

# **The Literary Structure of the Book of Daniel and its Implications**

*David Gooding*



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Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the English Revised Version (1885), the King James Version, or are David Gooding's own translations or paraphrases.

The Myrtlefield Trust

PO Box 2216

Belfast, N Ireland

BT1 9YR

w: [www.myrtlefieldhouse.com](http://www.myrtlefieldhouse.com)

e: [info@myrtlefieldhouse.com](mailto:info@myrtlefieldhouse.com)

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# The Literary Structure of the Book of Daniel and its Implications

## I

Two major basic questions face the expositor of any narrative work: first, 'What does this or that part of the book say?', and second, 'Why does it say it?'. For Daniel,<sup>1</sup> answering question 1 has its special difficulties, particularly if the question 'What does it say?' is taken to include the question 'What does it mean?'. By comparison, answering question 2 looks at first sight easy; in actual fact it is a complex question with at least two different meanings, each requiring a different kind of answer.

At one level the question 'Why does this particular paragraph or chapter say what it says?' means 'What part does this paragraph or chapter play in the thought-flow of the book? Are the information it provides and the point it makes related in any way to the information provided, the points made, by other paragraphs and chapters? If so, how? By way of similarity? Or contrast? Or expansion? Or addition? Or does it make its own independent contribution to the information provided by the book as a whole without being particularly closely related to the information provided by other paragraphs or chapters?'. At this level, then, the question refers to matters internal to the book itself; to the author's selection and disposition of his material, and to the consequent inter-relationship of the constituent parts of the book—to the author's ποιήσις and to his σύνθεσις or σύστασις τῶν πραγμάτων as Aristotle would phrase it.<sup>2</sup> Let us call this level, Level 1.

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<sup>1</sup> The following are the principal works referred to, or otherwise made use of, in the course of this paper: J. G. Baldwin, *Daniel* (London: Tyndale, 1978); B. S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (London: SCM, 1979); J. J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Vision of the Book of Daniel* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977); M. Delcor, *Le Livre de Daniel* (Paris: Gabalda, 1971); O. Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament, An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974); H. L. Ginsberg, 'The Composition of the Book of Daniel', *VT* 4 (1954) 246–275; L. F. Hartmann and A. A. Di Leila, *The Book of Daniel* (New York: Doubleday, 1978); E. Heaton, *The Book of Daniel* (London: SCM, 1956); W. L. Humphreys, 'A Life-Style for Diaspora: A Study of The Tales of Esther and Daniel', *JBL* 92 (1973) 211–223; C. F. Keil, *Biblical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959 repr. of the 1869 ed.); A. Lacocque, *The Book of Daniel* (London: SPCK, 1979); Ad. Lenglet, 'La structure littéraire de Daniel 2–7', *Bib* 53 (1972) 169–190; A. R. Millard, (i) 'Daniel 1–6 and History', *EQ* 49 (1977) 67–73; (ii) 'Daniel', *A Bible Commentary for Today*, ed. G. C. D. Howley et al. (London: Pickering and Inglis, 1979) 901–925; J. A. Montgomery, *A critical and exegetical commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1927); N. Porteous, *Daniel, A Commentary*, 2nd rev. ed. (London: SCM, 1979); H. H. Rowley, (i) *Darius the Mede and the Four World Empires in the Book of Daniel* (Cardiff: University of Wales, 1935); (ii) 'The Unity of the Book of Daniel', *HUCA* 23/1 (1950/1) 233–273; A. Szörényi, 'Das Buch Daniel, ein kanonisierter Pescher?', *VT Suppl.* 15 (1966) 278–294; B. K. Waltke, 'The Date of the Book of Daniel', *BS* 133 (1976) 319–329; D. J. Wiseman et al., *Notes on Some Problems in the Book of Daniel* (London: Tyndale, 1965); E. J. Young, *Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949; London, 1972).

<sup>2</sup> *De Arte Poetica* 1450<sup>a</sup> 5, 15; 1451<sup>b</sup> 26–32. Notice that according to Aristotle an author can be a ποιητής even if he is writing about things that have actually happened, and not composing fiction. For a study of Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* from this point of view, and of the significance of the selection and arrangement of his material and of the juxtaposition of certain items, see H. F. D. Kitto, *Poiesis, Structure and Thought* (Cambridge University Press and University of California Press, 1966) chapter VI and particularly pp. 279ff.

At another level the same question ‘Why does this paragraph or chapter say what it says?’ means ‘What was the author’s motive in writing this?’, and/or ‘What effect was he thereby aiming to have on his readers?’. At this level the question concerns matters external to the book itself: what brought the book into being? What end was the book designed to serve? Let us call this level, Level 2. Now I am not suggesting that the two different levels of this question should, or even can, be always considered in isolation from one another. In practice they will sometimes merge. But I am suggesting that we must always remember that there are two levels to this question, and that even if we have got our answers at Level 2 correct, we still have not fully understood the total message of a book unless we can answer satisfactorily the questions that arise at Level 1. And secondly, where a biblical author has not told us the purpose, in the Level 2 sense, of his book, or of any part of it, and we are obliged to conjecture that purpose, the decisive evidence must be the message which the book itself is presenting. And, since we cannot be sure we are correctly understanding what message (or messages) the book is presenting, unless we can explain satisfactorily the inter-relation of the various parts of the book to one another and to the book as a whole, answers at Level 1 must determine the answers given at Level 2. It is always this way, and not the other way, round.

Or, at least, it should be. In practice all too often the order is reversed. On the basis of certain prominent features in a book a *Sitz-im-Leben* is conjectured. If other features in the book are then seen not to be calculated to appeal to the people of the conjectured *Sitz-im-Leben*, and not to be immediately relevant or even suitable to them and their needs, nonetheless the *Sitz-im-Leben* is still allowed to have the final word in evaluating the significance of the details of the book. The features that do not fit the *Sitz-im-Leben* are judged to be insignificant as far as the author’s purpose is concerned. Or else they are taken as evidence that the book is a composite work: the apparently irrelevant features, it is held, were part of the story as it left the hand of an earlier author and presumably served his purpose, whatever it was, exactly; but when the story was taken over by the final author, these features naturally did not fit his *Sitz-im-Leben*, but, nevertheless, he either did not trouble to, or for some reason could not, eliminate or change them. But when a conjectured *Sitz-im-Leben* is allowed thus to be the arbiter of what features in a story were relevant to the author’s purpose and what features were mere padding, or vestigial remains, conjectural answers to questions of purpose at Level 2 have in fact been allowed to override questions of purpose at Level 1. True literary priorities have thus been reversed.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Many will hold of course that long, detailed prophecy is impossible, that Daniel 11 must therefore be a *vaticinium ex eventu*, and that this overriding consideration puts beyond all question that part, at least, of the book was written during Antiochus Epiphanes’ persecution of the Jews; and that this in turn dictates what the purpose of the book must have been. Actually, even if it could be proved that the book was written then, its purpose would still have to be deduced from the whole of the book’s contents, and not from one or two chapters. But that detailed predictive prophecy is impossible is neither a fact nor a law; it is an axiom adopted by faith. It is not binding on any except those who first choose to believe it. As to the historical errors in the book which, it is alleged, prove that the book could not have been written in the sixth century BC, see D. J. Wiseman et al., J. G. Baldwin 19–29, A. R. Millard (i) and (ii). For a discussion of the evidence from language see K. A. Kitchen *apud* D. J. Wiseman et al., 31–79, J. G. Baldwin 29–35, P. W. Coxon, *HUCA* 48 (1977) 107–122. For an argument based on the datings of the Qumran manuscripts of Daniel see B. K. Waltke.

## II

With this in mind we turn to the longstanding debate over the purpose of the Book of Daniel. At Level 2 the traditional view of the book can hold that the events and visions of the book were recorded, soon after they happened, primarily because they happened, and secondarily because it was thought that the record of them would benefit the book's readers. The current majority view, however, cannot posit any such primary reason. It holds that the events did not happen as recorded, and that the visions and prophecies are almost entirely *vaticinia ex eventu*, invented by a second century Palestinian Jew. Obligated therefore to suggest some other primary reason for the invention of these fictions, it finds it in the author's alleged desire to encourage his fellow Jews who were suffering persecution under Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

But here the debate begins,<sup>4</sup> since many, even of those who share the majority viewpoint, feel that much of the material in the book is highly unsuited to this alleged desire. They<sup>5</sup> argue, therefore, that the book must be of composite authorship: the final second century author must have incorporated in his volume stories that were originally written in much earlier and better<sup>6</sup> times and for other purposes than comforting the persecuted under Antiochus Epiphanes. Others, of course, deny composite authorship, and the debate continues. What interests us here is the kind of argument that from time to time is employed in the debate.

H. H. Rowley, for instance, attempting to refute the idea of composite authorship, and to maintain a Maccabean date for the composition of the whole book, argued that 'point can be found for every story of the first half of the book in the setting of the Maccabean age to which the latter part is assigned'.<sup>7</sup> Take, for example, chapter 4. The chapter, says Rowley, 'is the story of a king whose overweening pride is punished by madness. It is known that Antiochus, who fancied himself a god incarnate, was called by his people Epiphanes, madman. This chapter, then, might well be understood in that day as a reference to Antiochus, and bring its promise of humiliation at the hands of God'.<sup>8</sup> Well, so it might if its detailed features might properly be reduced to this vague general outline. But actually, as H. L. Ginsberg so

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<sup>4</sup> For a survey of the debate from the seventeenth century up to 1950 see H. H. Rowley (ii) 235–248. For more recent times see Eissfeldt 512–529, particularly 517 onwards, and J. C. H. Lebram, *JSJ* 5 (1974) 5–11.

<sup>5</sup> Notably H. L. Ginsberg. Among the liberal writers who argue for the unity of the book are, for example, H. H. Rowley, O. Eissfeldt, Ad. Lenglet, and A. Lacocque. Among those who argue against are J. A. Montgomery, M. Delcor, J. J. Collins, L. F. Hartmann and A. A. Di Leila, and W. L. Humphreys. N. Porteous in the revised edition of his commentary confesses that he would now give more weight 'to the arguments of those who favoured an earlier, independent authorship for the stories of events at the heathen court' (180). Of course, those who argue for the overall unity of the book are prepared to admit that their Maccabean author used, to a great or lesser extent, earlier material. A. A. Di Leila, 11–18, attempts a mediating position that involves a whole array of successive editions and then candidly admits that his hypothesis might well seem 'unusually intricate and perhaps overly ingenious' (17). On the sheer impracticability of such hypotheses as this see N. Porteous 172 and J. G. Baldwin 209.

<sup>6</sup> J. J. Collins, 8–10, puts the matter succinctly. See also W. L. Humphreys 221.

<sup>7</sup> Rowley (ii) 268.

<sup>8</sup> Rowley (ii) 269.

trenchantly pointed out,<sup>9</sup> there are many features in the story of Nebuchadnezzar's madness that do not fit Antiochus' case at all; indeed, they conflict with it. Rowley, of course, saw this difficulty, saw that certain features of this story, and of others, would not have suited the alleged purpose of a Maccabean author at the time of the conjectured *Sitz-im-Leben*. Notice, then, how he decided the question and what he allowed to decide it for him. 'A story told to point a message', he argued, 'does not have to be an exact parallel in all particulars. The form imposes some limitation on the author, so long as it does not conflict with his purpose . . .'<sup>10</sup> In other words, Rowley insisted that the conjectured purpose, in the sense of Level 2 (the effect the author aimed to have on his readers), must be allowed to decide which features of the story have significance and purpose in the sense of Level 1.

Understandably, many, even among those who hold to the majority view of the book, have found Rowley's arguments unpersuasive; and they have adopted some form of the multiple authorship theory. Yet their solution does not really mend matters either. For while it admits that chapters 1–6 were not written originally to comfort the persecuted under Antiochus Epiphanes, it still holds, as its basic controlling consideration, that chapters 7–12 were written at that time and for that purpose; and that it was the author of chapters 7–12 who first incorporated chapters 1–6 in the book, presumably with the intention of making them serve his purpose. It has to maintain, therefore, that the original purpose and meaning of chapters 1–6 are different now from what they were originally<sup>11</sup> and, what is more important, that the only features of chapters 1–6 that are significant for the purpose and meaning of the book as it now stands are those features which tie in with the ideas and purpose of chapters 7–12. Any features in chapters 1–6 that do not fit or serve the alleged purpose of chapters 7–12 are deemed to serve no purpose in the book as it now stands.<sup>12</sup> Once again, the conjectured purpose, in the Level 2 sense, of one part of the book, is the thing that decides for all the features of the whole of the book whether they do, or do not serve any purpose, in the Level 1 sense, in the book as it now stands. It is our contention that this ordering of priorities in critical approach and judgement is false to true literary criticism. We must start the other way round.

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<sup>9</sup> Ginsberg 246–247.

<sup>10</sup> Rowley (ii) 271.

<sup>11</sup> So, for instance, J. J. Collins 11: 'Chapters 1-6 are certainly included for a purpose, and are important for the meaning of the whole book, but their significance here is not necessarily identical with the purpose for which they were composed'.

<sup>12</sup> Alternatively, chapters 1–7 are held to be the more important part of the book, both from a literary and a theological point of view, with chapters 8–12 being of a somewhat inferior status. So E. Heaton, 47–53, holds that the author of chapter 7 is to be regarded as the author of the book; that 'it is this section [chapters 2–7] which conspicuously employs the fundamental ideas of Jewish religion and delineates with massive simplicity the religious issues and theological convictions which constitute the book's distinction and value'; that the bulk of chapters 2–7 must belong in its present form to a period of Antiochus Epiphanes' reign after 169 BC and before 167 BC; and that chapters 8–12 seem 'to belong to a range of ideas more easily paralleled in later Jewish teaching than in the first section of the book . . . and are probably best regarded as a commentary on it, composed at a later time, in different circumstances . . . by a disciple of the original author', the whole book nevertheless being 'produced within a period of five years'. B. S. Childs, 616–618, also has developed the idea that the first part of the book, or at least chapter 2, is not only primary but ancient; but with him chapters 7–12 are secondary: 'chs. 7–12 extend the vision of ch. 2 into the period contemporary with its Maccabean author' (618); 'the author of chs. 7–12 understood his role as one of filling in the details of the early visions of Daniel . . . and thus confirming Daniel's prophecies in the light of the events of contemporary history' (616). What the purpose of chapters 1, 3–6 are in this scheme Childs does not appear to say.

We must start by asking what the book is saying as a whole. To that end, we must try to discover how the various parts fit together to make the whole, and what is the purpose, in the Level 1 sense, of each part in relation to the whole. That is how we must start; if we eventually find that the parts do not fit together to make a coherent whole, but present a jumble of contradictory features, it will be time enough then to begin to think in terms of composite authorship, or incompetent editorship. But we should not assume in advance that this is what we are likely, or even bound, to find. And if in fact we find that the individual parts do fit together in an obviously designed way to make up a coherent whole,<sup>13</sup> we must then allow the total message of the book to suggest what may have been the author's purpose in the Level 2 sense.

Let us begin, then, by considering the author's selection and disposition of his material. All are agreed that there are ten major elements in the book, corresponding roughly to the traditional chapter divisions in each case, except that chapters 10–12 record one single vision and not three. Theoretically, these could be simply a collection of individual items, each significant in itself but without much, or without any, connection with the other items. But the merest glance is enough to discover that judged by subject matter some chapters have more in common with each other than they do with the remaining chapters. Grouped by these superficial similarities they arrange themselves thus:

<i>GROUP 1</i>	<i>GROUP 2</i>
ch. 1 The refusal to eat the king's impure food. Daniel and his colleagues are vindicated.	ch. 6 The refusal to obey the king's command and refrain from praying to God. Daniel is vindicated.
TWO IMAGES	TWO VISIONS OF BEASTS
ch. 2 Nebuchadnezzar's dream-image,	ch. 7 The four beasts.

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<sup>13</sup> Ad. Lenglet has proposed a very interesting scheme according to which chapters 2–7, the Aramaic chapters of the book, form a concentric structure: chapters 2 and 7 both present visions of the four kingdoms and so balance each other; chapter 3 with its story of the deliverance of the three Jews from the furnace is balanced by the story of Daniel's deliverance from the lion-pit in chapter 6; and chapters 4 and 5 both relate the divine discipline of a king and are in addition interlocked by the lengthy recalling of the first story in the telling of the second. Lenglet also has interesting things to say about the purpose of the suggested symmetry. His scheme has certainly a great deal to commend it, and has convinced scholars such as J. G. Baldwin (59–63) and, with modifications, J. J. Collins (11–14). One of its strong points is that it would account, in part, for the use of Aramaic in chapters 2–7: they form a literary whole by themselves. Lenglet's article is too important for a resumé of it to be attempted here; it should be read at length. Though the present writer proposes a different scheme from Lenglet's, it should be noticed that he agrees entirely with Lenglet that chapters 2 and 7 were meant to balance each other in a symmetrical structure, and that chapters 4 and 5 were meant to stand together as a closely-knit sub-group. He disagrees in that he holds that though chapter 3 has many features in common with chapter 6, the main point of the story in chapter 3 is taken up by chapter 8 rather than by chapter 6, and that chapter 6 is balanced by chapter 1 rather than by chapter 3. Baldwin, 39 and 59–63, following C. H. Gordon, suggests that the deployment of the two languages in the book gives to the whole book a deliberate ABA structure, and she adds the important observation that the thought-flow of the book is marked by highly significant progressive parallelism (62), which is clear evidence that 'the book must have been the work of one person, who planned the presentation of his theme with meticulous care . . . Such bold selectivity [*scil.* of certain historical incidents] is the mark of the artist: by this means he proclaims his message.' With this observation the present writer concurs wholeheartedly.

<i>GROUP 1</i>		<i>GROUP 2</i>	
ch. 3	Nebuchadnezzar's golden image.	ch. 8	The two beasts.
TWO KINGS DISCIPLINED		TWO WRITINGS EXPLICATED	
ch. 4	The discipline and restoration of Nebuchadnezzar.	ch. 9	The prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah.
ch. 5	The 'writing on the wall', and the destruction of Belshazzar.	chs. 10–12	The 'Writing of Truth' and the eventual destruction of 'the king' (11:36–45).

Even at this lowly level of analysis there seems to be a simple recurrent pattern in the grouping of the subject matter: a single chapter followed by two pairs, another single chapter followed by another two pairs. The pattern, of course, may not be intentional on the part of the author; it could be an apparent pattern imposed on the book by our particular analysis of its subject matter. But further observation suggests that the pattern is deliberate, that the book's ten component parts were intentionally arranged in two groups of five each, with chapter 5 forming the climax of the first group, and chapters 10–12 the climax of the second.

The first thing to notice is that the Babylonian Empire whose first attack on Jerusalem is recorded in chapter 1, comes to its end in chapter 5 with the destruction of Belshazzar and the capture of Babylon. The passing of the first great Gentile empire to destroy Jerusalem and the temple, and to depose the Judaeans, was obviously an event of great significance for the Jews; certainly it might reasonably be made the first major climax in the narrative sequence of the book. It would in that case also be reasonable that, while chapter 6 is a court-story, as are chapters 1–5, it should stand apart from them: it differs from them in that they all took place at the Babylonian court, whereas it took place at the Medo-Persian. Moreover, one could see a reason why the visions of chapters 7 and 8, though both dated to the reign of Belshazzar, should be included in Group 2 and not in Group 1. It is not that they are visions while the members of Group 1 are all court-stories, for Group 1 itself includes visions and dreams (chapters 2 and 4) along with, or as part of, its court-stories; but the visions and dreams of Group 1 are all given to the Babylonian monarch (no visions are given to the Medo-Persians, and of course none to the Grecians), whereas the visions of chapters 7–8, as well as the later visions of chapters 9–12, are all given to Daniel. Put another way, the four items, chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5, all relate special sights that the Gentile monarchs were given to see: the four items, chapters 7, 8, 9 and 10–12, all relate special sights that Daniel was given to see. It begins to look, therefore, as if chapters 1–5 were meant to stand as one major group, all devoted to the doings and experiences of the Babylonian kings.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> It is not, as we have seen, a strong objection against this division that it cuts across the popular grouping according to which chapters 1–6 are commonly bracketed together as court-stories and chapters 7–12 as visions. A more serious objection might be that it cuts across the division that is frequently made on the basis of language: Hebrew in chapters 1–2:4a and 8–12, and Aramaic in chapters 2:4b–7. But, in fact, as O. Eissfeldt (528) has said, 'An explanation of the double language which is entirely satisfactory has not yet been proposed by anyone.' But see J. G. Baldwin 39.



And now another feature pointing in the same direction. The destruction of Belshazzar in chapter 5 is not told as an isolated story.<sup>15</sup> Before Daniel reads and interprets the writing on the wall, he first recalls, solemnly and at length (5:18–22), the story of God’s discipline upon Nebuchadnezzar which chapter 4 has just related, and concludes: ‘And thou his son, O Belshazzar, has not humbled thy heart though thou knewest all this.’

So within the sub-group formed by chapters 4 and 5 Belshazzar’s destruction comes as a climax: Nebuchadnezzar is first warned by a dream that his pride is calling for discipline, and he is urged to repent; but he fails to repent, and is cut down; subsequently repenting, he is restored. Belshazzar, knowing all this, defies its warning, and sins worse than Nebuchadnezzar. For him, therefore, there comes no further warning with an appeal to repent and to make discipline unnecessary: he is summarily and irremediably cut down. Now crucial and climactic in all this is Belshazzar’s calling for and drinking out of the vessels of divine service. But it is not only climactic in the thought-flow of chapters 4 and 5: it forms the climax of the whole first group of chapters. Chapter 1 opens with the announcement (1:1–2) that the Lord gave into Nebuchadnezzar’s hand not only the king of Judah but also part of the vessels of the house of God, and that Nebuchadnezzar carried these vessels into the land of Shinar to the house of his god, and brought them into the treasure house of his god. Doubtless, Nebuchadnezzar, according to his own lights, was treating God’s vessels reverently; but to Jewish sensibilities and faith it must have been a tremendous blow, not only that Nebuchadnezzar did such a thing, but that he did it apparently with impunity. But Belshazzar does immeasurably worse. Nebuchadnezzar had at least put the vessels in his god’s temple, idolatrous though it was; he treated the vessels as sacred. Belshazzar profanes them; he takes them out of the temple and drinks from them himself. But with that, divine judgement falls, and the Babylonian Empire which captured Jerusalem in chapter 1 now is itself captured in chapter 5. Both from an historical and a literary point of view the first group must end with this climax. The mention of the vessels of divine service at the beginning of chapter 1 and then again at the climax of chapter 5 clamps chapters 1–5 together as a group;<sup>16</sup> to tack chapter 6 on to this group would produce a ruinous anti-climax.

But now that we have noticed the significant deterioration between Nebuchadnezzar’s attitude to God and Belshazzar’s, let us plot this theme of deterioration throughout the book as a whole.

### **The progressive deterioration in the attitudes of the Gentile emperors to God**

ch. 1	Nebuchadnezzar idolatrously, but reverently, places God’s vessels in the house of his idol: but he does not ban the Jews’ worship of God. <sup>17</sup>
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<sup>15</sup> See Lenglet 186–187.

<sup>16</sup> To borrow a term from C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: CUP, 1953) 348.

<sup>17</sup> Nebuchadnezzar did, of course, destroy the temple of God at Jerusalem (2 Kgs 25:13–17); but in so doing he was showing a very different attitude to God from that which Antiochus Epiphanes was one day to show. In taking the vessels from the temple and putting them in the house of his god Nebuchadnezzar would be claiming that Israel’s god had now given the power over Israel to Nebuchadnezzar. And if in addition he thought that his own god had now demonstrated himself to be stronger than Israel’s god, he would still reverence Israel’s god as a god.

- ch. 3                    Nebuchadnezzar tries to force Jews to worship his god, but does not ban their worship of God, and in the end worships their God himself.
- ch. 5                    Belshazzar sacrilegiously drinks from God's vessels, but even so does not ban the worship of God nor deify himself.
- ch. 6                    Darius temporarily bans prayer to God, and is sorry.<sup>18</sup>
- ch. 7                    The little horn speaks words against the Most High.<sup>19</sup>
- ch. 8                    Antiochus stops the regular sacrifice, casts down the sanctuary of God, magnifies himself even to the Prince of the host.
- ch. 11:31                Antiochus sets up the abomination of desolation in the sanctuary.
- ch. 11:36                'The king' magnifies himself above every god and speaks unheard-of things against the God of gods.

Two things are at once evident. First, this progression, presenting as it does a major theme which runs throughout the whole book, shows that the book was designed as a whole.<sup>20</sup> More of that presently. Second, it shows from another point of view what we have already found,

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<sup>18</sup> It is true that Darius' edict forbidding anyone to make a petition of any god or man might be construed as a kind of deification of himself. But the very temporariness of the edict, and the fact that it banned prayer only and not sacrifice, distinguishes it from the extremes of the final monarchs.

<sup>19</sup> Little is said about the horn of chapter 7. He 'speaks words against the Most High' and 'thinks to change the times and the law' (7:11, 25); but what exactly he says against the Most High, and what is involved in trying to change the times and the law, is not spelled out. But chapter 8 expresses in detail the attitude of its little horn to Israel's God. 'It magnified itself even to the Prince of the host' (RV), 'it aspired to be as great as the Prince of the host' (NEB, 8:11). What this aspiration consists in is then explained: it 'suppressed his regular offering and even threw down his sanctuary'. And this behaviour is further defined: 'he shall take his stand against (NIV; 'challenge' NEB) the Prince of princes' (8:25). This attitude to God is clearly worse than that of Darius in chapter 6. At the same time nothing is here said about the horn's self-deification. He is not said, as 'the king' of 11:36 is, to exalt himself *above* every god; he simply 'magnifies himself even up to the Prince of the host' (8:11 ַעַל, as against ַעַל of 11:36). In chapter 9 little more is added: the sanctuary is destroyed, the sacrifice and oblation is caused to cease (9:26–27). But in chapter 11, verses 30–32 repeat these two offences and then add explicitly that there shall be set up the abomination that makes desolate. It was bad enough to cut off the true worship: it is far worse to import and impose the false. Even so, this is only the penultimate horror.

<sup>20</sup> Compare what J. G. Baldwin, 62, says of the implications of progressive parallelism.

that chapter 5 ends the first stage of the story and chapter 6 begins the other. Bad as the kings of chapters 1–5 have been, neither of them has banned the Israelites' worship; but in chapter 6, for the first time in the Book of Daniel, the Gentile emperor bans the worship of Israel's God. Admittedly Darius in chapter 6 repents of his error, as did Nebuchadnezzar. But just as Nebuchadnezzar's idolatrous and unsatisfactory treatment of the divine vessels in Group 1 led on to Belshazzar's immeasurably worse treatment of those vessels, so Darius' temporary banning of prayer to Israel's (and anybody else's) God in Group 2 heads a progression that gets steadily worse until the ultimate horror, when the king of 11:36ff exalts himself above every god, the God of Israel included. This is the final extreme; none could go further. It rightly forms the climax of Group 2 as Belshazzar's impiety formed the climax of Group 1. And just as the mention of the sacred vessels both at the beginning and the end of Group 1 clamps that group together, so Group 2 is clamped together by a similar device: crucial to the courtiers' conspiracy to force the king to destroy Daniel in chapter 8 is the 'signing of the writing that it be not changed according to the law of the Medes and Persians which does not pass away' (6:8); and in chapters 10–12 the thing which predicts and controls the future, all opposition notwithstanding, is 'the Writing of Truth' (10:21), the contents of which the angel is sent to reveal to Daniel.

It seems clear, then, that the author has formally arranged his material to stand in two groups with five items in each, the fifth item in each group forming a marked climax to the thought-flow within the group. And this formal arrangement is further confirmed by the fact that if one compares each item in Group 1 with its counterpart in Group 2, general similarities in idea and phrase appear such that one cannot think them fortuitous:

<i>GROUP 1</i>	<i>GROUP 2</i>
ch. 1 Nebuchadnezzar reverently places God's vessels in his idol's temple. Daniel and others refuse to indulge in pagan impurities. Court officials sympathetic. Daniel and his colleagues' physical and mental powers vindicated. They are promoted to high office.	ch. 6 Darius bans prayer to God for thirty days. Daniel refuses to cease practising the Jewish religion. Court officials intrigue against him. Daniel's political loyalty to the king vindicated. He is restored to high office.
ch. 2 A survey of the whole course of Gentile imperial power. Four empires in the form of a man. The fatal weakness: an incoherent mixture of iron and clay in the feet. The whole Man destroyed by the stone cut out by divine power. The universal Messianic kingdom set up.	ch. 7 A survey of the whole course of Gentile imperial power. Four empires in the form of wild beasts. The hideous strength: a frightening mixture of animal destructiveness with human intelligence. The final beast destroyed and universal domination given to the Son of Man.

*GROUP 1*

- ch. 3 Nebuchadnezzar thinks that 'no god can deliver (the Jews) out of his hand'. He commands them to worship his god. The Jews defy him. They are preserved in the furnace. God's ability to deliver is thereby demonstrated.
- ch. 4 The glory of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar is warned that he deserves discipline. He persists in pride, is chastised, and his chastisement lasts for 7 times. He is then restored.
- ch. 5 Belshazzar makes a god of his pleasures, but still recognizes the gods of stone etc. The writing on the wall. The end of Belshazzar and the end of the Babylonian empire.

*GROUP 2*

- ch. 8 The little horn: 'none can deliver out of his hand'. He stops the Jews' worship of their God, and defies God himself. God's sanctuary and truth are finally vindicated.
- ch. 9 The desolations of Jerusalem: Israel's sins have brought on them the curse warned of in the OT. Jerusalem will be restored, but Israel's persistence in sin will bring on further desolations lasting to the end of 70 x 7 years. Then Jerusalem will be finally restored.
- chs. 10–12 The king exalts him-self above every god, and regards no god. The Writing of Truth. The series of apparent 'ends' leading up to 'the time of the end' and eventually to The End itself.

**IV**

From the author's choice and disposition of his material we turn now to a consideration of his thought, as far as we can deduce that thought from the disposition of the material. To do this adequately would require nothing less than a detailed exposition of every section in the book, and of each section in relation to all the other sections. That is impossible here. We must content ourselves with taking a few examples, deducing one or two general principles, and drawing what conclusions we may. From the two sets of pairs that appear in the first half of the book, and from the further two pairs in the second (see the list on pp. 7–8), and from the pairs that become evident when we place the two halves of the book side by side (i.e. chapters 1 and 6, 2 and 7, 3 and 8, 4 and 9, 5 and 10–12; see the list above), it is evident that the pairing of topics is characteristic of our author. Why has he done this? What purpose or effect does such pairing serve?

Take first chapters 2 and 7. They have the advantage that they have long since been regarded as a pair in many different analyses of the book. To see the point of the pairing will therefore be easier. What is at once evident is the balance between marked similarity and marked contrast. The visions have a common topic: both depict the whole course of Gentile imperial rule from the time of Nebuchadnezzar to its abolition; both depict the establishment of the Messianic kingdom. But their views of Gentile imperial power are very different, and their representations of the Messianic kingdom likewise different. Chapter 2 represents the

Gentile imperial powers as a succession of valuable metals in a beautiful, if awesome, statue of a man; chapter 7 as a succession of wild beasts. Neither vision, of course, represents Gentile power as unrelievedly and consistently bad. In chapter 2 the gold is glorious, the iron is strong; and in chapter 7 the first beast is made to stand on its feet and a man's heart is given to it (7:4), that is, it becomes more humane. But in both visions there is deterioration, and in the end an impossible mixture. In chapter 2 the attempt to mix two unmixables, iron and clay, produces fatal weakness and instability; in chapter 7 the giving of a man's eyes and mouth, but not of a man's heart, to a wild beast, that is, the combination of animal strength and instinctive cruelty with human intelligence, leads to a hideous strength and an insufferable and unprecedented destructiveness (7:7–8, 19–20, 23). In Chapter 2, then, the trouble is the image's own internal, self-ruining incoherence; in chapter 7 the beast's destructiveness of the world around him. Accordingly the Messianic kingdom is differently described in each vision, both in itself and in the way it supplants the Gentile empires.

In chapter 2 the polished image of a Man with its fatal weakness is rudely smashed, and its place taken, by a rough boulder cut out without hands (2:34), that is by supernatural power; whereas in chapter 7 dominion is taken from the hideous, destructive beasts by the Ancient of Days sitting in solemn judgement and given to ideal humanity, the Son of Man and the saints of the Most High.

The pairing of these two chapters, then, with their striking similarities and yet more striking differences, seems to be aimed at calling attention to the fact that there are two different ways of looking at, and estimating the character of. Gentile imperial rule, its strengths and its weaknesses. And it is surely a sign of balanced judgement on the part of our author to show that Gentile governments are from one point of view manlike, humane, majestic, but plagued with the weakness of incoherence, and at the same time to show from another point of view that Gentile governments are basically amoral, self-seeking, cruelly destructive, animal-like power-blocs.<sup>21</sup>

Another example of this putting of two sides of a question is the pairing of chapters 2 and 3. An image figures centrally in both. In both Nebuchadnezzar is taught a lesson in relation to Gentile imperial power. Chapter 2, with its succession of different metals in the image, and the eventual destruction of the image, teaches Nebuchadnezzar that a predetermined limit is set to the tenure of imperial power, whether by Nebuchadnezzar himself, the head of gold (2:38), or by Gentile governments generally. Chapter 3, on the other hand, teaches Nebuchadnezzar that a limit must be set to the scope and exercise of political power: the imperial political power must not lay claim to that loyalty and devotion on the part of its subjects generally, and of Jews in particular, that is properly reserved for God alone.

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<sup>21</sup> W. L. Humphrey, 223, misses the point when he claims that 'The reader must stretch his credulity to the breaking point in being asked to accept that the Daniel, who is both completely loyal to his Jewish heritage and God and is able to function as . . . a loyal courtier . . . in the court of foreign monarchs, is also the Daniel whose visions in the latter part of the book reveal these same monarchs and nations as oppressive and completely condemned in the divine plan.' Similarly, when J. J. Collins, 12, complains that Lenglet, in stressing the similarities between chapters 2 and 7 and maintaining that chapter 7 carries the same message as chapter 2, overlooks some crucial differences between the two chapters, the complaint may be justified; but the undoubted and important differences are not evidence, as Collins seems to suggest, that chapters 2 and 7 came originally from two different authors. Differences between the members of symmetrical pairs is a mark of our author's technique: it is his way of presenting a balanced view, differing, but complementary, analyses of things.

Similarly with chapters 7 and 8. In both the Gentile powers are represented as a succession of wild beasts. In both there is a horn that utters blasphemies and persecutes the saints. In both deliverance eventually comes. But besides the obvious difference, that chapter 7 presents all four Gentile powers, and chapter 8 only two of them, the climax of the vision and therefore its major point is different in the two visions. In chapter 7 the deliverance is a political one: the kingdom is taken from the Beast and given to the Son of Man and the saints. But in chapter 8 no mention is made of the Messianic kingdom; the deliverance is a religious one: it is the deliverance and vindication of the sanctuary, and the restoration of the daily sacrifice.

In addition, however, to putting two sides to a shared topic, the pairing of sections in the book seems also to serve the purpose of calling attention to a certain progression within the common theme. We may cite again chapters 4 and 5 with their shared theme: God's discipline of Gentile rulers, and the progress in the direction of defiant unrepentance and increasing impiety on the part of Belshazzar as compared with Nebuchadnezzar, with the consequent progress in the severity, summariness and finality of Belshazzar's punishment as compared with Nebuchadnezzar's. We have already examined the details (p. 9), and we need not repeat them here. But we can note one additional point regarding chapters 4 and 5 in particular, but also regarding all the other sections of the book. Daniel's thought is nowhere simple, but complex. Certain of the ideas in chapter 5 make it a suitable partner of chapter 4. Indeed, the recalling in 5:18–22 of the experiences of Nebuchadnezzar recorded in chapter 4 ties the one chapter to the other inseparably. At the same time certain other ideas in chapter 5 are echoed in chapters 10–12 in such fashion as makes the pairing of these two sections significant. Both members of the pair describe a climactic end foretold by a writing, the 'writing on the wall' in the one case, the Writing of Truth in the other. But while in chapter 5 the end concerned is the end of the first Gentile power to destroy Jerusalem and suppress the Judaeian kings, the end in chapters 10–12 is that of the last Gentile power; it is in fact nothing less than The End, preceded by an unprecedented time of trouble and accompanied by the resurrection of the dead (12:1–2). It is not without significance, then, that the insolent behaviour of the last ruler before the end of the Babylonian empire bears some resemblance to that of the last Gentile ruler before The End. But the differences in the circumstance, character and behaviour of the two rulers are equally significant: the situation in chapter 5 is at most an adumbration of that in chapters 10–12; between chapter 5 and chapters 10–12 there is an enormous worsening of the situation.

Take one more example of complex pairing. Chapter 1 seems at first sight (see the list on pp. 7–8) to stand by itself in its half of the book, and chapter 6 by itself in its half. But that is not so. As we have already seen (p. 9), chapter 1 with its reference to Nebuchadnezzar's handling of the temple vessels opens a theme which is later taken up and concluded in chapter 5 with Belshazzar's handling of those vessels. And chapter 6 with its crucially important 'writing that could not be changed' broaches a theme that comes to its climax in chapter 10 with 'the Writing of Truth'. But there is more to it than that. Chapter 1 also forms a pair with chapter 6, as can be seen by reference to the list on pages 11–12. Both chapters have a common theme; but, as we have come to expect, their differences are more significant than their similarities. In chapter 1 Daniel refuses to take part in unclean Gentile practice; in chapter 6 he refuses to abstain from Jewish religious practice. The interesting thing, however, is that

these characteristic differences between chapters 1 and 6, are the very points which these two chapters share with their partners in the other pairings. The unclean Gentile practice in which Daniel refuses to join in chapter 1 is eating unclean food (possibly also offered to idols); Belshazzar's act of insolent impiety in chapter 5 occurs at a banquet, and involves drinking out of the temple vessels and praising his idols. Similarly the stand Daniel takes in chapter 6 is over the question whether he should obey the king's command, cease praying to God, and pray instead to the Gentile king, while in chapters 10–12 the final Gentile king banishes Jewish worship and exalts himself above all gods.

From this it is clear that not only is the disposition of the material highly wrought and complex, but the details within each story are deliberate and significant. With this in mind, let us return to chapter 4, and ask what its purpose is in the Level 1 sense of that term, and how many of its details are meant to contribute to that purpose. Chapter 4 is the story of Nebuchadnezzar's madness. Rowley, we remember (see pp. 5–6), was convinced that the purpose of this story in the Level 2 sense of purpose was to encourage the Jews of Antiochus' day, by being 'a reference to Antiochus' and by bringing 'its promise of humiliation [*scil.* of Antiochus] at the hands of God'. Faced with the problem that several features in the story of Nebuchadnezzar's madness do not fit, but rather conflict with, Antiochus' case, Rowley solved the problem by maintaining that various features of the story did not, and should not be expected to, serve the purpose of the author. It was enough if they did not conflict with his purpose.

Well, let us look at some of these (according to Rowley) otiose features: (1) Nebuchadnezzar's madness was a literal madness, a discipline imposed by God for his sin of pride. Antiochus' 'madness' was not a discipline imposed by God: it was his sin itself. The punishment eventually imposed by God was death. (2) In commanding the cutting down of Nebuchadnezzar's tree, care is explicitly enjoined to preserve the stump for future growth; the discipline is temporary and intended not to destroy Nebuchadnezzar but to lead via repentance to restoration. But God's punishment of Antiochus' madness was neither temporary nor aimed at his restoration; nor would it have comforted many Jews to think it was. (3) Nebuchadnezzar's activity in building great Babylon is not criticized as sinful in itself. The sin lay in his motive of pride and self-aggrandizement. But Antiochus' activity, the stopping of the daily sacrifice and the desecration of God's temple, was of course sinful in itself.

Clearly these features of Nebuchadnezzar's story are not only otiose: they actually conflict with the alleged purpose of portraying Nebuchadnezzar and the treatment he received as a model, for the Jews' encouragement in the second century, of Antiochus and the treatment they hoped he would receive.

But now suppose Nebuchadnezzar's story was not necessarily written for that purpose. Indeed, let us forget about purpose in the Level 2 sense, and ask what purpose chapter 4 was meant to serve in the book in the Level 1 sense. And let us further suppose that chapter 4 was meant, as we have suggested above (see the list on p. 12) to pair not only with chapter 5 but also with chapter 9, in the same way as chapter 2 pairs with chapter 7, and chapter 5 with chapters 10–12. Immediately it is evident that chapters 4 and 9 have a common theme, God's discipline on pride. And the common theme is worked out in such a way that all three features

of Nebuchadnezzar's story, far from being otiose, are seen to be necessary to complete the pairing of detail between chapters 4 and 9. Take Feature 3: Jerusalem and Babylon are two naturally, historically, and theologically contrasting cities, and if Jerusalem and her desolations are to be the subject of chapter 9, it is very poignant that these should be contrasted with the glories of Babylon in chapter 4 (without any criticism of those glories in themselves), the more so since the Nebuchadnezzar who in chapter 4 boasts 'Is not this great Babylon which I have built?' is the Nebuchadnezzar responsible for the initial desolations of Jerusalem mentioned in chapter 9. If, then, Jerusalem is laid desolate under God's discipline for her sin, it is appropriate that we should be told by Feature 1 what discipline Nebuchadnezzar receives for his. And Feature 2 then appears not only necessary to the pairing but exceedingly significant. If Jerusalem is promised that, however long her discipline takes, she will eventually be restored, that is understandable: she is the city called after God's name (9:19). But that Nebuchadnezzar should be assured that his discipline is only temporary and aimed at his restoration, and that the story should record that he was in fact restored, shows an appreciation of the even-handedness of God's discipline and concern for both Jew and Gentile that is truly remarkable.

Seen then in the light of its position in the structure of the book, the Level 1 purpose of chapter 4 becomes perfectly clear. Obviously chapter 4 has different and more important things to do than to present Nebuchadnezzar as a (rather inexact and misleading) model of Antiochus. What, if anything, we should deduce from all this about its purpose in the Level 2 sense, we may leave till later.

## V

It is time now to move on to more general conclusions.

It has become apparent that the Book of Daniel is a literary unity in which every constituent part has been carefully written and deliberately positioned in relation to its immediate context and to the book as a whole so that the book shall achieve a carefully balanced presentation of its message. A literary unity of this structural complexity must be the work one mind. The idea that it has reached its present form as the result of two or more editions, each with its own different purpose, is unlikely in the extreme.

Next, since every constituent part is clearly necessary to complete the symmetrical structure, it follows that we cannot say that any constituent part is a later addition, added by a redactor. Collins and others, for instance, cannot be right when they argue that the prayer of confession in chapter 9 is not the work of the author but an addition made by a later redactor.<sup>22</sup> It is the prayer within that chapter that develops the sequence: Israel sinned, was warned, persisted; Jerusalem therefore was desolated, will be partially restored, but because of continued sin will be desolated again until finally repentance leads to Jerusalem's full restoration. This sequence matches Nebuchadnezzar's experience in chapter 4: sin, warning, persistence, discipline, repentance, restoration. When Collins further argues that the prayer's view of history, that the Gentile persecution comes upon Israel as a result of Israel's sins, contrasts sharply with what the book says elsewhere, namely that the persecution is a

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<sup>22</sup> Collins 20, 185–187.



consequence of the Gentile king's own revolt against God, we may agree with him that there is a contrast. But the contrast is not a contradiction, any more than chapter 2's analysis of the flaw in Gentile imperial power, as being a fatal weakness produced by internal incoherence, contradicts chapter 7's analysis of that flaw, as lying in its hideous strength and destructiveness. Such a contrast, far from proving that the prayer of chapter 9 was not placed in the book by the author, is a hallmark of his style.<sup>23</sup> Next, seeing that the book is a unity in which every constituent part is necessary to the structure of the whole, we must further conclude that the author's purpose in writing the book was nothing less than to present the total message of the whole book; and that means we must take seriously the book's internal proportions, as having been deliberately planned by the author.

The total message of the book, then, is nothing less than a survey, part historical and part prophetic, of the whole period of Gentile imperial rule from Nebuchadnezzar's first assault upon Jerusalem and the removal of its Davidic king until the abolition of all Gentile imperial power and the setting up of the Messianic kingdom. Here is no narrow concentration on the few years of Antiochus IV Epiphanes' persecution of the Jews, nor even exclusive attention to the End time. Nor can chapters 1–5 be regarded as a mere overture to the main part of the work, prefaced to it because some of their stories bear some resemblance to the state of affairs that later obtained under Antiochus IV, or simply to put Antiochus' period into its historical frame. If the author has devoted no less than five chapters to the Babylonian period, and has made those five chapters stand as the one half of the book's symmetrical bipartite structure, that must be because he was as much interested in the Babylonian period as in the whole of the remaining period of Gentile domination (as is natural enough for an author who claims to have spent the greater part of his life in the Babylonian period); as much interested in those times when according to the explicit statement of chapter 2 the End was never imminent, and was never thought to be, as in predicting and describing those times when the End would

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<sup>23</sup> Nor is the contrast evidence, as Collins claims, that a gulf separated the apocalyptic view of history, supposedly presented by the rest of the book, from the traditional view of history found in the prayer. The Deuteronomic view of history, according to Collins, is that the course of history can be changed if the people repent, whereas the apocalyptic view holds that everything is fixed and predetermined so that no repentance or prayer can alter what has been decreed. But the supposed gulf exists only in theological systems that are not big enough to comprehend both God's sovereignty and man's free will. It did not exist in the mind of our author. In the other member of the symmetrical pair, chapter 4, he happily relates to Nebuchadnezzar the dream's warning that discipline, lasting '7 times', is determined upon him, and then immediately calls upon him to repent, to break off his sins, in order to avert the discipline (4:27). And chapter 9 itself is another example of how divine predictions and human responsibility interact. Daniel sets himself to pray about the fact that Jeremiah's prophecy indicated that Jerusalem's desolation would be fulfilled in 70 years. What troubles him is Israel's persistence in sin. How, then, can Jeremiah's prophecy righteously be fulfilled? The angel informs him that Jerusalem will certainly be rebuilt, though in troublous times. To that extent Jeremiah's prophecy will be fulfilled. But that rebuilding will not prove to be the final restoration. More desolations will follow lasting until The End. If we ask why that should be, the chapter as it now stands gives the obvious reason. Israel's persistence in sin. To hold, as Collins does, that the content of Daniel's prayer is completely ignored in the angel's announcement, is only possible if one first assumes that the prayer is not an integral part of the chapter. If the author intended the prayer as an integral part of the chapter, it is obvious that the angel's announcement is the answer to the problem that the prayer itself has raised: how can God righteously fulfil Jeremiah's prophecy while Israel persists in sin? See further N. Porteous, 195–6. Similarly E. Heaton's view (49–50) that there is a difference in theological outlook between chapters 1–7 and chapters 8–12 so large that the two sections must come from different authors involves a misreading of the author's style.

begin to be imminent; as much interested in those comparatively long periods when Jews were able without denying or compromising their faith to hold high office in the Gentile government, as in those comparatively brief occasions when loyalty to God would make participation in Gentile government impossible; as much interested in describing those periods when through dreams, through the loyal service, witness, spiritual knowledge and wisdom of the Jews in exile, God was patiently seeking to instruct, discipline, and restore the Gentile monarchs and to improve the quality of their exercise of power (see chapters 3, 4 and 6), as in describing and predicting those brief periods when, the Gentile monarch being incorrigible and insufferable, the only thing that God could be expected to do was to destroy him; as much interested, finally, in those long, normal years when, though Jews could suddenly find that refusal to participate in idolatry might temporarily endanger their lives, the Jews' own worship of God was never banned, as he is in recording and predicting those brief, rare and exceptional years when the Jews' faith and religion were, or would be, banned completely.

Now if this broad, balanced interest does not fit, without remainder, into the narrow Level 2 purpose of encouraging the Palestinian Jews who were in the thick of Antiochus IV's persecution, that need not worry us, it does fit the situation where, Jerusalem and the Davidic monarchy being destroyed, and complete domination given to Gentile imperial powers, intelligent Jews in exile were discovering through experience, thought, prayer and revelation what their role was to be in Gentile societies, what God was doing with the Gentile governments, what were the strengths, weaknesses and trends of Gentile imperial power, and where those trends would be likely to lead and eventually to end.<sup>24</sup>

But if the bipartite symmetrical structure of the book shows that chapters 1–5 were, in the author's plan and purpose, of equal weight and importance as chapters 6–12, it shows also that the reverse is true. It will not allow us to degrade the status of chapters 7–12 by suggesting, as Brevard Childs does,<sup>25</sup> that they are simply a midrashic interpretation of an earlier author's ancient prophecy (i.e. ch. 2), supplied and added to the book by a Maccabean commentator, who was concerned to tell his contemporaries how the original early prophecy applied to their own day. First of all, as we have already seen, the structural complexity of the book forbids our thinking that more than one author was involved. Secondly, the structure shows that chapters 7–12 do not stand as a self-contained group within the book. They stand together with chapter 6 to form the second major group within the book, with chapter 6 introducing their leading themes in the same way as chapter 1 introduces the leading themes of the remaining four chapters in Group 1. And certainly chapter 6 is not a midrashic interpretation of some earlier part of the book. Thirdly, the individual chapters of Group 2

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<sup>24</sup> To claim as some do that the Book of Daniel, being apocalyptic, holds that human political effort at improvement is useless because all is in the end doomed, is manifestly false to more than half of the book. Of course the book preaches that Gentile political systems are ultimately doomed, but that does not mean that they are not meanwhile worth spending time and effort on to try and improve them. More than half the chapters of the book, if only we will take them seriously as history and not dismiss them as fanciful legend, insist that the Jews in exile thought it worthwhile to work in Gentile government service, and that God was concerned to teach and improve Gentile rulers, often through the witness of the Jews to what are life's true values in the here and now. Even the apocalyptic vision of chapter 7 points out that the first beast becomes more human.

<sup>25</sup> And also A. Szörényi.

stand, as we have seen, in symmetrical opposition to their counterparts in Group 1; and the purpose of that symmetrical arrangement is not that the chapters of Group 2 should provide midrashic interpretation of their counterparts in Group 1.

Next let us take a feature of the book's structure and scope that may tell us something about the time when the book was written.

This feature we have already referred to: it is the deliberate placing of chapter 9 over against chapter 4 in the main symmetry of the book. For several reasons it is difficult to think that these chapters were first written and this symmetry first constructed during Antiochus' persecution of the Jews. First, no criticism is made of the culture of which the building of Babylon was such a superb expression. Rather the builder of Babylon is represented as a majestic tree set up by God himself for the preservation and delight of his subjects. His sin lies solely in his pride. It is, then, unlikely that chapter 4 was first written at a time when Gentile culture, in the form of Hellenism, which hitherto had penetrated Palestine peacefully, had now become one of the chief evils against which the Maccabees fought, and compromise with which was regarded as apostasy (1 Macc 1:11–15; 2 Macc 4:9–17). Secondly, Nebuchadnezzar had been the one who had laid Jerusalem desolate, destroyed the sanctuary and taken the gold and silver vessels to Babylon. Yet in chapter 9 no blame is laid on him for Jerusalem's original or continuing desolations; all the blame is laid on Israel's persistence in sin. It is difficult to think that chapter 4 was first written and placed over against chapter 9 at the very time when Antiochus IV had come to Jerusalem and arrogantly entered the sanctuary and taken 'the silver and gold and the costly vessels' and 'departed to his own land', or when two years later his officer after 'deceitfully speaking peaceable words' to the Jews of Jerusalem 'suddenly fell on the city, dealt it a severe blow . . . plundered the city, burned it with fire . . . stationed there a sinful people, lawless men . . . (1 Macc 1:20–24, 29–34). Actually, if chapter 4 had alleged that Nebuchadnezzar prospered uninterruptedly while Jerusalem lay desolate, and only later came to some monstrous fate, one might the more easily have supposed that it may have been written in Maccabean times, when Antiochus was still flourishing, and Jerusalem desolate. For 2 Maccabees 6:12–16 urges Jewish readers not to be depressed by the desolations suffered by Jerusalem but 'to recognize that these punishments were designed not to destroy but to discipline our people. In fact not to let the impious alone for long, but to punish them immediately, is a sign of great kindness. For in the case of the other nations the Lord waits patiently to punish them until they have reached the full measure of their sins; but he does not deal in this way with us, in order that he may not take vengeance on us afterward when our sins have reached their height . . . Though he disciplines us with calamities, he does not forsake his own people' (RSV). Now Daniel, in deliberately placing chapters 4 and 9 one against the other in a symmetry, is likewise inviting the reader to compare God's discipline of Nebuchadnezzar with God's discipline of Jerusalem. But in Daniel Nebuchadnezzar is not allowed to go on in his sin until it is too late and until he meets some terrible death as 1 and 2 Maccabees say Antiochus did (1 Macc 6:8–13; 2 Macc 9:5–28). Instead Nebuchadnezzar is given the treatment which 2 Maccabees says is reserved for Israel and which it says is a mark of God's great kindness to Israel. God with great care disciplines him so as not to destroy him, but to bring him to repentance, and thus to restore him to his original political majesty and cultural glory. And what is more, Nebuchadnezzar responds to

this discipline and is restored; whereas Israel is confessed by Daniel to be so intransigent in her sin that Jerusalem, though presently restored, will be laid desolate again, and suffer desolations right up until the end. It is, therefore, difficult to believe that chapters 4 and 9 of Daniel were written and made to stand over against each other in the symmetry of the book in Maccabean times. And it is even more difficult to believe that the story of Nebuchadnezzar's discipline was incorporated in the book in Maccabean times to encourage the faithful in the hope that just as God had treated Nebuchadnezzar so he would treat Antiochus. Finally, we may look at that section of the book which more than all others raises the question of its dating. It is the majority view that the long, detailed prophecy of chapters 10–12 must be, and is, largely a *vaticinium ex eventu*. By creating the impression that all these historical events, which his readers would know had actually taken place, had in fact been predicted in detail and fulfilled inexorably to the letter, the author aimed, on this view, to produce in his readers overwhelming confidence in his few, but major, real predictions. These were that Antiochus would make a third invasion of Egypt, this time very successfully, but that on his return journey he would suddenly meet his end, when encamped between Jerusalem and the sea; that there would then follow a time of unprecedented trouble for Israel, out of which nonetheless they would be delivered; that then the resurrection of the dead would take place, and thus the End would have arrived; and that all this would take place within a period of about 3½ years measured from Antiochus' setting up of the abomination of desolation. But this last event, according to the majority view, must have already taken place before the book was written and published (for had the book been published before that event, the prediction of it would have been a genuine predictive prophecy). How long after the setting up of the abomination of desolation it took our author to compile this book with its remarkably complex structure the majority view does not tell us; nor how long it took to get it published and into circulation. Practical sense suggests that by the time it was written and published, a considerable part of the 3½ years must have gone by. The book would now be promising that the End would occur within an even shorter time than 3½ years. Fortunately, when the book was published, Daniel's reading public, close-knit though they must have been, never realized who the author was—the publisher never spilt the beans—and took the book for an ancient book without wondering why they had never heard of it before. They believed its *vaticinium ex eventu* to have been a genuine prophecy, and put their faith in the author's prediction, were very encouraged by it, and prepared to meet the End. Unfortunately, of course, nothing happened. Antiochus did not invade Egypt again. He did not encamp between Jerusalem and the sea. He died, but not there: he died in fact far away out east. There was trouble for Israel as always, but nothing unprecedented. And the resurrection of the dead did not take place. The other things which other chapters in Daniel had promised would happen at the End, did not take place either: all Gentile imperial power was not everywhere removed, and universal dominion was not given to Israel.<sup>26</sup> The only

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<sup>26</sup> Hartmann and Di Leila, 303, like others who hold that 11:40–12:4 was meant to be a prediction of the fate of Antiochus IV, try to escape from the conclusion to which men of ordinary morality would be driven on this supposition by the non-fulfilment of the prediction, by first claiming that the prediction was not a prediction after all but only 'the sacred author's imaginative expectation of what would happen in the final days of Antiochus' career'; and then they add: 'That the expectation does not correspond to the known data of history in no way detracts from the author's confident and sure hope that the Lord of history holds unquestioned control

thing that took place within the time was the deliverance and cleansing of the sanctuary. Nevertheless the faithful having discovered the predictions to be false were not discouraged. They still accepted the predictions as genuine predictions and the whole book as authoritative; and they carefully preserved it and quoted it (e.g. 1 Macc 2:60). Later they canonized it.

At this point the majority view, based as it is on the alleged incredibility of predictive prophecy, becomes itself so incredible that it will be worthwhile looking again at the structure and thought-flow of this part of Daniel to see what they may suggest as to the purpose of this section and the time of its composition.

First we notice that chapters 11 and 12 are not simply a list of historical events which, being (as it is claimed) predicted and then fulfilled, might serve the purpose of creating confidence in further predictions about the time of the end. Any events at all, having been predicted and then fulfilled, could serve that purpose. The writer's purpose is at the least more than this. After the predicted demise of the final kings of Persia and then the death of Alexander the future is divided into four great movements (11:5-19; 11:20-28; 11:29-35; 11:36-12:3). By a very precise and consistent use of terms<sup>27</sup> the author indicates that only the last of these movements is 'the time of the end'; it alone introduces the End itself. Before 11:40 the only reference in the chapter to 'the time of the end' (11:35) indicates that it is still future; only with the event of 11:40 is it announced as having begun. But then by a deliberate repetition of vocabulary, this preview of history calls attention to the fact that while only the last movement is the time of the end and finally the End itself, all four movements show features in common, and witness the repetition of almost identical situations: a king will stage an enormous attack upon Egypt, and either on his outward or return journey, or both, will station armies in 'the glorious land', threatening or actually perpetrating destruction and outrage of one kind or another. In other words, each of the first three movements, though lacking the distinctive features, and the distinctive combination of events, of the time of the end, will to some extent look like the time of the end, and yet will not be the time of the end.

So the first great movement starts 'at the end of the years' (11:6); after much toing and froing over the subsequent years and generations this movement comes to its peak when 'at the end of the times' (11:13) the king of the north sets out to invade Egypt with a vast army. None can withstand him. He stands in the glorious land and in his hand is destruction (11:15-16).<sup>28</sup> But in spite of great success, he is eventually turned back, and goes home. There he falls (11:18-20). The second great movement (11:20-28) climaxes in Antiochus IV's first attack upon Egypt. On his return through Palestine after great success 'his heart will be set against the holy covenant. He will take action against it'; but then 'he will return to his own country' (11:28 NIV). The third great movement commences 'at the appointed time' (11:29) with another

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also over such powerful men as Antiochus IV Epiphanes.' This attempted escape is grievously unsatisfactory to the moral sense of ordinary laymen. As B. S. Childs observes of the alleged pseudonymity of the book, 'In spite of the efforts of several generations of critical biblical scholars to dispel this objection, the issue continues to trouble the average lay reader of the Bible who has not been initiated into the critical approach.'

<sup>27</sup> Notice how by the repeated use of the word 'end' in a variety of phrases (11:6, 13, 27, 35, 40; 12:4, 6, 9, 13) there is conveyed the sense of a succession of periods each with its own end; and notice at the same time how the phrase 'the time of the end' is carefully and consistently reserved for the last period preceding The End (see 11:35, 40; 12:4, 9).

<sup>28</sup> There is no need to depart from the MT here, though perhaps the meaning is not that he actually engages in destruction, but as NIV puts it 'He . . . will have the power to destroy it'.

invasion of Egypt by Antiochus IV. This time he is unsuccessful; for the ships of Kittim come against him. Returning in frustration he enters Palestine and wreaks terrible outrage on the sanctuary, setting up the abomination that makes desolate (11:29–31). Even so, he does not meet his end in Palestine. Only in the time of the end does the invading king meet his end there. And, of course, only in the time of the end does Israel experience trouble unprecedented in all her history. Only in the time of the end is the deliverance of Israel accompanied by the resurrection of the dead.

But now another recurrent feature in the preview of these movements emerges. Doubtless because each succeeding movement as it develops will look as if it may turn out to be the time of the end, the angel warns that in the first movement some in Israel will think the time has come for the vision of the Messianic kingdom to be established and they will take steps to try to establish the vision. But events will prove them mistaken (11:14). Similarly in the second movement the angel warns that the strategies and deceitful diplomacy of the Gentile kings shall make it look as if they are about to create the conditions of the end-time. But the appearances will be misleading. It will not prove to be the time of the end, 'for yet the end shall be at the time appointed' (11:27).

With this we can perhaps foresee ourselves what the angel is going to tell the people of the third movement; and of course he does so tell them. In spite of Antiochus' enormous outrages upon the sanctuary and his persecution of the faithful, he points out that they are not living in the time of the end. Rather Israel shall experience persecutions, captivities and death, and from time to time even the wise shall fall, and all this will go on happening 'until the time of the end' (11:33–35).

Now all this makes excellent sense, and has an obvious, serious, and practical purpose when taken as predictive prophecy. It is a very necessary warning in advance to people who will find themselves living in momentous times not to think that they are already living in the time of the end and that the End is at hand, simply because their own times show certain features that will mark the time of the end as well.

But the majority view, that the preview of the first three movements is really a *vaticinium ex eventu*, removes from the first two movements this serious purpose of warning the people who lived in those times. Of course, their warning may on this view still enforce the observation made of the people in the third movement that neither were they yet living in the time of the end. If this was its purpose, however, it goes clean counter to what the majority view says the writer's purpose was, namely to stiffen the resistance of the faithful suffering under Antiochus in the belief that the End was imminent. For now the writer is reminding them that in the first two movements people thought they were living in the time of the end and they were not. The invading king went back to his land and did not come to his end dramatically in Palestine. And by the time the author's readers got hold of his book, they already knew that Antiochus had likewise on this occasion too gone back east without coming to his end in Palestine. And here was the author telling them that the time of the end would be seen to have begun only when there came another massive invasion of Egypt (11:40). And seeing, as we know, the invasion never even began, contemporary readers of the book would never have come to think that they were even living in the time of the end, let alone that the End was imminent.

It will be retorted, of course, that the book does promise that the time of the end will have commenced and the End itself will have arrived within three and a half years. But this understanding of the question and answer of chapter 12:6–7 seems to rest on an inaccurate translation. As Keil long ago pointed out,<sup>29</sup> the question in 12:6 is not ‘When shall the end of these wonders come?’, but ‘How long shall the end of these wonders last?’. The wonders in question are not merely the unheard-of things which the king of 11:36 speaks against God<sup>30</sup> they are surely nothing less than all the information that the angel has passed on to Daniel since Daniel last got the opportunity to speak. And the question asks not, of course, how long the whole period covered by the angel’s revelation shall last, but how long the end of that period shall last. In other words, ‘the end of these wonders’ is the equivalent of ‘the time of the end’. And since Daniel has just been told that the time of the end will include, among other things, a time of unprecedented trouble for Israel (12:1), the question naturally asks how long this time should last; and the answer, 3½ times, is naturally supplemented by ‘When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed’ (12:7 NIV). The 3½ times must therefore be counted from the beginning of the time of the end; and the angel has already said that the people living under Antiochus’ persecution are not yet living in the time of the end (11:33–35), and that that time will begin only with the final invasion of Egypt. And since that invasion never happened, the wise among Daniel’s readers never began to count.

Again it will be retorted that the writer does inform his contemporaries at 12:11–12 that the End will come 1290, or, at the most, 1335, days after the removal by Antiochus Epiphanes of the continual sacrifice and his setting up of the abomination. But the two sets of numbers given by the angel here do not correspond with the number of days given in 8:13–14 for the vindication of the sanctuary from the violations perpetrated by Antiochus. This shows, then, that 12:11–12 does not refer to the desolation of the sanctuary by Antiochus during the third great movement, but to another such desolation in the fourth great movement, the time of the end. That the final movement should witness its own desolation of the sanctuary in addition to the one perpetrated in the third is nothing to be surprised at. It is rather to be expected. It has been the lesson of the whole of chapter 11 that all the four great movements will have major features in common. It has been the lesson of some of the pairings in the book—chapter 5 with chapters 10–12, and chapter 6 with those same chapters—that earlier periods likewise saw partial adumbrations of the time of the end.

Daniel’s book, then, certainly preaches that Gentile imperial domination shall come to its end, and that the Messianic kingdom will be set up; and that each age is nearer to that end than the previous age. On the other hand, far from telling the Jews of Antiochus IV’s day that they were living in the time of the end, the burden of chapter 11 is that people are not so likely to be living in the time of the end as they think they are. To which is added in chapter 12 a warning, to the people of Antiochus’ day as of any other day, that only when the time of the end actually begins, will the full significance of the details of Daniel’s prophecies of that time be finally apparent (12:4, 9).

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<sup>29</sup> Keil 489.

<sup>30</sup> As some have thought on the grounds that the words used on these two occasions are related.

## About the Author

**DAVID W. GOODING** was Professor Emeritus of Old Testament Greek at Queen's University, Belfast and a member of the Royal Irish Academy. He has taught the Bible internationally and lectured on both its authenticity and its relevance to philosophy, world religions and daily life. He has published scholarly articles on the Septuagint and Old Testament narratives, as well as expositions of Luke, John, Acts, Hebrews, the New Testament's Use of the Old Testament, and several books addressing arguments against the Bible and the Christian faith. His analysis of the Bible and our world continues to shape the thinking of scholars, teachers and students alike.