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### The “For/Against” Phenomenon and the Rebuilt Temple Debate

“Are you for us, or for our adversaries?” (*English Standard Version*, Josh. 5:13). This biblical verse highlights the “for/against” phenomenon that extends even to early Judean history: every movement has a counter-movement. A prime example lies in the rebuilding of the destroyed temple in Jerusalem. During the Babylonian exile, in the late 6th and early 5th century BCE, conflicting parties emerged in a time of chaos and uncertainty. The Jewish people, already split between the deported and those remaining, were also split into opposing parties with differing perspectives on religious issues. As seen in the books of Isaiah and Haggai, two such parties develop around the theology of a rebuilt temple. In *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*, biblical scholar Paul D. Hanson identifies the parties as the oppressed yet “faithful minority,” which longed for a new way of life, and the domineering “normative” institutionalists, which sought to preserve pre-exilic institutions (Hanson 171). However, in this black-and-white picture, could there be room for grey? Before this question is answered, it may be best to first confirm the parties in Hanson’s binary.

Corresponding with the for/against phenomenon, the faithful minority and the normative institutionalists opposed each other, with the former being *anti*-temple and the latter, *pro*-temple. Believing that the building is not needed for them to be in God’s presence, Trito-Isaiah, a prophet of the former party, writes, “Thus says the Lord: ‘Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool’” (Isa. 66:1). Therefore, one of the reasons for the temple’s rebuilding, to reunite with

God's spirit after its departure in Ezekiel 10, is rendered unnecessary. In the following verses, Trito-Isaiah continues to denounce the need for a temple through the direct words of God, who says, "What is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest?" (Isa. 66:1). The multiple "*what's*" employed by God ask the believers to clarify and explain what they have built. As a result, the diction almost mocks the normative institutionalists for thinking that they could build a resting place worthy of God, the creator of the universe (Isa. 66:2). Not only is the temple unnecessary, but it also falls short of the perfection and holiness of God.

Moreover, Trito-Isaiah directly places the faithful minority on higher moral ground, by emphasizing that it--not the other party-- "is the one to whom [God] will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit" (Isa. 66:2). He argues that those who comfortably belong to the majority long for the empty hierarchical institution, in which some (such as priests) wield, and may misuse, their power over others. By contrast, those who are humble and contrite are alienated and cast to the side; the suffering minority are the ones who look to and are noticed by God. Significantly, the "rejection of the normative cult" is accompanied by the "acceptance of the faithful minority" (Hanson 171). By showing how the faithful minority live for God, while the other is preoccupied with an empty institution, Trito-Isaiah himself uses the for/against phenomenon to strengthen his party's credibility.

The prophet continues to denounce the need for a temple by focusing on another role: providing an altar for sacrifices. He compares the traditional sacrifices and offerings, such as those of oxen, lamb, and grain, to the murder of a man, the breaking of a dog's neck, and the offering of pig's blood, all of which are "the most shocking of pagan rites" (Isa. 66:3, Hanson 180). With these comparisons, he shuns the institution of the temple, boldly stating that its purifying rituals actually have the exact opposite effect. Instead, as God's spirit roams the earth,

he suggests that believers can give offerings and sacrifices at God's "holy mountain Jerusalem" (Isa. 66:1, Isa. 66:20). Again, according to Trito-Isaiah, rebuilding the temple is unnecessary; he further argues that it may even be detrimental for one's walk with God.

Conversely, the author of Haggai is a member of the normative institutionalist party. The book's two chapters are concerned with the rebuilding of the temple, which is seen as the key to becoming morally righteous, as well as prosperous. At the time of writing, he emphasises the fact that the believers are never satiated by food or drink; their clothing cannot warm them; the yield of their crops is small (Hag. 1:5-6). How can this be, if their god is all-powerful? Haggai offers a reason for this taxing lifestyle: they have tended to their own belongings and homes while God's "house lies in ruins" (Hag. 1:4). To become prosperous, the Jewish people must become right with God. To become right with God, they must restore the temple.

Continuing to stand in stark contrast to Isaiah 66, Haggai includes pro-institution language. The roles of priest, king, and governor, all of whom are given significance by the institutions of the Judean kingdom and religion, are mentioned more than ten times combined, thus strengthening the validity of the institutions (Hag. 1-2). The time period is put into context according to King Darius' rule, thereby implying that much of life revolved around these institutions. Furthermore, God is referred to as the "Lord of hosts," a name which pictures "the armies of Israel, at whose head Yhwh is marching to battle" (Hag. 1:5, Host of Heaven). Here, God takes on a role that is only given significance by the institution of the kingdom. The final instance of pro-institution language occurs when God "declares," much like how a king declares a decree, that the governor of Judah, Zerubbabel, will be "[made]...like a signet ring" (Hag 2:23). In the time of ancient Israel, signet rings were used to authenticate and sign documents; in Egypt, which enslaved the Israelites in the book of Exodus, they were worn to showcase the wearer's

power and position (A Brief History of Signet Rings). Thus, the *institutionalist* factor of the normative institutionalist party is evident.

The *normative* factor of the party refers to the enduring rituals and traditions established by pre-exilic norms. In particular, the interest in purity as defined by priestly law takes center stage in Haggai, occupying nine verses in a 38-verse text. Recording a vision from God, the prophet writes that God actively tells him to “ask the priests about the law” (Hag 2:11). One may think that the original author of the law, God, would possess the most knowledge and thus be best for inquiries and clarification. However, it is the priests who are highlighted, thus gaining even more credibility and authority in the community. Moreover, the questions posed are each answered correctly and succinctly. The priests confidently determine the state of cleanliness in each hypothetical situation, demonstrating their intellect and level of comfort with God’s laws (Hag 2:12-13). By showcasing the importance of priestly law through God’s words, and by passing the torch of authority from God to the capable and knowledgeable priests, Haggai further solidifies the significance of the normative institution of priests and temples.

After the initial readings of Isaiah and Haggai, the opposing parties in Hanson’s binary are confirmed. However, as suggested earlier, simplifying history into a black-and-white picture might erase something minor yet still important: the greys. Upon further inspection, a middle party complicates Hanson’s binary, and the for/against phenomenon morphs into the *false dilemma fallacy*, which “presents only two options or sides when there are many” (False Dilemma Fallacy). In this case, the two parties stand on opposite sides of the spectrum of perspectives on a rebuilt temple; in the middle, there exists another party, which this paper will call the “optimists,” due to its hopeful nature towards the future, when God and the Jewish people reunite in an unneeded, yet nonetheless wonderful, restored Jerusalem.

Evidence for this third party can be found in the book of Zechariah, which begins, much like Haggai, with an abundance of pro-institution language. Again, God is called “Lord of hosts,” and the time period is put into context according to King Darius’s rule (Zech. 1:1-3). However, the prophet begins to reveal his position as a member of the optimist party, as God commands, “Do not be like your fathers,” who “did not hear or pay attention to me” (Zech. 1:4). While the normative institutionalist wishes to return to the pre-exilic days of their fathers and prophets, Zechariah expressly advocates for the present Judah, by stating that the other party’s wish is to be as foolish as their fathers were. Zechariah further denounces the wish as unrealistic, as God questions, “Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever?” (Zech. 1:5). Here, the torch of authority and power in Haggai, which moved from God to the priests, now returns to God. Instead of wishing to become like their long-gone, sinful predecessors, the optimist thinks that the current community should turn to the everlasting God, learn from its past mistakes, and move forward. Thus, the optimist does not look at history and the traditional institutions with kind eyes, but is optimistic for the future.

Continuing to distance himself from the normative institutionalist party, Zechariah imagines Jerusalem as “villages without walls” (Zech. 2:2). Though the borderless city will be restored, it will not be as restricted as its former self was; metaphorically, the community will not be as bound by endless priestly laws as the pre-exilic community. Moreover, Jerusalem will become a welcoming haven for “many nations,” who “shall be [the Lord’s] people” (Zech. 2:11). The traditional law in Deuteronomy 7:3-4, which prohibits intermarrying, is no longer relevant in the new Jerusalem, for the foreign will convert and join in the Jewish people’s worship of God. As such, like the faithful minority, Zechariah emphasizes that some laws from the original institution, which elevated and gave power to priests, will become obsolete.

However, it must be noted that the optimist differs from the faithful minority as well. For example, though the new Jerusalem will be borderless, God will still have a physical resting place (Zech. 1:16, Zech. 6:9-15). Thus, the optimist is pro-temple, advocating for its restoration, and further aligns with the normative institutionalist by, as stated before, including pro-institution language (“priest” and “Lord of hosts”), which lends credibility to the traditional institution. Moreover, a vision, detailing a woman (“Wickedness”) in a basket sent from Israel to the land of “Shinar,” emphasizes the still-present priestly focus of a clean and purified community (Zech. 5:5-11). Therefore, a careful analysis of Zechariah brings to light the existence of a perspective neither belonging to the party of the normative institutionalist nor to that of the faithful minority. Instead, this optimist party lies in the middle of the spectrum of perspectives on the rebuilt temple. Though pro-temple, it desires a welcoming future that has reaped the consequences of the old institution, and thus, its *lessons* as well.

After carefully analyzing Zechariah, one discovers that Hanson’s binary is not binary after all. This leads logically to the question, were the previous readings of Isaiah and Haggai careful enough? The answer is no longer a resounding, “Yes.” Thus, now that the spectrum of perspectives has been revealed, what can be discovered upon further examination? In Isaiah, the faithful minority prophet colors in the greys of the original black-and-white picture by acknowledging the beliefs of the traditional institution. For example, those who eat “pig’s flesh and the abomination and mice,” which are forbidden by priestly laws, “shall come to an end together” (Isa. 66:17). Indeed, even the aforementioned comparisons of sacrifices and offerings to the murder of a man, the breaking of a dog’s neck, and the offering of pig’s blood all support the priestly laws and the institution that allocates consequences for their breaking. After all, the sacrifices and offerings are only abominable if the actions they are compared to are also

abominable. As such, the faithful minority still finds meaning in the traditional institution (much like the normative institutionalist).

Meanwhile, in Haggai, one can also find traces of grey. Whereas the priest-turned-prophet Ezekiel proclaimed that the spirit of God had left the temple and hence Israel as well, causing the temple and the community to become vulnerable to external attacks, Haggai argues against his fellow believer (Ezek. 10). Though he favors the traditional institution, and thus should logically hold the same perspective as a priest (who upholds the institution), he writes that God “remains in [their] midst” and that they should “fear not” (Hag. 2:5). In this verse, Haggai agrees with Isaiah 66, in that the earth is the Lord’s “footstool” and that, even in the midst of a destroyed temple and a conquered Israel, God is still among his people (Isa. 66:1). Thus, the need for a temple is complicated, and the position of the normative institutionalist becomes slightly less normative and slightly less institutionalist.

As a result, Hanson’s usage of the for/against phenomenon, in relation to the debate of the rebuilt temple, collapses upon closer inspection of the biblical text. Though the black-and-white picture yields a helpful summary of two parties, the faithful minority and the normative institutionalists, the greys eventually seep through, revealing both a middle party (the optimist) and the nuances in the original two. As such, in order to truly understand the cultural landscape of ancient Israel, one must not rely on portraits that have dulled over time. By reading more carefully, future studies will yield more accurate and vibrant portraits, thereby bringing the black-and-white past into the chaotic present, and the academic field onto sturdier foundations.

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