth century date of the book, recent evangelical commentators will typically invoke linguistic arguments, not only in a defensive way against the second century dating of (parts of) the book, but also as a positive argument for an early date. Thus, despite the high volume of Persian loanwords strengthening a case for a primary stage of composition well into the Achaemenid period, Sprinkle responds that since Daniel's career ended at the very beginning of the Persian period the narrator "could have used Persian terminology for government and administrative terms," as well as imported goods and other loanwords.[28] It seems clear that E2 scholarship is not aimed at finding the most likely explanation of the evidence in such cases, but rather the one that fits best with their previously adopted views. Another feature of E2 discussion on language evident in Tanner's discussion of Persian loanwords is that the argument is focused on attempting to prove that the sections of Daniel

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[26] See Young and Elms, "Avoiding the Apocalypse" 214–16.

[27] For a presentation of some such arguments, see Young and Elms, "Avoiding the Apocalypse" 201–13.

[28] Sprinkle, *Daniel* 21. Rather dismissive of the issue, Tanner says that the appearance of a significant number of Persian loanwords "is not surprising if Daniel was written around 536 BC when the Persian Empire had replaced the Babylonian Empire," Tanner, *Daniel* 65.

with a large number of Persian loanwords (Dan 1–6) must be pre-160's BCE.[29] However, I think that many, or most, mainstream scholars would agree that the fact that there is such a concentration of Persian loans in the stories, and that some of them seem to have been misunderstood already by the second century BCE Old Greek translation, are arguments for a stage of primary composition of the Daniel narratives in the Persian era, or at least early Hellenistic era, even if updated (as usual with biblical literature in transmission), itself a common mainstream view.

Both Sprinkle and Tanner have a more straightforward job in arguing that the Greek words for musical instruments in Dan 3 could have been loaned before the Hellenistic period.[30] I think this would be the mainstream view, although neither gives any context other than the implication that these Greek words are another failed attempt by mainstream scholars to date the work to the second century BCE.[31]

Sprinkle and Tanner also move to the attack, using arguments from the Aramaic and Hebrew of Daniel for a pre-second century BCE dating of Daniel, with, for example, Sprinkle concluding that "a strong case can be made on linguistic grounds for an early dating."[32] I found this to be a low point of their arguments. A large part of both scholars' sections on Aramaic is spent repeating Archer's argument from 1970 that since the Qumran Genesis Apocryphon is from the second century BCE, and Daniel's Aramaic has archaic features shared with the fifth century Elephantine papyri, then "the Aramaic of Daniel supports an early date for the book."[33] It is not made clear that the date of the Genesis Apocryphon

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[29] Tanner, *Daniel* 6–7, 65–66: as mentioned, it is not uncommon for Tanner to have information in multiple places in his commentary. Characteristically also, Tanner's main section on pages 6–7 is made up almost exclusively of quotes from other scholars, here the very out-of-date Harrison, and the very up-to-date Noonan, an expert on loanwords, albeit only citing an SBL conference paper of his, not say, his 2012 dissertation, even if too late to see its 2019 publication.

[30] Sprinkle, *Daniel* 22–23; Tanner, *Daniel* 8, 66–69.

[31] See the summary of scholarship in Ian Young, "The Greek Loanwords in the Book of Daniel," in *Greek Through the Ages: Essays in Honour of John A. L. Lee* (ed. James K. Aitken and Trevor V. Evans; Biblical Tools and Studies 22; Leuven: Peeters, 2015), 247–68. It is to be noted that Sprinkle's only reference in this section is the (good) 1970 article by E2 scholar Yamauchi. In line with its larger bibliography, Tanner cites Noonan's article and my one just cited, along with a good selection of earlier references, albeit strangely citing the work of Coxon as if he argued that the Greek loanwords dated Daniel late.

[32] Sprinkle, *Daniel* 23–26, with summary quote on 40.

[33] Sprinkle, *Daniel* 25; Tanner, *Daniel* 76–77, compare 4–5. In fact, my sentence is a simplification. Sprinkle dates the Genesis Apocryphon to the second century (page 23), while Tanner mentions both the third century (page 76) and the second (pages 76–77). This better reflects Archer's original argument, where at various points of his article he dated the Genesis Apocryphon to the third, second and first century BCE! See Gleason L. Archer, Jr., "The Aramaic of the 'Genesis Apocryphon' Compared with the Aramaic of Daniel," in *New Perspectives on the Old Testament* (ed. J. Barton

is itself a matter of dispute so that, at the very least, it cannot provide a fixed point for comparison with Daniel.[34] Nor is it acknowledged that mainstream scholars routinely date the composition of the Aramaic sections of Daniel earlier than the second century BCE.[35] Nor is there any hint that linguistic typology and chronology are not always in lockstep.[36] Various details presented would seem to indicate a lack of first-hand knowledge of the evidence, such as the repeated mention of the Aramaic active causative as the "hophel tense."[37] Obvious counter evidence to the early dating argument is ignored. Note, for example, the mixed "transitional" spelling in the fifth century BCE at Elephantine of consonants, such as Proto-Semitic /d̲/ as both earlier ז (most common) and (less common) later ד,[38] as opposed to the uniform appearance of later ד in their supposed sixth century BCE Daniel. That Daniel's Aramaic looks later in such features needs to be acknowledged and explained (e.g., as textual updating, itself a delicate topic for evangelicals, see below), not ignored, as does a blanket statement such as Tanner's "Since the Aramaic of the book of Daniel is quite in keeping with Official Aramaic, there is nothing about the text itself that would suggest the book had not been composed in the sixth century BC."[39]

Sprinkle's short paragraph and Tanner's two paragraphs on the Hebrew of Daniel are again based on out-of-date work by Archer from 1974, and make the strange argument that the differences between Daniel's Hebrew and that of the Qumran sectarian documents (Tanner follows another publication of Archer in adding Ecclesiasticus/Ben Sira) show that Daniel is much earlier.[40] In fact, the Hebrew of both Ben Sira and Qumran is evidently typologically earlier than Daniel's "Late Biblical Hebrew."[41] I, of course, would not be quick to draw any

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Payne; Waco: Word, 1970) 160–69 (161, 166, 169). Tanner also mentions a similar argument by Vasholz, also from the 1970s, about 11QtgJob, but characteristic of his citation also of up-to-date scholarship he quotes Machiela's 2009 book on the Genesis Apocryphon in regard to its date: Daniel Machiela, *The Dead Sea Genesis Apocryphon: A New Text and Translation with Introduction and Special Treatment of Columns 13–17* (STDJ 79; Leiden: Brill 2009).

[34] As mentioned, Tanner cites Machiela's work, but only to back up a possible second century BCE date for the Genesis Apocryphon, not as evidence of the scholarly debate.

[35] See, for example, John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) 36.

[36] For a classic study cautioning against linguistic dating of Aramaic texts see Michael O. Wise, "Accidents and Accidence: A Scribal View of Linguistic Dating of the Aramaic Scrolls from Qumran," *ABRSup* 3 (1992) 124–67. For similar considerations applied to Hebrew see below with notes 41–42.

[37] Sprinkle, *Daniel* 24.

[38] Takamitsu Muraoka and Bezalel Porten, *A Grammar of Egyptian Aramaic* (2nd ed.; HdO 1:32; Leiden: Brill, 2003) 3–6.

[39] Tanner, *Daniel* 5.

[40] Sprinkle, *Daniel* 26; Tanner, *Daniel* 75.

[41] See, for example, Ian Young, "Late Biblical Hebrew and the Qumran Pesher Habakkuk," *JHS* 8 (2008) 1–38 [http://www.jhsonline.org]; Ian Young, Robert Rezetko and

chronological conclusions from this, and the danger of arguing chronology from the language of late copies of literary compositions is a problem for scholars of all descriptions.[42]

A sixth characteristic of evangelical exegesis of Daniel is a rather literalistic reading of apocalyptic imagery. This leads, for example, to the need to postulate time jumps in the text, especially in Chapters 7 and 11, in order to avoid the close connection that the text makes between ancient historical events and the events of the end time. Both Sprinkle and Tanner are forced to argue that the evident sequence of events in Chapters 11–12, where the description of the reign of Antiochus IV is followed by end time events like the resurrection of the dead, actually conceals a time jump between the literal events of Antiochus' time and the literal events of the end which of course are still future even to us. Sprinkle admits that "there is no obvious break," but because everything in the vision must have a literalistic fulfillment, it would be failed prophecy for Daniel to describe the death of Antiochus in a final battle in the holy land, and for this to be followed by the end time: "Against this view is the theological objection that the critical view makes Daniel's prophecy of 'truth' (11:2) into a lie."[43] Therefore, no matter how unnatural, a solution must be found. For Sprinkle, the mention of "the time of the end" in verse 35 indicates a shift to talk of the end times.[44] Tanner agrees and finds a literary clue in that this "new" king is "introduced" just as "the king," which of course would otherwise be taken naturally as referring to the aforementioned king of the narration, i.e., Antiochus.[45]

Related to the literalistic mis-reading of apocalyptic imagery, and a contributing factor, is that evangelical authors typically do not read Daniel in the context of other apocalypses. It is true that Revelation is often read back into Daniel, but this is more in the service of producing a single, rather flat and consistent reading in line with whatever eschatological views the author holds. But Daniel is not read in the context of other apocalypses of more similar type and time, such as the Enochic literature. Mainstream scholars should be encouraged from this to improve how they understand apocalyptic imagery to convey meaning, and to continue the trend to break out of a (western) canonical straitjacket when reading biblical literature.

Martin Ehrensvärd, *Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts* (2 vols.; Bible World; London: Equinox, 2008) 1.250–79.

[42] See, for example, Robert Rezetko and Ian Young, *Historical Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew: Steps Toward an Integrated Approach* (SBLANEM 9; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014); Ian Young, "Ancient Hebrew Without Authors," *JSem* 25 (2016) 972–1003, introducing what I call the Text Critical paradigm for approaching Hebrew linguistics.

[43] Sprinkle, *Daniel* 321. Compare Tanner *Daniel* 690: "the lack of a clear transition from Antiochus IV in vv. 21–35 to the antichrist in v. 36."

[44] Sprinkle, *Daniel* 322.

[45] Tanner, *Daniel* 690.

Seventh, E2-type evangelicals are committed to the Hebrew Masoretic Text (MT) as being effectively the original text that left the pen of the original authors of Scripture.[46] Therefore there is a tendency for E2 scholars on Daniel to divert the attention of their evangelical readers away from the very significant diversity evidenced by the ancient textual evidence for the book. In line with Tanner's aim to present a full technical commentary on Daniel, it is his book that deals in most depth with text critical issues. It must be acknowledged that Tanner has brought together a great deal of useful material in his commentary, and regularly gives much fuller information than less technical commentaries. In regard to the texts of Daniel, see, for example, a list of the Qumran manuscripts of Daniel and what verses they preserve (page 9), the details about Old Greek Manuscript 88 or the Codex Chisianus (page 13 n. 39), notes on the three places where leaves of OG Papyrus 967 are found (page 14 with n. 45), or the full bibliographical details for the editio princeps of 967 (page 15 n. 49).

Tanner's "textual notes" section on each chapter is very full with detail. Thus, on Dan 8, Tanner acknowledges that the chapter has "numerous text-critical problems, and much variation between MT and the versions."[47] He has 26 textual notes on the 27 verses of this chapter, and often notes on textual matters, somewhat confusingly, are found instead in the detailed notes on the translation.[48] Amid all the notification and discussion of textual variants in these sections, though, one fact might be missed: Tanner does not depart from the MT once in Dan 8.[49] Quite often this is done by mentioning textual variants but not commenting on them. At other times, the comment is about how the MT is possible, rather than seriously considering the alternative that the other versions might have earlier readings, see, for example, on Dan 8:8, where the lack of, or alternative text of, the difficult חָזוּת "visibility" (?) in the MT phrase "and there came up (into?) prominence four (horns) instead of it" in all the ancient versions except the Peshitta is countered by an argument from possibility: "However, even though the horn of v. 5 was described as חָזוּת does not demand that the four horns (Alexander's successors in the symbolism) cannot also be described

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[46] Robert Rezetko, "Building a House on Sand: What Do Evangelicals Do When They Do Textual Criticism of the Old Testament?" in Elliott, Atkinson and Rezetko, *Misusing Scripture* 95–127.

[47] Tanner, *Daniel* 478.

[48] See, for example, Tanner, *Daniel* 480 n .4 on Dan 8:2.

[49] Let me be clear that Tanner does not necessarily believe that the MT is perfect. He does seem to toy with the idea that a preposition has fallen off one word in Dan 8:22 (page 502), even though his translation puts this in italics, indicating that he is translating the MT, not an emended text (page 504). Elsewhere, there are rare examples where Tanner is willing to entertain the idea that a small textual error may have crept into the MT, see, for example, on Dan 5:11, although he leaves the suggested erroneous words in his translation (page 338). Sprinkle is also willing to accept that the MT may not be the best text all the time, even if his discussions tend to end up sticking with the MT. See, for example, on Dan 8:14: "'He said to me' may originally have read, 'He said to him' (Theodotion, Old Greek, Syriac)" (page 214).

as חָזוּת. Like the horn of Alexander, they are also conspicuous or noticeable; they were *prominent*."[50]

Going back to the sections about the text of Daniel in the Introduction, it can be seen that Tanner is setting out the evidence in a way that makes it seem reasonable that he will be dealing only with the MT. The best example of this misleading presentation of the text-critical evidence is his treatment of the Old Greek (OG) translation.[51] Tanner seems to give good attention to the OG, his section in the Introduction on the Greek versions covering pages 11–18, as well as many textual notes throughout the commentary. However, the analysis on pages 11–12 just discusses the fact that we have two Greek translations, and ends with a long quote of Jerome's condemnation of the OG, with Tanner's added comment: "What we can be more certain of is that the early church gave preference to the Theodotion tradition, thinking it to be much closer to the original Hebrew-Aramaic text."[52] The OG is already condemned on the basis of the assumed original status of the MT!

In fact, the OG is well known to be highly variant throughout Daniel, although there has been a scholarly tendency to focus on the extraordinarily variant Chapters 4–6. Tanner does mention that the OG is very variant, especially in those chapters, but he does not let his readers see how variant (I presume because it would surely be scary for evangelicals committed to the divine inspiration of the original text to see how variant our Hebrew Bible textual evidence actually is). Tanner leads off the section of the Introduction on the OG with a quote from a leading scholar, Michael Segal.[53] However, it is noteworthy that this quote is used, which talks about how the OG is a relatively free translation in matters such as reflecting word order, but that we are not allowed to hear Segal's voice when he describes how he thinks that both OG and MT are rewritings of an original core version of the story in Dan 5.[54] Only briefly does Tanner mention that perhaps the translator of OG Dan 4–6 had a different Aramaic text

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50 Tanner, *Daniel* 479.
51 Compare, on the Qumran manuscripts "Significantly, none of the apocryphal additions to Daniel appear in the Qumran fragments" (page 9), "the eight surviving fragments reveal no major disagreements against the MT, though they do have some minor textual variants" (page 9), "they attest to the reliability of the transmission of the Hebrew text" (page 11), and "they suggest that the apocryphal additions to the book of Daniel were not original" (page 11). In fact, the Qumran fragments show that the MT is pre-medieval, but that is far from proving that the MT is original.
52 Tanner, *Daniel* 12. It is to be noted that this appeal to church tradition is ignored when talking about the extra sections of the traditional Christian version of Daniel, with its long Chapter 3 and stories of Susanna, and Bel and the Dragon. More important is evangelical fidelity to the MT, a version that the evidence would indicate was hardly known to the early church.
53 Tanner, *Daniel* 13.
54 Michael Segal, "Daniel 5 in Aramaic and Greek and the Textual History of Daniel 4–6," in *Congress Volume Stellenbosch 2016* (ed. Louis C. Jonker, Gideon R. Kotzé and Christl M. Maier; Leiden: Brill, 2017) 251–84.

in front of them.[55] During his commentary on Dan 5, he gives no clue at all what the major variations are. For example, mainstream scholars commonly consider that MT Dan 5:18–22, minus in the OG, is an addition to the MT which summarizes the story of Dan 4 to help draw these two chapters even closer together in order to heighten the contrast that is being drawn between Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 4) and Belshazzar (Dan 5).[56] This is part of a tendency of the MT, as a later edition, to make closer connections between each of the chapters to make the book a more finished product.[57] None of this discussion is allowed to come before his evangelical audience. Tanner ends his dismissal of the OG with another misleading quote from a leading mainstream scholar, this time from McLay: "Based on McLay's sampling of five passages, he concluded that both the OG and Th[eodotian] were attempting to give a faithful rendition of "a text virtually identical to MT."[58] However, McLay's remarks are in the context of a study of a few select passages, which generally exclude highly variant OG material, and must be seen in the broader context of McLay's work. Without dealing with any of the major issues and topics in modern scholarship on the OG, Tanner somehow is able to conclude his section on the Greek versions of Daniel with "Th[eodotion] should certainly be regarded as the more reliable witness for chaps. 4–6 in particular" (presumably because the OG is not the MT and the MT is the original text of the Bible, near enough).[59]

A positive side to this devotion to the MT is that more technical E2 commentaries offer a high number of helpful comments on the Hebrew and Aramaic text and its translation. See for example the helpful comments by Sprinkle in Dan 8:4 on the meaning of the D-stem (*Piel*) of נגה as "multiplied/ repeated action," or the discussion of the various options for how the H-stem (*Hiphil*) of גדל is different to the G-stem (*Qal*), with a translation such as "magnified itself" preferred over just "became great."[60]

Eighth, and finally, reading both of these works, it seems clear to me that the overall purpose of evangelical scholarship on Daniel is to provide for primarily evangelical readers a protective counter narrative to mainstream scholarship on Daniel which is felt to "attack" the inerrant historicity of the book. As we have seen, one of the major tasks, if not the primary task, which an E2 scholar must perform when writing on Daniel is to "defend" traditional evangelical views against the "attack" by mainstream scholars. They are providing scholarly-inclined E2 readers with resources to save them from having to engage with

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[55] Tanner, *Daniel* 16.

[56] See, for example, Collins, *Daniel* 242.

[57] For some other examples suggested by scholars see Ian Young, "Five Kingdoms, and Talking Beasts: Some Old Greek Variants in Relation to Daniel's Four Kingdoms," in *Four Kingdom Motifs Before and Beyond the Book of Daniel* (ed. Andrew B. Perrin and Loren T. Stuckenbruck; Leiden: Brill, 2020) 39–55 (48, with n.28).

[58] Tanner, *Daniel* 18.

[59] Tanner, *Daniel* 18.

[60] Sprinkle, *Daniel* 206–7; compare Tanner, *Daniel* 481–82.

mainstream scholars. While Sprinkle, as we have noted, provides E2 readers with a detailed defence of the E2 approach to Daniel, arguing that it is academically more reasonable than the mainstream view, this is even clearer with Tanner. Tanner describes what the aim of this commentary is: "For too long, critical scholars have dominated the discussion of Daniel. I hope this commentary will fill a much-needed gap, providing evangelical pastors and teachers with a full-orbed commentary."[61] This sentiment is also clear from the endorsements for the book, e.g., "The evangelical world has long needed a commentary of this magnitude … If you can only own one commentary on Daniel, this is it."[62] I take this to mean that this commentary is meant to be the one stop shop so that evangelicals do not have to look at mainstream commentaries and be led astray. Why bother reading, say, Collins, when Tanner has (allegedly) covered all the same ground (but from a theologically "sounder" angle)? In fact, in my judgement, what has been produced are two large commentaries on Daniel that are (especially in Tanner's case) apparently comprehensive in their coverage of issues and bibliography, and yet, are very often misleading in their presentation and engagement with mainstream scholarship.

OTHER BOOK REVIEWS

MARIO BAGHOS, *From the Ancient Near East to Christian Byzantium: Kings, Symbols and Cities* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2021). Pp. xxxviii + 264. Hardback. £64.99.

This monograph written by my former colleague, Mario Baghos, is a detailed and insightful study of the symbolism of city and kingship in ancient cultures in the wider Mediterranean world. What first makes the subject matter interesting and thought-provoking is the sharp contrast between ancient and modern cities. While modern cities are conditioned by Central Business Districts, utilitarian in structure and outlook, structures of ancient cities were motivated by a deep human consciousness of imitating the sacred. Ancient societies built their city to be the *axis mundi* and *imago mundi*, "centre of the world" and "image of the world," striving to make their existence meaningful by cosmicising their living space and thus participating in the sacred (xii). The ancient city recapitulated the three cosmic tiers of the celestial, terrestrial and subterranean/infernal, while their rulers embodied and regulated cosmic order, a function Baghos terms "eco-systemic agents" (xvii). This monograph surveys how this universal religious consciousness was encapsulated, albeit in diverse ways, in ancient

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[61] Tanner, *Daniel* 2.
[62] Endorsement by Rick Griffith at Tanner, *Daniel* ii.