

A Brief Investigation of Old Testament Precursors to the Pauline Missiological Model of Cultural Adaptation

by Brian K. Petersen

Introduction

The example of purposeful cultural adaptation that Paul wrote about in I Corinthians 9:19-23 is invariably a source of extreme challenge and fascination for missionaries. It calls them to an almost unlimited willingness to leave that which is natural and comfortable, learn what is new and unfamiliar, and do all of this without violating the supra-cultural boundaries of Christ's commands (cf. vs. 21). At the grassroots level, some have questioned the need for such adaptation. They have argued that any such endeavor will either inherently involve some kind of syncretistic compromise or perhaps be increasingly unnecessary in this era of ever-widening globalization. And yet, while acknowledging these concerns, this call to do whatever cultural adjusting it takes to communicate effectively still maintains a hold on many of those who are passionately committed to the completion of the task.

Paul gave several examples of how this approach might be applied. For example, to reach Jews for Christ, Paul voluntarily lived under the Jewish laws (vs. 20; cf. Acts 21:24ff). To reach non-Jews with the gospel, Paul lived outside of these same Jewish laws, conforming himself to Gentile cultural expectations, in order to reach these non-Jews (vs. 20; cf. Galatians 2:14). He willingly adapted his lifestyle and cultural practices in order to communicate and relate successfully to his target audience. However, regardless of the cultural group he was addressing, he never compromised his commitment to obey the laws of the Lord Jesus Christ. There would always be limits to the extent of one's cultural adaptation, even for the sake of the gospel. Paul stated it clearly: "To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law)..." (vs. 20)

It's much easier to talk about Paul's model of adaptation and communication in a purely theoretical way than it is to actually apply it to a given cultural group. However, the more we see how it had already been applied in the Bible used by the early church, the Old Testament, the more we can confidently allow the

Brian has lived and worked in Asia since the late 1980s. He has conducted intercultural training seminars, directed projects utilizing various art forms for enhanced communication (music, visual art, poetry, film), presented papers at "Rethinking Forums" and other venues in South Asia as well as North America.

Holy Spirit to guide us in our own contexts requiring cross-cultural communication today.

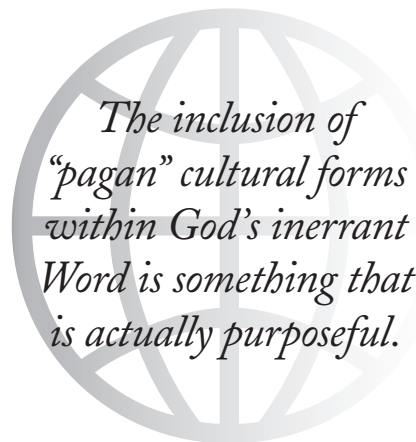
Over the last couple of years, the author has sought to find biblical examples of this imperative for cultural adjustment found in Paul's statements in I Corinthians. Many have written about the ways in which Paul worked out this principle in several of his sermons in the book of Acts. He adapted his approaches with monotheistic Jews in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:13-43), polytheistic Gentile farmers in Lystra (Acts 14:8-20), and intellectual Greeks in Athens (Acts 17:16-34).¹

However, this present paper will concentrate on some of the clearest examples of the Pauline model that are found in the pages of the Old Testament. Just as a study of the varied statements of God's purpose for the nations in the Old Testament (e.g., Gen. 12:1-3) can enhance one's commitment to and understanding of the Great Commission statements of the gospels, an analysis of examples of cultural adaptation among the first thirty-nine books of the Bible can also raise our commitment to and insights into the Pauline model of "becoming all things to all people."

This brief overview of several Old Testament passages will in no way be exhaustive. It only makes the point that God has consistently done whatever it took to communicate divine truth effectively to his target audiences. Others must continue digging for similar Old (and New) Testament examples that can be added to those presented here. Indeed, the author's own research was enhanced in this process when he obtained a copy of John R. Davis' insightful book last year, *Poles Apart: Contextualizing the Gospel in Asia* (revised edition, 1998).² This very suggestive book, especially its ninth chapter on "Biblical Precedents for the Concept of Contextualization," confirmed many things already discovered, as well as providing direction for the pursuit of other case studies of cultural adaptation in the Old Testament.

The Question of "Pagan" Cultural Forms within the Old Testament

The overall issue, which will be addressed in analyzing several OT passages, will be the existence of Ancient Near Eastern (i.e., "pagan") cultural forms that found their way into the pages of Holy Scripture. Scholarly debate surrounding this topic has generally focused on the question of cultural borrowing. In essence, theological conservatives (such as the author) have most often been motivated by a concern to protect the fully divine nature of Scripture by arguing against any reli-



ance of the biblical authors or characters upon the pagan cultures of the nations surrounding Israel. Those of a more liberal persuasion have been more attracted to postulating how particular Old Testament accounts stand in a dependent relationship to earlier non-biblical material. They have thus hoped to demonstrate the more essentially human and non-exceptional nature of the Bible.

Although a number of the instances of supposed borrowing will not be resolved or even mentioned in these few pages, it is the author's contention that the inclusion of "pagan" cultural forms within God's inerrant Word is something that is actually purposeful, a strategic decision of the Holy Spirit in working through the human authors of Scripture. *Forms* have been recruited, as it were, in order to serve the divine *purpose* of truth communication. In other words, the use of such *forms* have helped make the *meaning* of the divine truths all the more clear to the original

audiences in question. Thus, rather than becoming a "challenge" to the veracity of Scripture, such "pagan" elements instead serve to show the divine creativity and communicative excellence in revealing eternal truth to culture-bound human beings of the Ancient Near East (hereafter "ANE").

The following "case studies" serve to emphasize the importance of cultural adaptation to effective cross-cultural communication. If it was crucial to Paul's missionary strategy, if it was previously modeled in the pages of the Old Testament, then it must also form an integral part of our contemporary approach to the evangelization of all peoples.

God's Covenant with Abram (Genesis 15:7-18)

The basic issue recounted in this passage is the doubt that existed in Abram's mind regarding whether or not he would indeed inherit all the land of Canaan. He was still only living in a tent and was surrounded by a multitude of peoples who were fully entrenched in their cities and towns. In light of this unlikely context for a quick transfer of land titles to him and his promised descendants, Abram asked the Lord, "How can I know that I will gain possession of [this land]?" (Gen. 15:8) This question sounds strikingly similar to the inappropriate inquiry made by Zechariah in the temple, when told by the angel Gabriel of God's intention to give him and his elderly wife Elizabeth a son (John the Baptist). Feeling a bit uncertain about God's ability to do the seeming impossible, Zechariah likewise asked, "How can I be sure of this?" However, in contrast to God's immediate censure in this instance (i.e., nine months without the ability to speak), God acted with graciousness and deep insight with Abram. God realized his need to have greater confidence in His promise regarding land and communicated with Abram in such a clear way that he never again questioned God's intention to come through with the real estate.

It is interesting to note that the divine response came in the form of a simple yet seemingly strange command:

“Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon.” (vs. 9)

That is all that the Lord said. He gave no further instructions. He did not tell Abram what to do with these animals or why He wanted them to be brought to Him. (Remember that the Lord has not yet given the detailed descriptions of the various sacrificial offerings that would eventually be revealed to Moses. That event was still hundreds of years in the future.)

The important thing to note is that Abram immediately acted on God’s request. In fact, he not only brought the animals, he also killed and arranged the carcasses in a specialized way. It’s as if he knew what God expected him to do. The animals were slaughtered, split in half, and placed in two parallel rows, the halves forming a pathway down the middle (vs. 10).

Later, when Abram woke up from his sleep, he observed a startling sight: there were two objects, a smoking firepot and a blazing torch, moving back and forth between the halves of the animals. At this juncture, God declared that He has thereby made a covenant with Abram regarding turning over the deed to the entire Promised Land. It’s as though the arrangement of the animals with the levitation of the two objects between the two rows had solemnized such an agreement.³

What are our western minds to do with such a bizarre scene? The Lord certainly knew, and Abram seemed to be aware of what was happening; but for those of us who are not familiar with ANE culture, this ritualistic behavior appears very perplexing, even a bit extreme.

We can gain some insight into common ANE cultural practices regarding the solemnizing of covenants by reading Jeremiah 34:18-20. How would the Lord treat covenant breakers? He would treat them just like the animal that had been killed and cut in two and through

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whose halves they had walked. In the ANE context, some covenants were ratified between two parties by their walking down the “aisle” created by the halves of animals. As the two parties walked, they pronounced upon themselves a curse, asking God to treat them as they had treated the animals *if* they failed to fulfill their covenant obligations. This was commonly referred to as a “royal land grant covenant.”⁴

Evidently Abram did not need any instruction from the Lord about this ritual. He had grown up among (and as fully part of) the peoples of the ANE and was, thus, totally familiar with this method of ratifying a covenant, especially regarding a land grant transaction. The Hebrew word for making a covenant, interestingly enough, means literally to “cut” a covenant, a possible reference to this common practice.

The strange thing about this particular use of the ritual is that it was only one of the parties (the Lord) who walked between the pieces of the animals. Abram saw two items “passing” between the animal halves: a smoking torch and a blazing torch. Within the thinking of ANE cultures, these two items (fire and smoke) represented the divine presence. But Abram was not asked to walk alongside them through the halves. Only the Lord is seen pronouncing, as it were, a “curse” upon Himself, saying that He Himself should be split in two, should He go back on His promise to give the land to Abram. This is a staggering, unbelievable way for God to communicate His truth! Abram, as a result, never again had any question or doubts concerning God’s promise to give his descendants the land of Canaan.

In summary, the Lord had chosen an ANE cultural *form* and had transformed its common, temporal *meaning* by using it to confirm the absolute certainty of His promise to Abram.

It would be fulfilled. God adapted himself to Abram, an ancient near easterner, relating His eternal truth to a cultural practice that would make sense to Abram in his context. Robert I. Bradshaw has observed, regarding the relationship of ANE covenants to the Old Testament, that

it is generally recognized that the concept of covenant represents a supreme example of God’s accommodation in His revelation to mankind. In expressing Himself through the covenant God has taken something that is already understood as the starting point of a relationship. This concept is then developed and changed as revelation continued.⁵

The Use of Hittite Covenant Formulas in the Pentateuch

The covenant which God initially enacted with the children of Israel at Mount Sinai also had links to cultural forms which existed prior to that moment in salvation history. Research has identified the basic structure of this covenant as very similar to Hittite treaties ca. 1344-1271 BC, during the reigns of Shuppiluliuma I, Murshili II, and Muwatalli II.⁶ It was the Hittites who standardized the “suzerain-vassal treaty” *form* in the ANE context, most examples containing at least six sections: introduction of the parties; the historical background of the relationship of these treaty partners; the terms or stipulations of this particular agreement itself; a listing of witnesses; the detailing of blessings and curses; and a statement regarding the use of the document itself.⁷ There was also some variation in the order of these elements of this type of treaty. In addition, such a covenant was undertaken between a superior political power and one that was subordinate to the former.⁸

The essential format of these Hittite treaties can be observed in at least

three locations in the Pentateuch: the “covenant code” (Exodus 20, 25), the “holiness code” in Leviticus (Leviticus 1-26), and the “deuteronomic code” in Deuteronomy (Deuteronomy 1-3, 12-27, 31-32).⁹ It can also be found in Joshua 8, 24.¹⁰ However, it is most clearly seen in portions of the book of Exodus (20:1-23:33) and in the entire book of Deuteronomy.¹¹

Here follows an analysis of this ANE form in the light of the book of Deuteronomy, built upon some observations made by John H. Walton¹² (see table below).

The relationship between Israel and Yahweh, as described in the Old Testament, was unique among the nations of the ANE. However, when God formalized this special relation-

ship, He utilized cultural *forms* that were already in existence, combining both continuity and discontinuity in cultural adaptation. The *form* was not new; the *purpose* for which it was used, its *meaning*, was unparalleled.

The Ritual of Circumcision (Genesis 17:9-14)

Who was it that originally came up with the idea of circumcision? The

Table 1: Treaty Elements in the Book of Deuteronomy

Treaty Element	Reference	Brief Description
1. Introduction of Speaker	Deuteronomy 1:6-3:29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yahweh is the author and initiator of the covenant, the suzerain who has the right to make certain demands; • He has promised the land of Canaan to the people of Israel, requiring them to go into it and conquer it; He will give them success if they do so.
2. Historical Prologue	1:6-3:29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The history of the missed opportunity of the last generation of Israelites is reviewed; • They refused to go into the land and conquer it out of fear and distrust of God's commitment to empower them; • As a consequence, they wandered in the desert for 40 years, until that disobedient generation died; • Now, the next generation has the same opportunity being laid before them.
3. Stipulations	Chps. 12-26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Summary</i>—ethical & religious behavior as the conditions of the covenant: • Appropriate place of worship; • Prohibition of loyalty to any other gods; • Purity in eating habits; • Honoring God with first fruits and tithes; • Humane treatment of slaves & indentured servants; • Celebration of prescribed festivals of remembrance; • Appropriate means of dealing with violent crimes; • Approach to warfare; • Relationships with potential spouses, offspring, captive women, etc. • Private property rights; • Appropriate types of textiles and clothing; • The perimeters of being “clean” or “unclean”; • Various other laws regarding ethical behavior.
4. Statements regarding the Document	27:2-3; 31:10-13, 24-26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The tablets of the covenant were to be kept in the ark; • The Law was to be read every seven years during the Feast of Booths; • Stones were to be set up prior to hearing the reading of the blessings and curses.
5. Divine Witnesses	31:19-22, 26-28; 32:39-43	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A song was to be taught to Israel so that they could sing it as a witness either for or against them relative to their keeping of this covenant; • The Law itself is a witness; • The heavens and earth are both witnesses; • The song of Moses also mentions several witnesses, e.g., God's oath to exact vengeance, should Israel be found faithless.
6. Curses and Blessings	28:1-68	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blessings for Obedience (1-14): children, crops, livestock, food, victory over enemies, good reputation & impact among the peoples, rain, lending vs. having to borrow, being the top vs. bottom, head vs. tail: in a word, <i>life</i>; • Curses for Disobedience (15-68): the opposite of each of the above blessings; in summary: <i>destruction</i>.

evidence is fairly clear that this cultural *form* was practiced in the ANE by a number of people groups. The western Semitic peoples practiced it, including the Arabians, Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites and Egyptians, along with the Hebrews (cf. Jeremiah 9:25-26). However, circumcision was not practiced by other cultures, including the Babylonians, Assyrians, Canaanites and Philistines.

The original practice was most likely limited to adolescent and young adult males, having the *function* of a rite of initiation into adulthood, into the clan and/or into marriage. It is interesting to note the language concerning marriage relationships: the Hebrew words for bridegroom, father-in-law and son-in-law all come from the same root word, *hatan*, which is Arabic for “to circumcise.” So, a “son-in-law” is literally “one who has been circumcised” and a “father-in-law” is “the one who performs the circumcision.” This certainly gives new *meaning* regarding the cost of wedding preparations for the groom.

So, this particular practice is neither new nor unique to the Hebrews. The earliest reference to circumcision that we have comes from Egypt in approximately 2400 BC,¹³ well before the Lord commanded Abraham to begin circumcising within his extended family in Genesis 17. However, God transformed the *meaning* and *function* of this practice of removing the foreskin in two ways: first, by making it something to be done primarily on newborn infants (i.e., on the eighth day after birth); and, secondly, by insisting on a distinctive symbolism for the act (i.e., that it represented the special relationship that Yahweh would have with all of His covenant people, including even those who could not yet choose to follow the Lord themselves.)

Thus, God has again taken a cultural *form* familiar to His chosen people, a ritual that already existed among the nations surrounding them, and transformed it into a new, powerful *message* about who He is and how He

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acts. This minor surgical procedure now declared, “You belong to Me! I will always be your God, and you will always be My people.” The fact of circumcision’s permanent nature allowed for such new *meanings*.

It is interesting to note that, as circumcision was the physical sign of God’s covenant people in the Old Testament, in a similar (though not completely parallel) way baptism became the outward symbol of those who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ in the New Testament. Baptism likewise is a religious ritual that was practiced by both pagans and Jews many centuries prior to its practice by John the Baptist and later by Jesus and His disciples.¹⁴

Basic Names Used for “God” (Genesis 14:18-22)

A common point of debate among missionary linguists and evangelists has concerned the choice of words to be used to refer to God Himself: are any of the existing words for the supreme deity acceptable for use regarding the one true God, or must new words be borrowed from other languages, whether ancient biblical ones or from other contemporary cultures? How can one purge distorted connotations from a local word and avoid syncretistic understandings? On the other hand, how can one avoid the inherent foreignness of using “outsider” words for God that may produce equally unhelpful associations?

New terms were indeed introduced into the revelational world of those early human objects of God’s communication, the term YHWH (“Yahweh”) being the best example. However, God the Holy Spirit, as the superintending author of Holy Scripture in cooperation with the human writers (cf. 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21), chose to use some general words to generically refer to the supreme deity in the Old

Testament that are at least surprising. The most startling word choice has to be the Semitic word *el*, especially because of all of its contextual connotations in the ANE.

In contrast to the word *Yahweh*, *el* was already well known in the ANE.¹⁵ It had been used to refer to the highest god in the Canaanite pantheon, one seen primarily as creator and father. The difficult thing is that *el* in ANE literature, while indeed referring to the supreme god, is described as a deity that is essentially different both in character and power from the God who revealed Himself to Abram. For example, there is “the description of *el*’s hunting and feasting, and lovemaking to his two wives and the birth of the gods Dawn and Dusk.” *El* is seen in Canaanite writings as “a vigorous and prodigiously lusty old man.”¹⁶ Such understandings could not be further from an accurate picture of the one true God of the universe. We are left to conclude that the Holy Spirit was most concerned with taking an imperfect term that was widely known and accepted as referring to the highest of all gods, and then pouring new *meaning* into that term, that previously existing cultural *form*.¹⁷ The whole Old Testament repeatedly provides sufficient contrasts between God, as He is, and those so-called gods of the peoples that surrounded Israel. The biblical writers accurately describe His nature, primarily through an extensive series of narrative accounts of how He acts, in addition to theological comments within the text that clarify God’s nature and character.

The Holy Spirit could have relied exclusively upon brand new terms for “God”; He did not do so. He was willing to build new *meaning* into the base of previously existing terms or *forms*, however imperfect they may have been in themselves. The multiple revelations of God

in the Scriptures sought to eliminate potential syncretistic tendencies; the use of local terms for God helped minimize the foreignness of the basic word for God. “This is the God you seek; you must just know Him accurately, according to His revealed truth.”

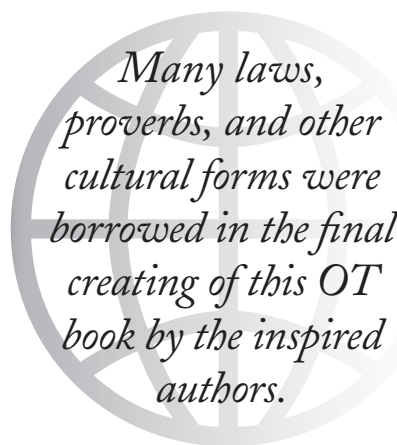
It’s amazing to find a similar approach to terms for the supreme God that was used by the New Testament writers.¹⁸ The general Greek word for God (*theos*) had decidedly inaccurate connotations in ancient Greek culture, including both polytheistic, anthropomorphic and also more philosophical, monistic conceptualizations. In addition, the term which John chose to refer to the Lord Jesus Christ in his prologue (the *logos*) had long ago been wrapped in varied understandings that were unhelpful and risked misunderstanding. However, the Holy Spirit evidently counted on the clarity of the total divine self-revelation in Christ to hold off compromised, tarnished views of Christ and God. This battle was never won once and for all; it was a continual pursuit of the early apostles, as evidenced by the very existence of the many heresy-addressing epistles that we have. But, at the core, there was a desire, once again, to build on the known terms, those that were not foreign but local. Yes, new *meanings* must be poured into these terms, but they must be *poured* into the old, well-known terms and not merely into new words that are totally unfamiliar to the target audience.

Alleged Borrowing from Ancient Near Eastern Poetic Literature (Psalms & Proverbs)

Much has been said about the possible relationship between some of the psalms of Israel (e.g., Psalms 29 and 104) with those of both Ugaritic and Egyptian derivation.¹⁹ However, confidence regarding any direct dependency or borrowing is not as clear and unequivocal as it is concerning certain sections of the book of Proverbs. Most scholars, including evangelicals, more universally agree that Proverbs has antecedents in other ANE wisdom literature. Therefore,

focus here will be comprised solely of a brief analysis of Solomon’s proverbial writings and their relationship to similar works in ancient Egypt and elsewhere.

As was already stated, it is widely believed that some portions of the book of Proverbs were taken from the pool of common human wisdom that existed in the ancient world. Some of these ancient traditions most certainly were already being written, read, and passed on to others before the time of Solomon. The literary *forms* that are found in the book of Proverbs were common throughout ANE cultures.



They were especially used as instruction formats to the young and/or as guidelines for those serving in a royal court as administrators. The words of the wise that were consolidated into books are closer to the style of “teaching manuals” than to a string of unrelated folk wisdom. There seems to be a deliberate reference to a particular prototype of these literary forms in Proverbs 22:20-21: “Have I not written *thirty sayings* for you, sayings of counsel and knowledge, teaching you true and reliable words, so that you can give sound answers to him who sent you?” [italics mine] This is paralleled in the earlier and well-known “Instruction of Amenemope,” who instructed his son in proper conduct. This work, written prior to the book of Proverbs, has many themes in common with the set of sayings found in Pr. 22:17-24:22. It also begins by addressing the reader with this statement: “Mark for yourself these *thirty chapters*: they please, they

instruct, they are the foremost of all books.” (27, 7) [italics mine]

Noted Old Testament scholar James B. Pritchard made this comment regarding Amenemope’s collection: “Amenem-Opet differs from earlier Egyptian books of wisdom in its humbler, more resigned, and less materialistic outlook.”²⁰ The table on the following page contains some other examples of the parallels that can be observed between this noteworthy yet non-inspired “Instruction of Amenemope”²¹ and the divinely inspired book of Proverbs.²²

Note that, despite these many similarities, there are many verses in this portion of Proverbs that have no parallels in the Egyptian wisdom literature. In addition, the majority of the whole book of Proverbs has no close parallel in other ANE literature.

However, having said that, one must still admit that many laws, proverbs, songs, poetic couplets and other cultural *forms* were borrowed in the final creating of this OT book by the inspired authors. To say that the Bible is fully inspired by the Holy Spirit does not preclude the selective inclusion of some non-Israelite materials as part of the final God-given product. All truth is God’s truth, wherever it may be found. These portions are then reinterpreted and given authority and *meaning* by the biblical authors, all under divine direction.

The uniqueness of Proverbs among similar types of literature in the ANE is, first and foremost, its insistence on linking the success of all human wisdom to a reverential relationship with the one true God, revealed specially to Israel and his people. So, any outside material had to conform to this overall perspective or be transformed such that it fully incorporated the biblical view of the world.

The Bible is most certainly God’s unique revelation of Himself to human beings, given through the instrumentality of Israel and the apostles. However, this does not mean that every sentence of Scripture had to

Table 2: Parallels between the Book of Proverbs and the Instruction of Amenemope

Book of Proverbs	Instruction of Amenemope
12:22 The Lord detests lying lips, but He delights in men who are truthful.	10 th Chap. Do not talk with a man falsely—the abomination of the god. Do not cut off the heart from thy tongue, that all thy affairs may be successful. Be sincere in the presence of the common people, for one is safe in the hand of the god. God hates him who falsifies words; his great abomination is the contentious of belly.
12:23 A prudent man keeps his knowledge to himself, but the heart of fools blurts out folly.	21 st Chap. Better is a man whose talk (remains) in his belly than he who speaks it out injuriously.
15:16 Better a little with the fear of the Lord than great wealth with turmoil. 15:17 Better a meal of vegetables where there is love than a fattened calf with hatred.	6 th Chap. Better is poverty in the hand of god than riches in a storehouse; better is bread when the heart is happy, than riches with sorrow.
16:8 Better a little with righteousness than much gain with injustice.	13 th Chap. Better is bread, when the heart is happy, than riches with sorrow.
17:5 He who mocks the poor shows contempt for their Maker; whoever gloats over disaster will not go unpunished.	23 rd Chap. Do not laugh at a blind man nor tease a dwarf nor injure the affairs of the lame. Do not tease a man who is in the hand of the god, nor be fierce of face against him if he errs.
19:21 Many are the plans in a man's heart but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails.	18 th Chap. One thing are the words which men say, another is that which the god does.
20:9 Who can say, "I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin?"	18 th Chap. Say not, "I have no wrongdoing," nor (yet) strain to seek quarreling.
20:22 Do not say, "I'll pay you back for this wrong!" Wait for the Lord, and he will deliver you. (cf. 27:1)	21 st Chap. Do not say: "I have found a strong superior, for a man in thy city has injured me." Do not say: "I have found a patron, for one who hates me has injured me." For surely thou knowest not the plans of god, and thy silence will cast them down.
20:23 The Lord detests differing weights, and dishonest scales do not please Him.	16 th Chap. Do not lean on the scales nor falsify the weights, nor damage the fractions of the measure... Make not for thyself weights which are deficient; they abound in grief through the will of god.
22:17 Pay attention and listen to the sayings of the wise; apply your heart to what I teach... 22:18... for it is pleasing when you keep them in your heart and have all of them ready on your lips... 22:19... so that your trust may be in the Lord, I teach you today, even you.	1 st Chap. Give thy ears, hear what is said, give thy heart to understand them. To them in thy heart is worthwhile, (but) it is damaging to him who neglects them. Let them rest in the casket of thy belly, that they may be a key in thy heart. At a time when there is a whirlwind of words, they shall be a mooring-stake for thy tongue. If thou spendest thy time while this is in thy heart, thou wilt find success; thou wilt find my words a treasure of life, and thy body will prosper upon earth.
22:20 Have I not written thirty sayings for you, sayings of counsel and knowledge?	30 th Chap. Mark for yourself these thirty chapters: they please, they instruct, they are the foremost of all books.
22:22 Do not exploit the poor because they are poor and do not crush the needy in court, 22:23 ... for the Lord will take up their case and will plunder those who plunder them.	2 nd Chap. Guard thyself against robbing the oppressed and against overbearing the disabled. 28 th Chap. God desires respect for the poor more than the honoring of the exalted.
22:24 Do not make friends with a hot-tempered man, do not associate with one easily angered.	9 th Chap. Do not associate to thyself the heated man, nor visit him for conversation.

(cont. on next page)

22:28 Do not move an ancient boundary stone set up by your forefathers. (cf. 23:10-11)	6 th Chap. Guard against encroaching upon the boundaries of the fields, lest a terror carry thee off.
23:1 When you sit to dine with a ruler, note well what is before you, 23:2 . . . and put a knife to your throat if you are given to gluttony. 23:3 Do not crave his delicacies, for that food is deceptive.	23 rd Chap. Do not eat bread before a noble, nor lay on thy mouth at first. If thou art satisfied with false chewings, they are a pastime for thy spittle. Look at the cup which is before thee, and let it serve thy needs.
23:4 Do not wear yourself out to get rich; have the wisdom to show restraint. 23:5 Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle.	7 th Chap. If riches are brought to thee by robbery, they will not spend the night with thee; at daybreak they are not in thy house: their places may be seen, but they are not. The ground has opened its mouth . . . that it might swallow them up, and might sink them in to the underworld. (Or) they have made themselves a great breach of their (own) size and are sunken down in the storehouse. (Or) they have made themselves wings like geese and are flown away to the heavens. Rejoice not thyself (over) riches (gained) by robbery, nor mourn because of poverty.
23:10 Do not move an ancient boundary stone or encroach on the fields of the fatherless. . . 23:11 . . . for their Defender is strong; he will take up their case against you.	6 th Chap. Guard against encroaching upon the boundaries of the fields, lest a terror carry thee off. One satisfies god with the will of the Lord, who determines the boundaries of the arable land.
25:21 If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. 25:22 In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head and the Lord will reward you.	2 nd Chap. So steer that we may bring the wicked man across, for we shall not act like him—lift him up, give him thy hand; leave him (in) the arms of the god; fill his belly with bread of thine, so that he may be sated and may be ashamed.
27:1 Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.	18 th Chap. Do not spend the night fearful of the morrow. At daybreak what is the morrow like? Man knows not what the morrow is like.

represent previously unknown insights. We have conclusive evidence that some things that God chose to make a part of His divine revelation existed prior to its writing. This demonstrates that God consistently used certain elements or *forms* of the non-Israelite cultures, transforming them in their *purpose* and *meaning*. He became, as it were, an “ancient near easterner” in communicating effectively to those people, most especially (but not exclusively) the Hebrew tribes.

However, the Holy Spirit’s decision to sometimes “contextualize” the truths of the Bible also undoubtedly facilitated Israel’s cross-cultural communication of true religion to the surrounding nations. Gary Brantley has observed in his article, “Pagan Mythology and the Bible,” that “familiar figures and literary style would facilitate Gentile nations’ understanding of the truth.

Consistent with this observation, Alexander Heidel argued that

since the Old Testament was intended also for the Gentile world, it is but natural that the biblical authors availed themselves of figures of speech and imagery with which also Israel’s neighbors were familiar, or which were at least easily understandable to them.²³

John Davis, in the previously mentioned book *Poles Apart* (1998), has made a number of astute observations regarding these issues. Here are several insights that are so well stated as to warrant inclusion in this paper:

The Old Testament reflects an interaction between the surrounding nations, Hebrew culture and the revealed “Word of God.” When Yahweh chose Israel (Ex. 19:6-7) in a special way to be “My people,” He at the same time transformed many of

the existing pagan rituals and cultural forms and utilized them for perpetual implementation by His people. Of course, these outward cultural forms were “reinterpreted” with new inner meaning, *but there is no doubt that they were already “there” before Yahweh chose the people of Israel.* Few scholars deny now that many of the rituals Israel adopted had pagan origins.²⁴ [italics by Davis]

. . .there is a difference between the concept of “borrowing” (from surrounding nations) and “revelation” where God gives direct instructions to the Prophets, yet even the “borrowing” by Israel from its pagan surroundings was directly under the control of Yahweh and certainly was not indiscriminate.²⁵

Israel understood the risk of syncretism but continued to adopt, adapt, transform and re-invest anything

from the surrounding cultures and make it uniquely its own.²⁶

Here we see clearly the principle of continuity and discontinuity operating hand in hand. The story... is, on the one hand, a progressive de-culturalization of undesirable elements, such as idolatry, sexual immorality, corrupt economic and political practices, and on the other hand, it is an "extension" of other elements from the previous cultural norms or religious forms.²⁷

If Israel could borrow from OTHER SURROUNDING CULTURES which were familiar to them, why is it wrong for Asia Christians to borrow from THEIR OWN CULTURES?²⁸ [capitalization by Davis]

Daniel's Service in the Courts of Non-Israelite Rulers (Daniel 1-6)

The book of Daniel is most usually utilized within the church as a source of interesting stories for children and/or as important material for those seeking insights into biblical prophecy. However, it is an extremely insightful case study in how to speak and live effectively as God's servant in a cross-cultural setting.

It is invaluable to learn from the choices that Daniel and his Hebrew companions in Babylon made. Which Babylonian cultural forms could be adapted and used without concern about compromise? Which had to be resisted resolutely in order to avoid syncretism? In reading Daniel 1-6, one sees how these four Israelites sought to maintain their moral and theological integrity as servants of Yahweh and yet also tried to interact with the royal courts of Babylon and Persia in a relevant, culturally sensitive way.

1. In-depth study of non-Israelite religion and culture (1:3-21)

Daniel and his friends were approved for entering an intensive three-year training program, a "Masters of Arts and Science in Babylonian Studies" if you will, in order to prepare themselves for possible selection to serve in

However, *[the book of Daniel] is an extremely insightful case study in how to speak and live effectively as God's servant in a cross-cultural setting.*

the court of King Nebuchadnezzar. They could have refused this honor, though it might have had dire consequences for them. But, it's obvious that Daniel and his companions were completely willing to give up their lives in order to not do something they believed to be a compromise of their allegiance to the one-true God, Yahweh. Thus, it's clear that completing this in-depth study of "the language and literature of the Babylonians" (1:4) to gain "understanding of all kinds of literature and learning" (1:17) was something that Daniel and company believed was God's will for them.

It's also obvious that they participated in this program of study with diligence and enthusiasm since these four young Jews ended up at the top of their class. They were "ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in [the] whole kingdom." (1:20) It's important to note that these studies would necessarily include a vast array of religious subjects, including the Sumerian religious base upon which Babylonian religious understandings had been built.

These facts about Daniel and his friends are quite significant. They seem to provide a basis for the serious study of non-Christian religious culture, such that one might even become an "expert" in the field. As will be shown in the story of Daniel, excelling in such an endeavor can create the kind of credibility, as a true cultural insider, that can result in significant impact being made upon the top influencers of a culture, and even beyond.²⁹

2. Names associated with false religion (1:6-7; 4:8-9)

Right at the beginning of their course of study, the four Jewish students were given new names, undoubt-

edly without anyone asking them permission to do so. Each of these names were distinctly associated with the name of a Babylonian god. Daniel became "Belteshazzar," after the name of Nebuchadnezzar's god (4:8-9). Hananiah became Shadrach, meaning "The Command of Aku," a Sumerian or Elamite moon-god. Mishael was assigned the Babylonian equivalent Meshach, again referring to the moon-god Aku. Lastly, Azariah was called Abednego, meaning "the servant of the god Nego."³⁰

Did these Jewish trainees take a stand to reject these Babylonian names, especially owing to their association with false gods? Did they refuse to answer to them? No, they did not. But, remember that these are four young men who were fully loyal to the God of Abraham, at least according to everything written about them in Holy Scripture. More than once they were to prove that they were willing to do anything, even dying a horrible, violent death, in order to maintain their integrity as exclusive devotees of the Most High God without compromise.

It is instructive to note that the Apostle Paul greeted various brothers and sisters in the Lord by their original names, ones taken straight from the mythologies of ancient Greek and Roman religion. Nothing whatsoever was communicated that implied the necessity of their changing his or her name in order to be a more committed disciple of Christ.³¹

3. Seeking exceptions from those in authority (1:8-16)

The biblical narrative states that Daniel was determined not to eat the king's food, presumably because it would have inevitably included items that were forbidden by the Mosaic Law. It may have all been offered to idols, it may have simply

been forbidden meats, or it may have been prepared in a non-kosher way. However, it is interesting to note Daniel's attitude with regard to this issue. He did not treat this as he later would the issue of refusing to bow to an idol or pray to another god. In fact, he never gave any kind of ultimatum to the Babylonians at all, declaring that he refused to eat the food provided by his royal patron. Instead, he lived resolutely according to biblical principles and, at the same time, also sought to live under the authority of those whom God had sovereignly placed over him. He did not want to have to disobey his human masters if he could avoid doing so.

Daniel's solution was thus to appeal to their supervisor for the freedom to eat a different diet, as long as it did not get this official in trouble. Daniel proposed a creative solution whereby his supervisor could see that God was honoring Daniel's determination not to eat the king's menu, that he and his friends would actually become healthier by living on a strictly vegetarian diet. God subsequently honored Daniel's submissive spirit and his commitment to the Mosaic Law. He enabled Daniel and his companions to look "healthier and better nourished" than any of the other students at the Royal Academy.

4. Discerning acceptable meaning despite a seemingly unacceptable form (2:46-49)
Daniel was able to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream. In response, the text says that the king fell prostrate before Daniel and ordered that offerings and incense be offered. Most of us would have probably quickly urged the king to stop such an idolatrous act because it's "against our religion." Peter's response to Cornelius' "reverential bow" would probably have been on our minds: "Stand up. I am only a man myself." (Acts 10:25-26) However, Daniel perceived correctly that the king was merely intending to honor, not his chief wise man, but rather that wise man's God, the one true God who had enabled him to correctly ascertain the king's dream

and its interpretation. And, indeed, as the king was bowing and having the incense lit, he declared,

Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery." (Daniel 2:47)

Daniel thus treated this "act of worship" in the spirit in which it was given: as worship to Daniel's God and not to Daniel himself.³²

As a consequence, this incident proved to be the first step in Daniel ultimately having evangelistic impact

This incident proved to be the first step in Daniel ultimately having evangelistic impact on the entire kingdom of Babylon.

on the entire kingdom of Babylon, through King Nebuchadnezzar as his "disciple," as will be noted in chapter four.

5. Bowing before idols (3:1-12, 26-30)

It is clear that believers should never bow before idols, regardless of how acceptable such a practice is within a given culture. Daniel's three friends were thrown into the fiery furnace for refusing to do so. As was the case with the Apostle Paul, these men were also unwilling to disobey God's law in order to adapt to another culture at every point (cf. I Corinthians 9:21).

On the other hand, there may be an important distinction between active participation in pagan worship and merely being present in a pagan temple due to obligatory social roles (e.g., the expectation of attending a festival celebration with one's family). Such might have been the case in the encounter between Naaman, the

military general from Aram, and the prophet Elisha.³³

6. Patriotic feelings toward non-Israelite rulers (4:19)

Even though they were worshippers of false gods and did not follow God's Law, Daniel was totally committed to faithfully serving all of the rulers in whose courts he worked for so many years. Thus, Daniel was completely at a loss emotionally when the Lord told him how much Nebuchadnezzar would have to suffer (i.e., becoming and living like an animal) because of the extreme pride that had developed in his character. Daniel wished that such a judgment could be reserved for the king's enemies rather than be given to the king of Babylon himself. (Remember that the Jews had been enemies of Nebuchadnezzar, one of his subject peoples!)

There's just no question whatsoever that Daniel had fully adapted himself to his "adopted" culture; his identification was emotionally real, authentic and deep, and not merely a "strategy" for making converts.

7. Results of Daniel's commitment to an approach of balanced cultural adaptation (4:32, 34, 37)

As a result of Daniel's ministry, over a period of years, the king of the greatest empire of that time came to profess the greatness of the one true God and give Him honor above all others. It was an incredible tribute to Daniel's faithfulness as a witness for Yahweh when King Nebuchadnezzar, as the most powerful monarch of this day, made the following statement:

At the same time that my sanity was restored, my honor and splendor were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisors and nobles sought me out, and I was restored to my throne and became even greater than before. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything He does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble. (Daniel 4:36-37)

What an incredible impact this must have made on all those “advisors and nobles” that were coming to the king for his guidance and sovereign decisions over the empire! Remember that previously, after the incident of Daniel’s friends and the “fiery furnace,” this same king had decreed that

the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into rubble, for no other god can save in this way. (Daniel 3:29)

The decisions of Daniel and his friends, applying a balanced cultural adaptation, had resulted in honor for the one true God throughout the Babylonian empire!

8. *Maintaining one’s exclusive devotion to the one true God (6:3–16, 22, 25–28)*
The most famous of all the stories in the book of Daniel concerns the incident regarding the lion’s den. Suffice it to say that it again demonstrates Daniel’s willingness to pay any price in order to maintain his ethical and theological integrity (i.e., not disobeying God’s laws). There must always be limits to one’s cultural adaptation, regardless of the culture and one’s desire to be “sensitive.”

Concluding Remarks

It is hoped that these few case studies outlining divinely initiated cultural adaptation will provide challenge and encouragement for contemporary cross-cultural workers to do the same within their specific contexts. For many who read this article, it will be an instance of “preaching to the choir.” This perspective is neither new nor original. However, the present author has discovered that the study of such biblical examples can be a helpful tool in training nationals, especially in situations where local churches and mission organizations have become culturally insulated and less willing to continue pursuing appropriate approaches to balanced cultural adaptation. (Indeed, the subject of “contextualization” is often met with deep suspicion or

There must always be limits to one’s cultural adaptation, regardless of the culture and one’s desire to be “sensitive.”

immediate denunciation. Focusing initially on the Scriptures themselves for implications regarding this topic seems a better choice.) Therefore, if these pages serve such an eventually reproductive training purpose, this small endeavor will have been well worth the effort.

The author is also extremely interested in gathering more examples concerning how God, in essence, “became an ancient near easterner” to communicate His eternal truth. *If the reader is aware of other specific instances in either the Old or New Testament, if she or he could be so kind as to email the author regarding what has been discovered, along with any relevant documentation.* Please use the following email address: brianandlinda2002@yahoo.com. **IJFM**

Endnotes

¹Roy Joslin, *Urban Harvest* (Welwyn, Hertfordshire, England: Evangelical Press, 1982), 156-190. Also see comments on Joslin’s analysis in John R. Davis, *Poles Apart: Contextualizing the Gospel in Asia*, revised edition (Bangalore, India: Theological Book Trust, 1998), 228-232.

²Davis, John R., 213-235. Davis’ work focuses on the application of these concepts regarding contextualization in the Buddhist, especially Thai, context.

³Gerald R. McDermott, *Can Evangelicals Learn from World Religions?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 82.

⁴Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 44; John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews and Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL, 2000), 48, 668; Rick Ritchie, “We Shall Also Reign with Him,” *Modern Reformation*. Vol. 3, No. 3. May/June 1994: 10-13. See also J.W. Marshall, “Decalogue” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker, editors (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 173-174.

⁵Robert I. Bradshaw, “Covenant: 2.2,” (www.biblicalstudies.org.uk: An Internet

Resource for Studying the Bible, 1998) at http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/article_covenant.html, December 29, 2003; and Walton, Matthews and Chavalas, 48. See also Footnote 3 for Chapter 34 of Jeremiah, *New American Bible* (www.usccb.org: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2002, Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, D.C.) at <http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/jeremiah/jeremiah34.htm#v18>, December 29, 2003.

⁶See Harry A. Hoffner, Jr., “Hittites,” in *Peoples of the Old Testament World*, edited by Alfred J. Hoerth, Gerald L. Mattingly, and Edwin M. Yamauchi (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994).

⁷Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin. *Old Testament Parallels: Law and Stories from the Ancient Near East*, Fully Revised and Expanded Second Edition (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), 86-90. See also John H. Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature in Its Cultural Context: A Survey of Parallels Between Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989), 101-105; and James B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1950), 199-206.

⁸Marshall, “Decalogue,” 173-174.

⁹Matthews and Benjamin, *Old Testament Parallels*, 87.

¹⁰Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature in Its Cultural Context*, 105.

¹¹Walton, Matthews and Chavalas, 172. See also Catalina Emerson, “Critical Methods and the Old Testament: Form Criticism,” an English translation of the Study Notes of the *Biblia Plenitud* (Editorial Caribe, Inc., 1994), published on the “My Redeemer” (*Redentor Mio*) website at <http://www.angelfire.com/sc3/wedigmontana/Pentateuch.html>, December 29, 2003.

¹²Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature in Its Cultural Context*, 101-105.

¹³It is recorded in “The Offering of Uha” that over 100 men were circumcised. See D. Dunham, *Naga-ed-Der Stelae of the First Intermediate Period* (London, 1917), 102-104, quoted in the *Internet Ancient History Sourcebook: Egypt* by Paul Hallsall (Fordham University, 1999). There are bas-reliefs that show that this Egyptian practice dates back to the third millennium. See King and Stager’s section on the practice of circumcision in the ANE, 43-45.

¹⁴This is easily documented. See Michael J. Wilkins, "Matthew," in the *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, vol. I (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002) 24; and Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 823. Here are several internet references that can be referred to: Ian A. Fair, "Excursus on Baptism" (www.centerce.org: The Center for Christ Enrichment) at <http://www.centerce.org/BAPTISM/Advanced.htm>, December 29, 2003; and Claudia Setzer, "Tertullian's theology and "Jewish Baptism," Manhattan College, from the Interdisciplinary Working Group for the Study of Christianity in Roman Africa during the Second through Seventh Centuries (<http://divinity.library.vanderbilt.edu>: Vanderbilt University website at <http://people.vanderbilt.edu/%7Ejames.p.burns/chroma/baptism/setzbapt.html>); and "Baptism: A Pre-Christian History," Ed Barnes in *Loudon Church of Christ News and Notes*, Vol. 5. No 9 (www.kornet.org/lcoc: Loudon, TN: March 5, 2000), at <http://www.kornet.org/lcoc/news/00n0509.htm>.

¹⁵See Jack Finegan, *Myth and Mystery: An Introduction to the Pagan Religions of the Biblical World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1989), 138-139.

¹⁶G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, editors, translated by John T. Willis, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 242-261. Also see McDermott, *Can Evangelicals Learn from World Religions?*, 77-78.

¹⁷Arthur F. Glasser, "Old Testament Contextualization: Revelation and Its Environment" in *The Word Among Us: Contextualizing Theology for Mission Today*, edited by Dean S. Gilliland. (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1989), 36.

¹⁸See article on *Theos* by J. Schneider, *New Testament Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. II, edited by Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975-1978), 66-67. Also see the article on *Logos* by T.G. Donner, *New Dictionary of Theology*, edited by Sinclair B. Ferguson and David F. Wright (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988).

¹⁹See Matthews and Benjamin, *Old Testament Parallels*, 257-261, 372-373 and Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature in Its Cultural Context*, 163-166.

²⁰Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 421.

²¹Translation used from Pritchard, 421-424. See also Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature in its Cultural Context*, 192-197

and Matthews and Benjamin, *Old Testament Parallels*, 274-282, 374-375.

²²See especially "Table 15.1 Proverbs and the Instruction of Amenemope," found at the web address http://www.hope.edu/bandstra/RTOT/CH15/CH15_TB1.HTM, 2001. Also see Martin Luther King, Jr., "Light on the Old Testament from the Ancient Near East" (Stanford University, King Papers, Vol. 1, 1948) at web address <http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/mlkpapers>, 2001; and see also Walton, Matthews and Chavalas, 493-494, 560, 567.

²³Gary K. Brantley, "Pagan Mythology and the Bible" (ApologeticsPress.org, 1993), <http://www.apologeticspress.org/defdocs/rr1993/r&r9307a.htm>, December 29, 2003. See also Walton, Matthews and Chavalas, 7-8.

²⁴Davis, *Poles Apart*, 214.

²⁵*ibid.*, 218.

²⁶*ibid.*, 221

²⁷*ibid.*, 215

²⁸*ibid.*, 222.

²⁹See "Daniel: Character Counts—Leader's Guide" (Campus Crusade for Christ), p. 1-3, accessed at <http://www.thecitadel.org/studies/Training/Character%20Studies/05-Daniel%20L.pdf>, December 29, 2003. See also Walton, Matthews and Chavalas, 730-732.

³⁰Gleason L. Archer, Jr. "Daniel" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985), 34.

³¹Here are some of those individuals who had been given this kind of name (the following are all Greek names): *Phoebe*: Rom. 16:1—the goddess of the moon in Greek mythology; *Narcissus*: Rom. 16:11—Found in a Greek mythological story about a handsome young man who sees his face mirrored on the surface of a pond. He falls in love with his own reflection and stares at it so long that he eventually turns into a flower at the edge of the pond. From this story we get our word "narcissistic," referring to a person who shares the egotistical self-absorbed qualities of Narcissus; *Hermes*: Rom. 16:14—Hermes was the messenger for the gods in Greek mythology; it was a name often given to slaves. Known as Mercury in the Roman myths, he is always pictured with wings on his feet; *Olympas*: Rom. 16:15—Olympas was the name of one of the Greek goddesses; *Apollo*: Acts 18:24—A name associated with the Greek god Apollo. The question that must therefore be asked is: why didn't they change their names and rid themselves of any association with these false gods, goddesses, and other mythological figures? Must not even

the hint of syncretism be resisted at every juncture? Quite clearly neither they nor the apostle Paul felt that there was any reason to do so. It actually gave them an ongoing link with their birth communities, hopefully contributing to their witness for Christ among their relatives, neighbors and others.

³²See Jeremy M. Thomas, "Daniel: His Life, Emotional Makeup, Patience, and Spiritual Attitude," found at <http://www.geocities.com/jeremyandrobin/bookofdaniel/essay.html>, December 29, 2003. See also Walton, Matthews and Chavalas, p. 734.

³³There is an anonymous paper that has been circulated in some circles, written by an individual working in India among Hindus, which pulls potential principles from II Kings 5:1-19 for new believers seeking to live without compromise within their Hindu communities. It is entitled, "Go in Peace? Naaman Healed," and deals with the contextual implications of Naaman's encounter with the prophet Elisha. The essence revolves around Elisha's response of "Go in peace!" to Naaman's question of whether his very presence with the king of Aram in the temple of the god Himmon would compromise his newfound faith in the one true God.

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