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The “Healing” Sections in Relation to the First “Abraham” Section

In the previous chapter, we looked at the healing sections of Peter’s sermon (H1 and H2 in Figure 15.1) in relation to the healing event itself. In this chapter I would like us to look at the healing sections in relation to the first “Abraham” section (X in Figure 15.1) which they surround and to which they are very closely related.

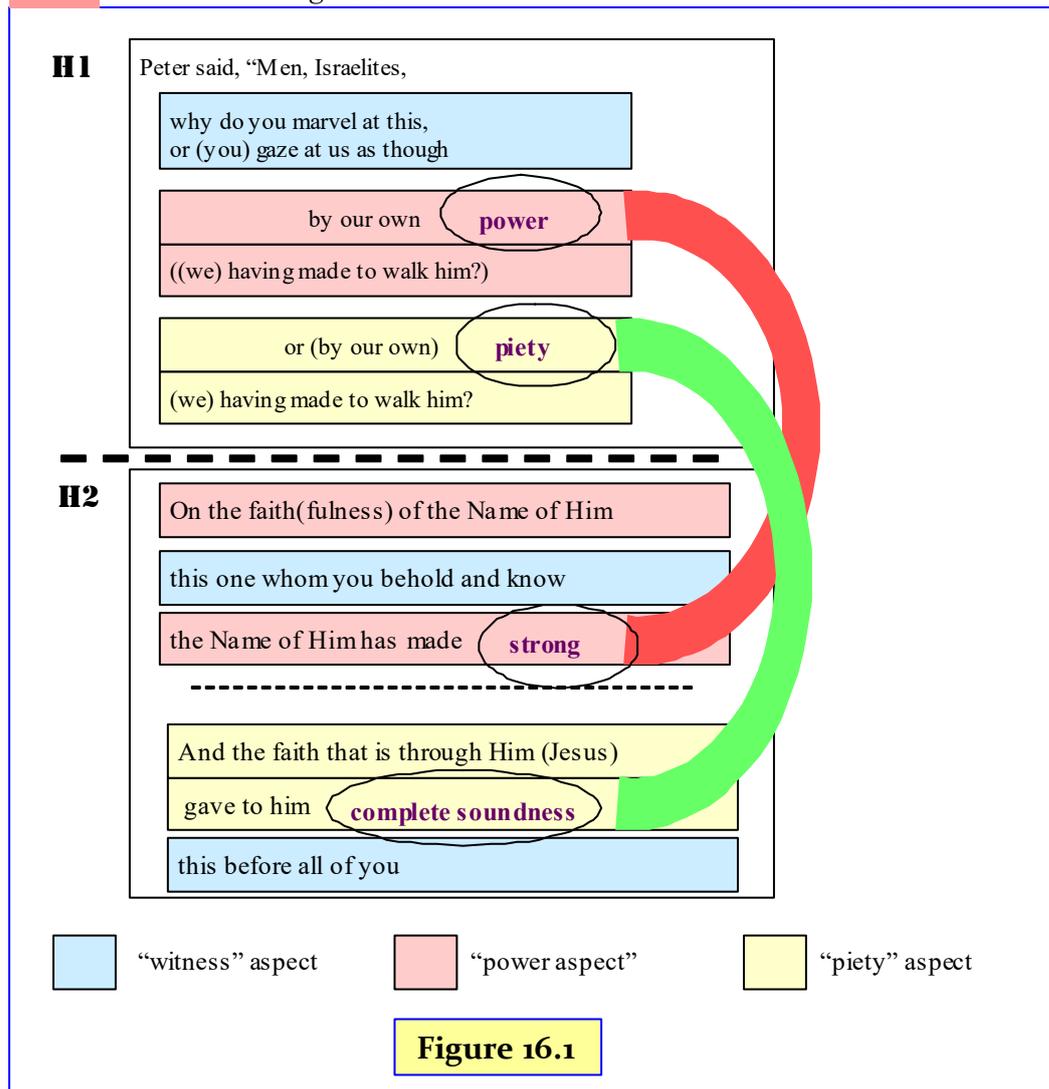
to start with, here is another analysis of H1 and H2 which complements the analysis at the end of the last chapter. This second analysis however will show the close links between H1, H2 and the first “Abraham” section of Peter’s sermon. Whereas the first analysis “divided up” the second half of H1 on the basis of grammar (the “main action” of subject, verb and object and “agency” of the adverbial clause), this analysis does so primarily on the basis of theme— healing by power and healing by piety.

This second analysis of H1 and H2 is shown on the next page (Figure 16.1).

Notes on Figure 16.1

1) The lower half of H1 has been expanded by “distributing” the main clause “we have made him to walk” over the two separate components of its dependent adverbial phrase “by our own power or (by our own) piety”. This move divides Peter’s question in H1 into, “Why . . . as though by our own power we have made him walk?” and “Why . . . as though by our own piety we have made him walk?”. This then enables us to link the first question with the upper part of H2—the “making strong” of the lame man and the second question with the “giving complete soundness” to the lame man.

2) The link between power and being made strong is straightforward, but what is the connection between piety (*eusebeia*) and complete wholeness (*holokleria*)? *Eusebeia* literally means “good worship”. *Holokleria* and its related adjective *holokleros* refer to complete soundness. *Holokleria* occurs in the LXX of Zech. 11:16 where it refers to whole and unblemished sheep as opposed to “bruised” sheep: (neither of which will be cared for by the wicked shepherd - a reference to Israel’s wicked leaders). *Holokleria* occurs in the LXX (the Septuagint) of Is. 1:6 where, the dire spiritual condition of the people is likened to a body which from head to foot has no



“soundness”.

There is a “worship” aspect to the idea of wholeness since unblemished animals and unblemished people (priests) only were to take part in Israel’s Old Covenant tabernacle and temple worship. We read this in Leviticus 21:16-24—where, in particular, a lame man (v. 18) will be ineligible for priestly service, and shall not “go through the veil or approach the altar” (v. 23), and in Leviticus 22: 17-25 - where the sacrificial animals must be without blemish. In Mal. 1:8, we read of God’s displeasure if lame animals are offered: “When you offer those (animals) that are lame or sick, is that not evil?” So the “complete soundness” appears to mean more than just “being strong” but to have reference to suitability for worship—in particular for the “ascent to God” both of the priest and of the sacrifice in the tabernacle and temple.

Holokleria is not used *specifically* in the LXX with reference to priests and animals of the OT sacrificial system, but these types of cultic reference do apparently occur in the classics and Philo and also in Josephus.

In the New Testament, the moral correlate of this physical “suitability” is found in the adjective *holokleros* in its two occurrences in the New Testament. In 1 Thess. 5:23 we read,

“and the God of the peace Himself sanctify you wholly, and may your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved unblameably in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ; (Young’s Literal Translation).

Here, *holokleros* - “unblameably” (or “blameless”) - is linked with sanctification (i.e. holiness, being set apart for God).

In James 1:4, we read,

“But let patience have (its) perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete (holokleros), lacking nothing”.

Holokleros here indicates a high, and complete, moral and ethical standard and is linked with the words “complete” and “lacking nothing”.

I hope that the above has shown that it is reasonable to consider that Peter’s reference to piety in H1 might correspond to the reference to complete soundness in the lower part of H2.

3) In both attributes, power and piety, the underlying idea seems to be that a person of power can produce a healing characterised by strength - suitable to act in a strong way, and a person of piety can produce a healing characterised by unblemished soundness, suitable for the act in worship. Peter denies that it is these attributes (whether or not they actually exist in himself or John) that have been responsible for the healing—in particular the physical healing *per se* (upper half of H2) and the physical healing understood as a component or precursor of the “complete soundness” in the lower half of H2. Fr the latter, I have tentatively suggested that it was not only Peter and John’s faith through Jesus (involved in the physical healing), but the man’s subsequent faith through Jesus which *together* produced the complete soundness which enabled him to praise God and participate in temple worship. (Also we noted earlier that his faith through Jesus was also possibly involved in his “leaping up and standing (i.e. rising) and walking” in the name of Jesus during the physical healing.)

4) If the foregoing is correct—or reasonably correct - then H₁ and H₂ have a broadly parallel structure as regards power and piety (shown by the pink and yellow boxes and the red and green connections in Figure 16.1), as well as a distributed “witness” aspect (the light blue boxes) occurring at the top, middle and bottom of the three sections (H₁, H₂ (upper) and H₂ (lower) respectively).

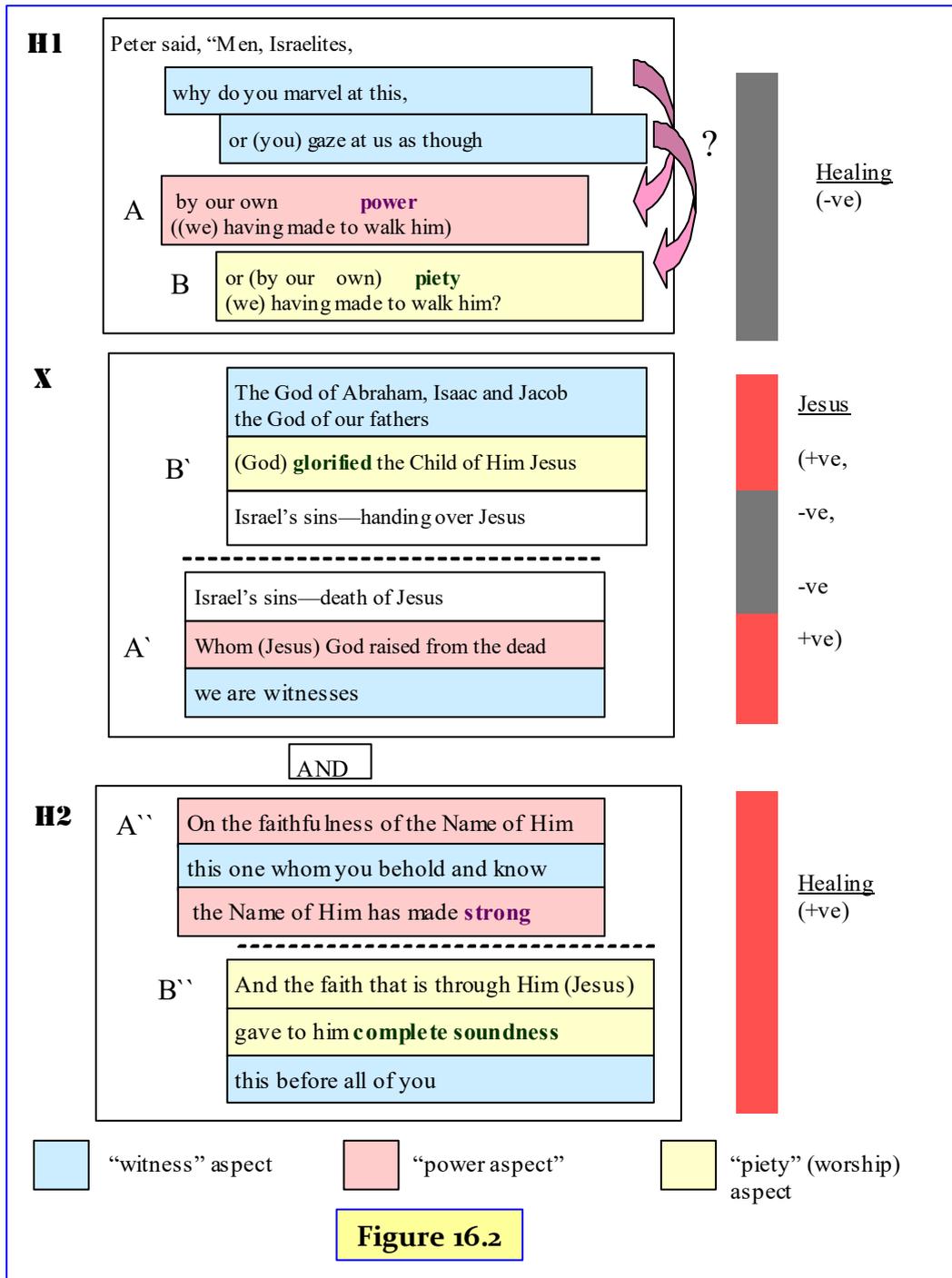
Relation of H₁ and H₂ to the First Abrahamic Section X

Let us now move on to the main task of this chapter which is to show how the H₁ and H₂ combine with and relate to the first Abrahamic section, X, which they surround. Here, we will rely heavily on what we have been considering earlier in this chapter. The combined diagram is shown in Figure 16.2 on the next page.

Notes on Figure 16.2

1) The structure as a whole consists of two chiastic patterns—H₁ and X considered together (A,B,B',A' in the diagram) and X and H₂ considered together (B',A',A'',B''), (and also, the parallel structure of H₁ and H₂ (introduced earlier in this chapter) considered together (here, A,B,A'',B'')). The chiastic structural aspects (partly) explain the unusual order in which Peter presents the events in Jesus' life of resurrection and glorification in X. The glorification is presented first, then the resurrection, even though in order of time the sequence was resurrection then glorification. Thus the “descent” produced by presenting Jesus glorification then his resurrection nevertheless chiastically matches the “resurrection followed by ascension” aspect of the man's healing—being made strong then having complete soundness in H₂. A similar symmetrical pattern, but with an additional “negative” overlay (see later) applies to the relationship between power and piety in H₁ and glorification and resurrection in X.

2) The “witness” sections are “distributed over the structure as a whole. The double witness—which is actually a “wrong” witness! - of marvelling and of gazing at the Apostles has so far been regarded as applying equally to the power and piety of the Apostles. However, given the pattern of the witness sections in relation to the “power” and “piety” sections elsewhere in Figure 16.2, perhaps we should see the “marvelling” as corresponding to the display of power (allegedly) by the apostles and the “gazing at the apostles” as corresponding to their (alleged) piety or holiness. I have tentatively indicated this in Figure 16.2.



The only "witness" section that is not clearly a witness section is the reference to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and our fathers. "The fathers" seems i) be a larger, general group of ancestors, which presumably must include Abraham, Isaac and Jacob within it since they are undoubtedly "fathers" of the nation, and/or ii) the reference to the fathers is to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—the two expressions being "in apposition". The former is supported

by e.g. the fact that the expression that Peter uses in v. 13 (in the Received Text) is basically that of Ex. 3:16, (although there, “the fathers” appears first) whereas structurally - by comparison with Acts 3:26 - (and also by comparing v. 13 with 1 Chron. 29:18) the “in apposition” understanding seems to be in view. The reference to our fathers enhances the bond between Peter and his audience.

Is it reasonable to see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as having a witnessing role? In this context, I think the answer is yes. Verse 13 says that the God of Abraham etc. glorified Jesus. This is a reference to Jesus’ ascension and to His being seated at the right hand of the Father, and all the honour and authority that goes with that those events. This ascension is the antitype and fulfillment of the Old Testament sacrificial system (as for example is made clear in Hebrews) - it is *the* true entrance into the true Holy of Holies, which Jesus does on our behalf so that we also can enter—in and through Him.

The actual entrance into heaven in clouds of glory was not actually witnessed by the Apostles—unlike their witnessing the resurrection (v. 15). Since all the other sections of Figure 16.2 have a “witnessing” component, this reference to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob fits the pattern, but is it reasonable to see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as witnessing Christ’s glorification? We know that “Abraham rejoiced to see My day” (John 8:58) - a joyful witness—and also, in his discussion with the Sadducees, Jesus said, (Luke 20:37-38)

“Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him. ”

There is also the reference to “the bosom of Abraham” in Luke 16:22 to which Lazarus went after death in the parable of Dives and Lazarus. Also, Matthew 8:10-11 speaks of Gentiles who will recline at table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

Finally, we note Hebrews 11:23 which speaks of the heavenly Jerusalem and of . . . the spirits of the righteous made perfect”.

3) The power and piety aspects of the healing mirror the power (resurrection) and piety (glorification) aspects of Jesus’ life. This links in with the witness aspect since witnessing the healing bears witness to the truth of the risen and ascended Lord Jesus. A further aspect of this is that the work of power in the resurrection (e.g. Jesus was declared *with*

power to be the Son of God . . . by His resurrection from the dead”) is attested to by a work of power in the healing of the man, and Jesus’ piety, or “good worship”, shown in His glorification (ascending into the true Holy of Holies), is attested to by the complete soundness of the man in entering the temple and praising God (a picture of his “glorification” - e.g. Romans 8:30, “those He justified, them He also glorified”).

4) There are negative and positive aspects both to the healing and to Jesus’ glorification and resurrection—a feature emphasised by structural considerations and indicated by means of red and grey columns in Figure 16.2 The negative aspect of the healing is presented in H₁—it was *not* by Peter and John’s power or piety. The corresponding positive aspect is presented in H₂—it is The Name of Jesus making the man strong and faith in Jesus giving him complete soundness.

In X, the “positive” of Jesus’ glorification and of his resurrection is chiastically matched with the two aspects of Israel’s sinful actions in verses 14 and 15—the handing over and denying of Jesus in the Presence of Pilate in v. 14 and the denying of Jesus, asking for a murderer to be granted to them and killing Jesus in v. 15.

Conclusion.

I hope this chapter has brought together a number of structural aspects linking the healing sections H₁ and H₂ with the first Abraham section, X.



