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Narration in Daniel

Scripture has a variety of ways of speaking and the process of interpretation requires a variety of hermeneutical approaches.¹

Critics have sometimes forgotten that there is a meaning in the final whole as well as in its constituent parts.²

NARRATION IN DANIEL^B MAKES FOR ONE OF THE MOST FASCINATING studies of narration in the Hebrew and Christian canons. Of the sixty-six books of the Protestant Christian canon, none display such intricacies and complexities as multiple narrators, characters as narrators, a Gentile convert as a narrator, and the intermittent shifting of their roles. Each narrator in Daniel^B has a specific purpose and viewpoint in his narration, and not always are they in complete agreement with each other, or at least this is how it seems on the surface. The coherence of these narrational voices, however, essentially lies in the hermeneutical end; all three narrators contribute to this end in their own specific way.

The “Tell” of Three Narrators

Before we begin to read Daniel^B closely, we must firstly examine the characteristics and traits of these three narrators. Each of these narrators—the Narrator, Nebuchadnezzar, and Daniel^C—will be explored in terms of their perspectives, tones, reliabilities, purposes, and finally as hermeneuts.

1. Goldingay, *Models for Interpretation of Scripture*, 1.

2. Heaton, *The Book of Daniel*, 48.

The Narrator

In the study of these three Danielic narrators, we must immediately notice that two of the three are characters proper in the storyline. Before we investigate the issues common to all three narrators, I would like to pause and pursue the possibility that the Narrator too obtains a character-like status. The notion that narrators are essentially characters of a special type is hardly novel; Wayne Booth cites several successful examples in his 1961 classic, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*.³ The exemplary dramatized narrators, according to Booth, are such narrators as Fielding in *Tom Jones* or the narrator in *Don Quixote*; of the latter Booth says, “the narrator has made of himself a dramatized character to whom we react as we react to other characters.”⁴ Booth accounts for the success of creating a dramatized narrator by claiming, “An author who intrudes must somehow be interesting; he must live as a character.”⁵ John Darr states that the dramatized narrator cannot be “just any old character: the narrator is always one of the most important characters—if not the most important character—of all, for he or she is designed to guide and control the readers’ responses to everything in the story.”⁶

The Narrator we find in *Daniel*^B is indeed one of the most important “characters” for the very reason that Darr latently suggests: the Narrator guides the reader through the multiplicity of hermeneutical lessons encountered throughout the narrative. Therefore, the prominence placed upon the Narrator is defined by the pedagogical role the Narrator plays in the narrative. However, this very role of pedagogue, which we will more fully explore later, constrains the Narrator from being the *most* important character, or from distracting the reader away from other more important characters. The extreme potentiality of dramatizing the only “living” narrator is purposely never realized in order that the reader receives the proper perspective anticipated by the Narrator. In other words, if the implied author would have truly made the Narrator the most important character, this would have distracted from the central focus placed upon *Daniel*^C.

3. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, see chapter 8.

4. *Ibid.*, 212.

5. *Ibid.*, 219.

6. Darr, “Narrator as Character,” 43–44.

A second way the reader can recognize the Narrator as more than an objective guide through the story is to discover the evidence of convictions in the Narrator's rendering. Arguably, if the narrator is a construct of the implied author, who is but a construct of the real author, then is there any such thing as an objective narrator? Cases can be bolstered for either side of this debate, but what we might further need to ask is, how does a narrator attain a sense of authority in the eyes of the reader? Darr states the case as such, "Since there is no such thing as absolute, universal, and unquestionable narrational authority in the abstract, the narrator must appeal to structures of the authority that are already recognized by his intended readers; and he must link himself to those authorities in a credible way."⁷ The Narrator anchors his authority in the eyes of the reader when he demonstrates his relationship with Yhwh and he reveals something about his own theological perspective. Firstly, he identifies the god of Jerusalem as Adonai (ynd)) meaning "lord," thus revealing that his own allegiance stands on the side of Yhwh.

Secondly, he establishes his worldview for his reader by placing all events in the sovereign hands of Yhwh. From his perspective even the fall of the beloved Jerusalem is a consequence of Adonai's mighty hand. Furthermore, Adonai controls for his ultimate purposes the hands and movements of this world's leaders, even those who do not claim allegiance to or recognize Yhwh.⁸ In this respect the objectivity of the Narrator gives way to the obvious and devout biases he has toward Yhwh, therefore his authority as a narrator is defined by this same power.

The final, and perhaps ultimate, demonstration of the Narrator as character comes by means of his role as pedagogue. If we can—or should—read Daniel^B as a hermeneutical exercise, then we must ask ourselves, "who is our teacher in this exercise?" Clearly, we must assess, at least in an immediate sense, that Daniel^C is our prime example of the hermeneut. We might also ask, "how have we come to view Daniel^C as the paradigm of the good hermeneut?" To this answer we must give credit to the Narrator. The Narrator introduces the reader to Daniel^C and shows him as an interpreter par excellence, but then leads the

7. Ibid., 55.

8. Fewell, *Circle of Sovereignty*, 15.

reader further; the Narrator takes the reader to Daniel^C himself who essentially becomes personally responsible—in a literary constructive sense—to teach the lessons of hermeneutics. The words of John the Baptist appropriately apply to the Narrator's relation to Daniel^C, "He must increase and I must decrease" (John 3:30); or the description of the law in relation to Christ, "Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ" (Gal 3:24). In this sense, the Narrator is the pedagogue, the reader is the student, and Daniel^C is the master-teacher. The subtle withdraw of the Narrator from Daniel^C is purposeful; not to dissociate the Narrator from Daniel^C for reasons of conflict, but rather to exalt Daniel^C above and beyond the status of the privileged Narrator.⁹

Noting that the Narrator fulfills a role beyond that of a narrator alone and noting that his role is intrinsically related to other characters, specifically Daniel^C, helps us to view the Narrator as more than simply a narrator and his role as something approaching character in subtle yet substantial ways.

PERSPECTIVE

As previously noted, the perspective of the Narrator is from the third-person, but what remains left to dissect is the Narrator's degree of omniscience or privilege. The privilege of the Narrator is quite precarious; he knows more than most characters but simultaneously displays a limited privilege to allow other characters like Daniel^C to show an obvious advantage over his perspective. This balance between omniscience and "limited omniscience" is indicative of his position between subjectivity as narrator and his claims to authority as narrator. In other words, as a subjective narrator, any claims to total privilege would cast a shadow of doubt on his willful submission to Yhwh, who implicitly is the only truly omniscient character. As a narrator who promotes claims to authority in Yhwh, privilege that is too limited would likewise cast a shadow of doubt on his basis of authority in Yhwh.

TONE

Generally speaking, the tone of the Narrator is far more sympathetic to the main characters than what we find in Daniel^C as narrator. The first and foremost tone that the Narrator establishes is the emphatically

9. See Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 213.

Yahwistic sympathies and perspectives, but to the Narrator Yahwism is not reserved for Jewish followers only but is rather open to any and all converts. The Narrator presents Yhwh not simply as the king of Israel, but as king of the universal world, both natural and supernatural alike. Thus, a pagan king such as Nebuchadnezzar is not just an oblivious pawn of God's will but is one who can personally confess and submit to Yhwh and become a Yahwist convert. Yet, some like Belshazzar become ineligible for conversion due to their willful ignorance and pride, while others like Darius are viewed sympathetically and are fully eligible for conversion. The reverent and awed tone with which the Narrator initiates the narrative is consistently carried out throughout the entire narrative in dealing with Yhwh. All three narrators handle Yhwh with the sincerest reverence.

The Narrator's devotion to Yhwh is the only priority that supersedes his presentation of the main character Daniel^C. The Narrator introduces Daniel^C as one possessing a plethora of desirable qualities, reveals his integrity, tells of his special God-given giftedness, and repeatedly presents him as a flawless interpreter. There is not even a hint of defect in his character or his talents. Through the Narrator the reader not only becomes acquainted with Daniel^C but furthermore, sees through the Narrator a person worthy of emulation in Daniel^C. The reader finds Daniel^C an attractive hero through the presentation and tone of the Narrator. Had the latter half of the narrative been placed prior to the earlier half of the narrative, and had the tone of the latter half been allowed to establish the general tone of the reading, the potential and effectiveness of discovering an attractive hero would have diminished greatly. The placement of the narrational sections is a well executed ploy by the implied author and is credited to the Narrator who is inadvertently present even in the latter half of the narrative where Daniel^C is the primary narrator.

RELIABILITY

The reliability of the Narrator is almost entirely gauged by the theological convictions he holds. As we have already noted, the Narrator establishes his relationship with Adonai early in the narrative and promotes a worldview that is in harmony with his theological position. The overall texture of the literature is theological and the Narrator revolves every

conflict and conquest around the involvement of Yhwh; that is, that the wisdom of man is no match for the wisdom of God. The harmony that is enjoyed between the Narrator and the implied author is indicative of the entire literary work, and when we keep in mind that, though Daniel^C narrates almost the entire latter half of the book, the Narrator never ceases to be a present force and guide. This being the case, the reliabilities of the other two narrators should be rightly judged according to their consistencies with the Narrator, who consistently speaks reliably on behalf of the implied author.

PURPOSE

We have, of course, already discussed the purpose of the book of Daniel^B as being a hermeneutical exercise, but in these sections dealing with the purposes of the three individual narrational segments, we need to explore each narrational subdivision for its distinctive purpose. Yet at the same time we also need to keep in mind the major premise of the hermeneutical circle that claims that the parts of the narrative make up the whole and the whole informs its parts in a reciprocal interrelationship. If we have established our agenda as reading the whole of Daniel^B as a hermeneutical exercise, then we must likewise consistently allow this premise to inform our study of these three narrational sections.

The purposes of the Narrator's narration are multiple and we would be naïve to claim that he has one sole purpose, but yet for our purposes we need to attend primarily to those that inform our reading of Daniel^B as a hermeneutical exercise. The Narrator performs many duties in his narration; for instance, he establishes historical context, asserts his theological worldview, he introduces characters such as Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel^C, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, Belshazzar, Darius, and the group of wise men, and tells the stories of the triumph of God-given wisdom through faithful young Jewish men over against the worldly wisdom of kings and their pagan counsels. Furthermore, he intersects with Nebuchadnezzar's literary doxology and conversion story to demonstrate the universal kingship of Yhwh and assure the reader of the legitimacy of the optimistic hope for Gentile Yahwism. Finally, the Narrator leads the reader to the memoirs of Daniel^C himself, introducing him and briefly interjecting a comment in his work mid-way through the memoirs.

The purpose of the Narrator's duties is emphatically characterized as being pedagogical. Though we cannot avoid understanding the Narrator's early chapters as being sincerely didactic, we must finally conclude that the Narrator's end goal is to lead the reader to a higher plane of learning and to a more excellent teacher, that being Daniel^C, who is ultimately understood as interpreter of Yhwh. The Narrator's telling of the tales works to endear the reader to Daniel^C, but in the end the reader must move beyond the childlike and romantic tales of Daniel^C, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah in order to dig deeply into the issues of theological hermeneutics and hermeneutical theology.

AS HERMENEUT

In his own right, the Narrator also serves as a paradigm of a good hermeneut.¹⁰ The first evidence that supports the proposition of the Narrator as hermeneut is the notion that "all statements are 'mediated.'"¹¹ The very idea that he interprets events and dialogue in a purposeful construct for a specific reason is an undeniable indication that he is rightly an interpreter in a basic and elementary sense.

In a more profound way, the Narrator interprets the hand of Adonai. The simple apprehension of interpretation of text is not the prime objective in Daniel^B, rather the prime objective is emphatically the interpretation of Yhwh as text, or Ultratext. Interpretation is not simply an academic or intellectual endeavor, it is above all a theological endeavor. Before we are introduced to Daniel^C and his three faithful companions, we accept the worldview of the Narrator who presents it in terms that demonstrate his abilities to interpret the hand of Yhwh.

While Daniel^C is the prime paradigm of hermeneut in the narrative, the Narrator initially leads the reader to the theory of interpretation by causing him/her to observe this focal hermeneut Daniel^C and his interpretations. As previously discussed, the Narrator is the one who has the responsibility for educating the reader with one side of the hermeneutical process, more specifically, with the theoretical premise. In the process, and in order to give the reader the indispensable theoretical foundation, the Narrator has himself interpreted for the reader a certain aspect of the life of Daniel^C. Yet the task of the Narrator is not complete

10. Darr, "Narrator as Character," 57.

11. Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 33.

until he fulfills his pedagogical role by leading his pupils of theory in the first six chapters to become the pupils of praxis under the tutelage of Daniel^C in the latter six chapters. Therefore, the Narrator does not just bridge the gap between student and teacher, he also bridges the gap between theory, which he fully demonstrates in his presentation of the earlier episodes of Daniel^C, and praxis, with which he pushes the reader to be challenged by the presentation of Daniel^C's memoirs.

The Narrator also serves as hermeneut by bridging the gap between the dead writers—here Daniel^C and Nebuchadnezzar—and living readers who are being prompted to become hermeneuts in our present-day. The respective literary works of Daniel^C and Nebuchadnezzar need some sense of presentation to the reader. The Narrator is the force that brings vitality to these documents. Though the inauguration of Nebuchadnezzar's narration is certainly abrupt and without a formal introduction from the Narrator, the Narrator plays a crucial role by filling in immensely important gaps in the storyline of Nebuchadnezzar's testimony. The intelligibility and coherency of Nebuchadnezzar's story is made possible by the necessarily intrusive commentary of the Narrator.

The intersection between Daniel^C and the Narrator is not of the same caliber in chapters 7–12 as is the intersection between the Narrator and Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 4. The introduction to Daniel^C as the writer is properly noted by the Narrator from the outset and only once throughout the remainder of Daniel^C's memoirs does the Narrator make a contextualizing comment. Thus, we may draw several possible conclusions from this observation. First, perhaps the Narrator has far more confidence in the storytelling abilities of Daniel^C than he does in Nebuchadnezzar. Second, as an interpreter himself, the Narrator knows what needs commentary and explanation and what does not; apparently Nebuchadnezzar's story has gaps that must be filled, while Daniel^C's stories do not leave gaps to the same degree. Third, and perhaps the most likely, the memoirs of Daniel^C do indeed leave gaps, but the Narrator retains these gaps to be filled only by the reader, who has now entered the practical side of this hermeneutical exercise. This is a sign of a good pedagogue, that when the training is complete—as it is assumed to be after the reading of chapters 1–6—that the student is allowed to stand or fall completely by his/her own merits.

As a final note proclaiming that the Narrator is himself a hermeneut is the logic that states only a hermeneut can teach hermeneutics. The episodes concerning the lives of Daniel^c, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah revolve around the issue of interpretation and are essentially interpretations performed by the Narrator. In other words, his own interpretations are about interpretations and are demonstrative of his own interpretive interests and skills. The fact that the Narrator leads his reader to learn about and study the works of another hermeneut by no means distracts from his own status as hermeneut; on the contrary, the skilled hermeneut will always refer to and interact with the works of other hermeneuts.

Nebuchadnezzar

PERSPECTIVE

Nebuchadnezzar is a major character in chapters 1–3, and in chapter 4 he becomes the narrator who writes his story from a first-person perspective. Not only does Nebuchadnezzar identify his readership as, “all peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth,” but he further addresses them directly, even in such a direct manner as calling his reader “you” (Dan 4:1, 2). His high place in political domination, already ascertained in the opening verses of the narrative, legitimates his assumed wide range of readership, which is nothing short of the “entire” world.

The privilege credited to Nebuchadnezzar is consistent with his character in terms of his royalty and pride. Firstly, Nebuchadnezzar makes no claims of privilege beyond that which is rational for any inside character to know. He is present for any recorded conversation in his narration, which he can reasonably recall. The dream he relates to the reader is a dream that he himself has dreamt and remembers. When greater privilege is required, such as the recording of the angelic proclamations and the recounting of Nebuchadnezzar’s metamorphosis, the voice of the Narrator is then reintroduced.

Secondly, not only does Nebuchadnezzar not have the privilege to reveal the whereabouts, thoughts, or actions of the other characters that he encounters in his story when they are not in his presence, but the limits of his privilege seem to be willful. Beyond the actual interaction he has with other characters, Nebuchadnezzar does not seem

concerned with them, which ironically reveals something about his own pride, the very thing found to be offensive to Yhwh. Other characters are only important insofar as they directly relate to him; what they do outside his presence does not even remotely receive mention. Likewise, as royalty, Nebuchadnezzar is accustomed to being the center of all attention; any attention given to other characters is beyond the capacities of his character.

TONE

The tone of Nebuchadnezzar is consistent with the general tone of the Narrator. As we have already noted, there comes a section in chapter 4 where the distinction between the Narrator and Nebuchadnezzar cannot possibly be made. By the time Nebuchadnezzar begins to narrate, he too has adopted a Yahwistic tone and reveals that he is concerned with bringing glory to Yhwh. In addition, Nebuchadnezzar in agreement with the Narrator also obviously displays strong optimism by offering hope for Yahwistic conversion for all people, not just Jews. The self-narrated conversion of Nebuchadnezzar works to legitimate the optimism held by the Narrator as well as to establish a paradigm of conversion for others.

The same consistency with the Narrator can be said of Nebuchadnezzar's tone toward Daniel^C, whom he refers to as the chief magician, and one in whom the spirit of the holy gods reside, and the revealer of all mysteries. Nebuchadnezzar, like the Narrator, also puts his complete confidence in the skills possessed by Daniel^C, but Nebuchadnezzar adds a dynamic of personal interest that the Narrator could not have as credibly added. After Daniel^C hears the dream and understands its meaning but before he delivers the interpretation, Daniel^C sympathetically verbalizes a desire that the calamity of the dream would fall upon the enemies of Nebuchadnezzar rather than on him. Essentially the tone is consistent with the Narrator but the further display of personal interest is an aspect that could only come from another inside character with whom Daniel^C has actual interaction, rather than from a narrator who is removed from the immediate internal story setting of Daniel^C.

RELIABILITY

The reliability of Nebuchadnezzar as narrator must be judged in light of his consistency with the Narrator. From his optimistic outlook of hope for conversion for the Gentile nations, to affirming submission to Yhwh as ultimate king, to his positive and affectionate attitude toward Daniel^C, Nebuchadnezzar as narrator proves himself consistent with the Narrator and therefore the implied author. The consistency between the Narrator and Nebuchadnezzar is so tight that distinguishing between the voice of Nebuchadnezzar and the voice of the Narrator in the midst of Nebuchadnezzar's story of conversion becomes an impossible task. Furthermore, the Narrator essentially confirms the conversion of Nebuchadnezzar who confirms the mightiness of God as well as the piety and interpretive skill of Daniel^C, which both reconfirm what the Narrator has thus far attested concerning Yhwh and Daniel^C. His reliability derives directly from his new-found Yahwistic worldview.

PURPOSE

The purpose of Nebuchadnezzar's narration is the most explicitly stated case among the three narrators, at least according to Nebuchadnezzar's own words. His address to all peoples worldwide indicates that his goal is universal and nonexclusive; and his goal is to relay the story of his own conversion to Yahwism in order that others may also come to acknowledge Yhwh as the universal God and king. The very task of hermeneutics is itself universal and deals with universal issues; thus making the connection again between the character of Yhwh and of hermeneutics. Not only does Nebuchadnezzar—and to some extent the Narrator—tell the story of his conversion to Yahwism, but he further personalizes and validates the story by publicly offering doxologies to Yhwh. In short, Nebuchadnezzar wants all peoples to come to know Yhwh as he himself has come to know Yhwh, yet hopefully without the trauma of his own personal experiences. Essentially, Nebuchadnezzar serves as a paradigm of a good convert, and as one who desires to turn others into interpreters of Yhwh.

Yet the use and purpose of this story and doxology is not limited to the “authorial intention” of the dead Nebuchadnezzar; it too becomes a tool in the hands of the implied author speaking through the Narrator, who is clearly present in the midst of this episode. The commentary by

the Narrator is not nearly as explicit in terms of purpose as what we find in the words of Nebuchadnezzar. The words of the Narrator seem only to function to fill in the gaps left by the temporarily lycanthropic Nebuchadnezzar by giving attention to the details of his condition. The purpose of Nebuchadnezzar's narration as utilized by the implied author contributes to the general theme of the book as well as the pedagogical purpose of the Narrator. For example, we do have an important appearance by Daniel^C, who characteristically solves a mystery that baffles the wise men, when he competently interprets Nebuchadnezzar's troubling dream. Additionally, we cannot help but think that Daniel^C and his three companions are somehow partially responsible for Nebuchadnezzar's conversion for their roles in standing up for the sake of Yhwh in the face of severe opposition, thus affording Yhwh an opportunity to rescue his servants miraculously and to demand serious attention from Nebuchadnezzar. Such details in the story of Nebuchadnezzar advance the Narrator's cause of endearing the reader to Daniel^C.

Completely unbeknownst to Nebuchadnezzar as narrator is the meticulous placement of this story in the metastructure of the narrative by the implied author. Chapter 4 is an important piece of the chiasmic structure that extends from chapter 2 to chapter 7. Chapters 4 and 5, the central pieces of this chiasm, work off each other by their differences as well as their similarities. Both chapters retell the stories of kings who are willfully smitten by their own pride. Both kings receive supernatural texts, one a dream and the other mysterious handwriting on the wall, and both receive their interpretations from Daniel^C. While Nebuchadnezzar suffers lycanthropy and recovers to give his testimony of the greatness of Yhwh, Belshazzar suffers political defeat and a fatal blow. Interestingly, Nebuchadnezzar, whom the Narrator credits with legitimate reasons for his pride, is the one who turns to Yhwh; while Belshazzar, whom the Narrator casts doubt upon any true basis of pride, does not voluntarily recover from his prideful state. In essence, these stories in connection with one another work to balance and counterbalance—and therefore qualify—the Narrator's optimism toward the Gentile nations. Conversion to Yhwh is universally possible; some will acquire Yahwistic wisdom while others will continue to be blinded.

The purpose of Nebuchadnezzar's narration must be viewed on two different levels: one, by the purpose intended by Nebuchadnezzar and the other by the purpose of fulfilling a broader agenda held by the

Narrator. Both are important and both bring meaning to the overall theme of Daniel^B as literature. While we may assess the Narrator's pointed purpose as pedagogical and didactic, that is, ultimately leading the reader to the master-teacher Daniel^C, his overarching goal is to turn people to Yahwism, righteousness, and wisdom, which are the very things exemplified by Nebuchadnezzar in his narration. Nebuchadnezzar's narration works to temper the Narrator's pedagogical purpose by keeping the larger Yahwistic goal in focus.

AS HERMENEUT

Nebuchadnezzar qualifies as hermeneut on two distinct accounts: 1) he, like the Narrator, interprets the hand of God, and 2) he interprets his story in written form to a wide readership. As is the case throughout the book of Daniel^B, the interpretation of God is the ultimate goal, and finally after several encounters with those who interpret God in Nebuchadnezzar's presence, Nebuchadnezzar himself steps in to tell of his own interpretation of God's activity in his life. Not only does Nebuchadnezzar engage in the activity of interpretation of God, an admirable endeavor in itself, but in his interpretation he is affirmed by the Narrator to have done his duties well, and furthermore, to be considered reliable in his interpretation by the implied author.

Nebuchadnezzar's interpretation of Yhwh is taken a step further when he reinterprets the whole event in writing to a wide readership inclusive of all people worldwide. Understanding through interpretation is one thing, interpretation through explanation is yet another.¹² The performance of his narration is interpretive and the goal of his narration is explicative inasmuch as he wants everyone to know of the power and glory of the universal God and king, Yhwh. In this sense, his writing also becomes conscientiously didactic, teaching a "universal" populace about the universality of Yhwh through his universal act of interpretation, which also seeks to prompt in his readership a similar desire for universal theological interpretation.

12. A view staunchly held by Schleiermacher; see Mueller-Vollmer, *The Hermeneutics Reader*, 12.

Daniel

PERSPECTIVE

Daniel^C as the main character and the one after whom the book is named takes over the duties of narration from chapters 7–12 by means of written memoirs. Like the narrational perspective of Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel^C writes his story from a first-person perspective. Like the privilege of Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel^C only knows as much as his character would be likely to know, but what Daniel^C is privy to is not the same as what Nebuchadnezzar would be likely to know. While Nebuchadnezzar relates only one supernatural event in his life, Daniel^C has multiple visions, he converses with angels, and is given information to which no other character has gained access. Daniel^C is now in a position we found Nebuchadnezzar in the earlier half of the narrative, that is, facing supernatural texts and the difficulty of interpretation. The importance of noticing that Daniel^C is not a fully privileged narrator but has gained his privilege to secretive and mysterious material by theological and hermeneutical means results in our holding Daniel^C in higher regard than that which the reader holds the Narrator. This, of course, is an intentional ploy by the implied author.

TONE

The Yahwistic tone employed by Daniel^C the narrator is in complete compliance with the tones of the Narrator and Nebuchadnezzar. Not only does the Narrator prove Daniel^C to be a devout Yahwist in the Narrator's rendering of the earlier half of the narrative, but Daniel^C too demonstrates his Yahwistic devotions in the tone of his own narration. However, the tones concerning the possible conversions of Gentile leaders and nations, and the tone taken toward the infallibility of Daniel^C's interpretive skill differ significantly.

By the time that Daniel^C purports to chronicle his memoirs, he has already witnessed the conversion of Nebuchadnezzar to Yahwism, and though this may be the case, the general pessimistic tone that Daniel^C adopts toward the Gentile nations is not shared by the optimistic Narrator and Nebuchadnezzar.¹³ The tone entirely shifts in this regard under the narration of Daniel^C in the latter half of the narrative. The possibility

13. LaCocque, *The Book of Daniel*, 9.

of peaceful coexistence between faithful Yahwists and Gentile pagans becomes completely unviable. Nations are no longer viewed as entities with which to share Yahwism, rather they are only seen ultimately as objects of Yhwh's harsh judgments. A common thread, however, runs through the narrations of the Narrator and of Daniel^C that proclaims that in either case, whether optimistic or pessimistic regarding the Gentile nations, triumph is guaranteed by Yhwh for the righteous ones. As a further demonstration of the shift, the divinely-inspired visions and epiphanies that appeared to the pagan sovereigns in the early narrative no longer visit the pagan seers, only Daniel^C himself steps in to be the seer of the visions in the latter half of the narrative.¹⁴ As a note of justification for the severe difference between the two tones, the early half of the narrative looks to the purported life and times of Daniel^C, while the latter half of the narrative focuses on the apocalyptic and eschatological aspects of world affairs that lead to the end before the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

The tone Daniel^C takes toward himself is as equally incompatible with the two former tones of the Narrator and Nebuchadnezzar regarding Daniel^C. As we have already noted, the Narrator and Nebuchadnezzar avidly support the view of Daniel^C's flawless interpretive skill and moral character; however, Daniel^C reveals quite a different side of himself. Though Daniel^C does not show any signs of indiscretion in his moral character in his narration, he does admit to certain frailties in his interpretive skills. Twice Daniel^C is given the interpretation of his *own* visions, in three episodes Daniel^C shows signs of physical distress resulting from his visions and angelic encounters, at least once Daniel^C admits his own lack of understanding, and once Daniel^C's interpretation is completely redirected toward another referent. Through Daniel^C himself the reader comes to grasp fully the frailty of the interpreter and of the act of interpretation. Had this frailty of Daniel^C been revealed by the Narrator or Nebuchadnezzar and had it been neglected by Daniel^C, not only would the character and skill of Daniel^C have been undermined, but the didactic and pedagogical purpose of the literature would have been severely hampered as well. The Narrator, and to a lesser extent Nebuchadnezzar, does his duty well: he directs the reader to Daniel^C and offers extremely invaluable evidence for the many reasons the

14. Ibid., 9.

reader should seek to emulate Daniel^C. Only when the reader has once reached this point may Daniel^C truly reveal the delicacies and pitfalls of the position of interpreter. Daniel^C pulls no punches; he honestly parades his vulnerabilities, weaknesses, shortcomings, and his need of interpretive assistance.

RELIABILITY

In order to avoid unnecessary confusion in the following discussion and by way of review, let us reiterate Booth's use of the term "reliability." Booth states, "I have called a narrator *reliable* when he speaks for or acts in accordance with the norms of the work, *unreliable* when he does not."¹⁵ The reliability of Daniel^C as narrator is a delicate subject and we must refer back to the tone adopted by Daniel^C, specifically in the areas where he seems to be in incongruity with the tones of the Narrator, who we have already established to be a consistent voice of the implied author. Though I affirm my notion that the Narrator speaks consistently for the implied author, I do not mistakenly claim they are one and the same.

Daniel^C is entirely reliable as a narrator in terms of his theological convictions, but in terms of his view of himself as well as his display of pessimism concerning the Gentile nations, he does not seem to be in complete agreement with the Narrator. This, of course, does not necessarily mean that he is found to be in disharmony with the voice of the implied author, the true judge of reliability.¹⁶ The position of the Narrator is also a delicate one: claiming that his authority to narrate is granted by his relationship to Yhwh and simultaneously claiming to be subservient to him by displaying less-than-omniscient perspectives. A similar balance exists between the Narrator and Daniel^C. The Narrator is essentially put in charge of telling the story of Daniel^C in order to guide the reader to a place of admiration and desire for emulation. The most effective way to accomplish this task is not only to give repeated demonstrations of Daniel^C's integrity and abilities, but also to imply his excellence by allowing the reader to foil the abilities and knowledge of Daniel^C and the Narrator. In other words, the Narrator purposely

15. Booth, *Rhetoric of Fiction*, 158–59.

16. Ibid.

presents Daniel^C on a pedestal by lucidly exhibiting Daniel^C's knowledge and subtly withholding the Narrator's own.

For example, in chapter 2 when Daniel^C comes to Nebuchadnezzar to interpret his dream, though the Narrator knows the contents of his dream, he does not expose the contents to the reader, rather they are revealed by Daniel^C himself. This has several effects: 1) Daniel^C is given the place of privilege and prominence over the Narrator; and, 2) the reader in no way is given the chance to be critical of Daniel^C's interpretation by judging it against the rendering of the Narrator, which would have implied that the Narrator's rendering is more reliable. This ploy of narration differs radically from the similar scene found in the Joseph narrative, where the narrator firstly tells the reader the dream directly, then later the reader overhears the dream as it is being told to Joseph; the reader then judges pharaoh's rendering against the account of the narrator. In our case, the reader must wait in anticipation for Daniel^C to deliver the dream. In essence, Daniel^C is an inside character whom the Narrator establishes as one who apparently knows more than himself who is not inside the storyline. By showing Daniel^C's fuller knowledge in the earlier half of the narrative allows him likewise to demonstrate his later lack of knowledge for a greater effect of destabilizing the reader and simultaneously making an important theologically hermeneutical point.

The second discrepancy that casts a shadow of doubt upon the reliability of Daniel^C as a narrator is his pessimistic attitude toward the Gentile nations. The Narrator is optimistic in this regard and calls on Nebuchadnezzar to deliver his doxology and to recite his conversion as a proof to validate his optimism. Nebuchadnezzar's address to all people worldwide exposes his agreement with the Narrator in his hopes for universal recognition of Yhwh as king. Daniel^C leads his reader to no such conclusion, even by implication; the Gentile nations are contrary to God's people and therefore contrary to God himself. The nations are to be the objects of God's judgmental wrath, while his own people, the righteous and the wise, will be vindicated.

Though there are two major areas of apparent divergence between Daniel^C and the Narrator, unreliability of either should not be too readily assumed. The effects of two distinct components work to resist the temptation to deem Daniel^C as an unreliable narrator. Firstly, the pitting of Daniel^C's memoirs against the Narrator's portrayal of Daniel^C is a

conscientious move of the implied author, who is over and above the entire story of Daniel^C and the telling of it by the Narrator. The implied author has fostered the competing pictures of Daniel^C to coexist, and in terms of privilege, Daniel^C often stands between the implied author, who implicitly and necessarily knows more than Daniel^C, and the Narrator, who often is displayed as knowing less. Furthermore, when we read the memoirs of Daniel^C there is no suggestion that what Daniel^C writes is by any means unacceptable to the Narrator or the implied author.

The evidence of the implied author's approval leads to the second matter that resists the status of Daniel^C's unreliability. In the middle of Daniel^C's narration at 10:1, the Narrator once again makes his final editorial comment for the sake of contextualization, but perhaps the results of this comment are far more effective than the mere benefit of contextualization. Keep in mind that the memoirs of Daniel^C are not discovered by the reader, they are presented to the reader by the Narrator, who we may assume is already familiar with them. Therefore, the presence of the Narrator during the reading of the memoirs of an assumedly dead author works as a stamp of approval by the Narrator upon the memoirs. The Narrator's fervor for precision is marked by his contextualizing comment, and his silence throughout the vast majority of Daniel^C's narration indicates his general approval and agreement. Furthermore, the Narrator's contextual comment in 10:1 is perhaps a conscious effort to destabilize his own reliability; compare 10:1, "in the third year of Cyrus," with 1:21, "Daniel remained there until the first year of Cyrus." Thus the pedagogue once again leads the reader to view the supposed "unreliable" narrator Daniel^C as reliable by subtly compromising his own reliable status.

What we must therefore conclude concerning the areas of apparent discrepancy is that the narration of Daniel^C rounds out the narration of the Narrator in complementary roles. Due to the early placement of the Narrator's introduction to Daniel^C and set in the temporal midst of dealing with potential pagan converts, the Narrator presents what was indispensable for the time. Daniel^C, however, whose memoirs are presented later, exposes the interpretive frailties of his own character long after his character has been firmly established. Daniel^C's own confessions of shortcomings only work to strengthen the reader's admirations of him, and furthermore to understand more vividly the astringent demands of interpretation. Likewise, the pessimism of Daniel^C also

rounds out the optimism of the other two narrators, not so much in terms that Daniel^C portrays hopelessness for Gentile nations, but more so in temporal terms when the nations will resist God and fight against his people, which demands God's intervention, victory, and vindication. In essence, Daniel^C's bleak eschatological outlook complements the optimism of the earlier half of the narrative by calling for righteousness and wisdom in a time when such possibilities still exist. Certainly in reflection Daniel^C continues to be a good example of Yahwism to Darius, and does not lose hope entirely for the Gentile nations even during the reign of Belshazzar, during whose reign many of these visions occur.

In short, the conscious and apparent "unreliability" of the Narrator and Daniel^C the narrator is indicative of the literature's interdisciplinary quality. The literature espouses two views of Daniel^C: one of pure wisdom and impeccable ability to interpret, and the other as one who struggles with the meanings and interpretations of texts that are presented to him. We need not prefer one over the other, nor are we forced to choose between them; both are integral to our understanding of the paradigmatic hermeneut. Furthermore, the distinction between the strength of Daniel^C and his weakness may be found to be artificial; in fact, keeping in mind that the two halves "chronologically" overlap in the life of Daniel^C, we may find that he is strong in the earlier half because he humbly admits to his weakness in the latter half, thus allowing the strength of Yhwh to compensate for his own shortcomings.

PURPOSE

The purpose of Daniel^C's narration, at least according to Daniel^C, is unclear. What we have before us are the written memoirs of Daniel^C's visions, angelic encounters, intercessory prayer, and final instructions. In close consideration of the material, we may conclude that Daniel^C writes down such remarkable events and details simply because of their extraordinary nature. However, unlike the address of Nebuchadnezzar to all peoples worldwide, Daniel^C does not assume an audience. Therefore, and as we will notice later, explanation or clarification of material that remains vague is not offered for a reader's benefit. In this sense, Daniel^C performs hermeneutics on a personal basis much like Schleiermacher who distinctly separates understanding from explanation. In other words, succeeding at understanding is hermeneutics; explanation of this

understanding is a related but distinctly separate function.¹⁷ During the episodes of his narration Daniel^C seeks understanding above all else, while explanation from Daniel^C is not offered. As Schleiermacher might say, his understanding is his interpretation. Even when the reader knows that Daniel^C truly receives understanding, he does not share or explain his understanding in his memoirs. Daniel^C seems to write for his own benefit, and therein is his supposed purpose.

The purpose of Daniel^C's memoirs is further from the purpose of the implied author than what we observe in the compatibility between the purpose of Nebuchadnezzar's address and the use of it by the implied author. The pedagogical purpose of the Narrator is fulfilled—and therefore the main responsibilities of his duty are relieved—when the reader finally encounters the literary works of Daniel^C himself. Though Daniel^C's material is not intentionally didactic per se, the Narrator employs his material to serve in this capacity. For example, fresh texts are presented, angelic interpretations are given which demand further interpretation, but none are given. The reader is therefore encouraged to reach his/her own point of understanding. The chronological overlap between the Narrator's episodes and Daniel^C's episodes sheds entirely new light on the life of this—and perhaps any—interpreter. The romantic view of the underdog whose abilities come from above, who is vindicated by God, and causes the unbelievers to take notice is heavily altered by the portrait Daniel^C paints of himself as one who becomes sick, turns pale, and completely fails to understand. The frailty of Daniel^C only works to reaffirm the quintessential qualities necessary to become a good hermeneut presented in chapter 1. If Daniel^C who possesses all the necessary qualities expounded in chapter 1 is this vulnerable in the face of astringently difficult texts, where does that leave less qualified interpreters?

The purpose of Daniel^C's narration—as employed by the Narrator—is for praxis. The Narrator has already equipped the reader with the theoretical side of hermeneutics in the earlier half of the narrative by causing him/her to observe the life of Daniel^C and his preparations for and performances of the acts of interpretation. Now the reader reaches a point when a literary text of Daniel^C the master hermeneut is

17. Mueller-Vollmer, *The Hermeneutics Reader*, 12. This function of explanation is referred to by Schleiermacher as “rhetoric.”

presented, and the reader must take theory and channel it into praxis. As we have noted, conclusive interpretations in Daniel^C's memoirs are absent, thus calling for the reader to become the interpreter by filling in the gaps and performing the act of interpretation. When we take into account all three narrational sections—in other words, the entire book—we must come to the conclusion that the purpose of Daniel^B is to train the reader to become a qualified theological hermeneut in the same vein as Daniel^C, who must face and acknowledge his weaknesses and inabilities before Yhwh.

AS HERMENEUT

Due to the nature of this work, which seeks distinctly to explore the nature of Daniel^C as hermeneut, we are going to leave the detailed readings of Daniel^B to be examined in the following chapters. What is presented here is only a commentary on some general observations of Daniel^C the narrator as hermeneut. His means and methods of understanding and interpreting are beyond our current quest; we only seek to view Daniel^C as hermeneut by his mode of writing down of his fantastical visions and encounters.

So the question that we need to ask is, "What is truly accomplished and what gap is being bridged by the act of writing down material as extraordinary as what we read in his memoirs?" The gap that seems to be the most prevalent in the latter half of the narrative is between memory and future. These memoirs of Daniel^C are supposedly drawn from the memory banks of Daniel^C yet its contents purportedly describe the future events. The very thing that is left to bridge the gap between these two entities, the past and the future, are the writings of Daniel^C. Thus, a tension, similar to the tension advocated by poststructural critics, is created between memory and preservation of something given to us by Daniel^C from his past, and at the same time heterogeneity and something new in the future.¹⁸ W. Pannenberg asserts a similar sentiment by stating, "The tension between promise and fulfillment makes history. The development of the Isrealitic writing of history is distinguished by the fact that the horizon of this history becomes even wider, the length of time spanned by the promise and fulfillment ever more extensive."¹⁹

18. Caputo, ed., *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, 6.

19. Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology*, 19.

These visions of Daniel^C become reiterated in written form, thus making it possible to transplant the text into different contexts, constantly bridging the gap between history and future. The written form of Daniel^C's memories allows the text to find new meaning in a context that is not solely tied to the original context.²⁰ We may assume as the memoirs are repeatedly reiterated in this temporal gap of reading that this gap is constantly in the process of closing. Furthermore as Derrida's point applies, this (re)iterability allows traces of Daniel^C and his memories to function in the absence of their general context.²¹ As we read Daniel^B afresh, our own cultural and intertextual experience allows us to find significance and meaning in our own situation. This is a universal and timeless proposal, that no matter when or under what circumstances Daniel^B was/is read, its truths are applicable when we skillfully employ its hermeneutical endorsements.

Conclusion

The book of Daniel^B enjoys the uniqueness of three distinct narrators who all relay their respective stories through their individual perspectives, tones, reliabilities, and purposes. Of course, we also recognize the working hand of the implied author who orchestrates the narrators and the various literary components to present the literature to the reader in a compelling and intelligible form. We will more fully explore the implications and ramifications of the narrational shifts that occur throughout the narrative as we begin to read Daniel^B.

20. Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, 64.

21. *Ibid.*