

THE TRANSLATION OF *ELOHIM* IN PSALM 45:7-8

By Murray J. Harris

Psalm 45 is one of the 42 psalms in the 'Elohistic Psalter' (Pss. 42-83), so-called because the term **אלהים** predominates as the divine name.¹ The psalm belongs to a group of some ten 'royal psalms' in which the king is the central figure.² It is a wedding-song (*epithalamium*) that was composed for some unspecified royal marriage³ and that was included within the Psalter probably because it epitomised an ideal king of the Davidic dynasty, the royal Messiah.⁴

1. For the relevant statistics see M. H. Segal, 'El, Elohim, and Yhwh in the Bible', *JQR* 46 (1955) 104f.
2. *Viz.* Pss. 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 110, 132 (some would add 118 and 144).
3. The identity of the king and queen remains obscure, but some of the more common proposals are Jehoram of Judah and Athaliah of Israel (who was Tyrian [*cf.* v. 13] on her mother's side; *cf.* 2 Ki. 8:16), Solomon and the daughter of Pharaoh (*cf.* 1 Ki. 3:1-3; 11:1-2), or Ahab and Jezebel (see the summary of research in L. Jacquet, *Les psaumes et le coeur de l'homme*. Vol. 2 [Gembloux: Duculot, 1977] 42). Because allusions to Nathan's oracles (2 Sa. 7:8-16) are scattered throughout the poem (*e.g.* vv. 3, 5, 7, 17; *cf.* Pss. 72, 89, 132), the king in question was probably king of Judah. After a thorough examination of the literary background of the psalm, J. S. M. Mulder concludes that 'Ps. 45 was all but certainly written before the exile under the influence of the court style of the later Neo-Assyrian empire. It originated probably in the seventh century B.C. in the Southern kingdom, with a good chance that Josiah is the king who is celebrated in the psalm' (*Studies on Psalm 45* [Oslo: Witsiers, 1972] 158). T. H. Gaster, however, has proposed in light of the common Near Eastern practice of treating a bridal couple as royalty, that the psalm describes a conventional wedding ceremony, with a comparison between the characteristics of a bridegroom and the qualities of a king ('Psalm 45', *JBL* 74 [1955] 239-251).
4. A messianic interpretation of Ps. 45 does not preclude an original particular historical setting (see vv. 9-10, 13-15) involving a royal marriage. On

As for the psalm's setting, M. E. Podechard believes that the poet's thought follows the successive stages of the wedding ceremony, from the bridegroom's procession to the bride's home, to the meeting of the two groups, to the joyful return to the royal palace.⁵ Some suggest that this nuptial ode may have been sung as the new queen and her attendants entered the royal palace in splendid procession (G. H. A. von Ewald⁶) or after the marriage ceremony had taken place and the king and queen were seated on thrones in their palace attended by the royal retinue and celebrating their wedding feast (with vv. 14-16 referring to an earlier event) (E. J. Kissane⁷).

this question see L. Sabourin, *The Psalms. Their Origin and Meaning* (New York: Alba, 1970) 161f. R. Tournay sketches the three principal interpretations of the psalm: (i) a purely secular marriage-song, incorporated into the Psalter owing to a messianic adaptation; (ii) a marriage-song for a king of Israel or Judah, regarded as a type of the Messiah; (iii) a directly messianic marriage-song composed in the third or fourth century B.C. ('Les affinités du Ps. XLV avec le Cantique des Cantiques et leur interprétation messianique', in *Congress Volume. Bonn 1962* (VT Supplement, 9) [Leiden: Brill, 1963] 173).

5. 'Notes sur les psaumes', *RB* 32 (1923) 28.
6. *Commentary on the Psalms*. Vol. 1. (London: Williams & Norgate, 1880) 165.
7. *The Book of Psalms*. Vol. 1. (Dublin: Browne & Nolan, 1953) 196, 200, 201. Building on a suggestion of J. H. Eaton (*Psalms* [London: SCM, 1967] 123; cf. 23, 31f.), M. D. Goulder sees in Psalm 45 a reflection of the day-long annual ritual surrounding the new marriage of the king on 15th Bul, the first day of an autumnal festival at Dan. The first half of the psalm is an enthronement hymn (vv. 3-9), the second half a prothalamium (vv. 10-17), the whole poem being sung in the evening (*The Psalms of the Sons of Korah* [JSOT Supplement Series 20] [Sheffield: Department of Biblical Studies, University of Sheffield, 1982] 121-137).

With regard to the structure of the psalm, v. 2 is a dedicatory preface in which the psalmist describes his pleasant task, while v. 18 forms a valedictory epilogue that indicates the desired outcome of the wedding-song, *viz*, perpetual praise of the king among the nations. Within this structure v. 3 is an introduction that praises the beauty and graciousness of the king, and v. 17 a conclusion which foresees that illustrious descendants will come from the marriage union. The heart of the poem consists of two sections, vv. 4-10 and vv. 11-16.8

There are depicted in vv. 4-10 the two pre-eminent characteristics of the king: martial prowess in the defence of truth and right (vv. 4-6); a just administration in a dynasty that is destined to endure for ever, an administration that merits the divine pleasure and prompts the joyful homage of his court (vv. 7-10). Or as L. C. Allen expresses it, 'verses 4-6 focus upon the king engaged in a just war, wielding sword and bow in his right hand; verses 7-10 envisage him on his throne wielding his royal sceptre, symbol of justice, and in his palace precincts in festive garb with his new consort at his right hand'.⁹

Verse 10 represents a climax and a transition, for the poet's thought has moved from the king himself (v. 3) as a mighty warrior (vv. 4-6) and just administrator (vv. 7-8) to the king's robes (v. 9a), to the royal musicians (v. 9b) and harem (v. 10a), to the king's consort (v. 10b), who is then immediately addressed in

8. *Cf.* the treatment of the psalm's structure in N. H. Ridderbos, 'The Psalms: style-figures and structure' in *Studies on Psalms* (OTS XIII, ed. by P. A. H. de Boer) (Leiden: Brill, 1963) 69-74; Mulder, *Psalm 45*, 22-29; L. C. Allen, 'Psalm 45:7-8 (6-7) in Old and New Testament Settings' in *Christ the Lord. Studies in Christology presented to Donald Guthrie* (ed. H. H. Rowdon) (Leicester: IVP, 1982) 221-227; and especially C. Schedl, 'Neue Vorschläge zu Text und Deutung des Psalmes XLV', in *VT* 14 (1964) 310-318.
9. 'Psalm 45:7-8' 226. Podechard aptly observes that this king excels in performing two essential functions of royalty - defence of the nation from without, the maintenance of justice within ('Notes' 33).

vv. 11-13. In the second principal segment of the psalm (vv. 11-16), which is 'an unfolding of the statement in v. 10b: "the consort stands at your right hand"',¹⁰ the poet exhorts the new bride to give exclusive allegiance to her lordly husband (vv. 11-13) and describes the splendid pomp of the bridal train and the consummate joy of the bridal party as they enter the royal palace (vv. 14-16),

Verses 7 and 8 of Psalm 45 are bound together by **על-כך** in v. 8b. God could be said to have anointed the king with the oil of incomparable exultation (v. 8b,c) precisely because the king's dynasty was permanent or eternal (v. 7a), his royal administration was marked by equity (v. 7b), and he himself loved righteousness and eschewed wickedness (v. 8a). If 'the oil of gladness' (v. 8c) refers to a literal anointing, it could allude to an earlier consecration with oil at the king's coronation (*cf.* 1 Sa. 15:17; 2 Sa. 12:7; Ps. 89:20) or possibly to the preparations for the wedding celebration or for the marriage bed. On the other hand, if the expression is metaphorical (as seems more probable, *cf.* Is. 61:3), **שמן ששן** will be epexegetic of **שמן** ('oil = gladness'), indicating that God had anointed the king on his marriage-day with a joy such as no other

10. 'Psalms' 74.

11. Thus also E. König, *Die Psalmen* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1927) 474 n. 3, comparing Ps. 95:1b. Alternatively **שמן ששן** could symbolise consecration so that the phrase would mean '(God. . . has anointed you) in a consecration that brought you gladness'. But C. A. Briggs construes **שמן ששן** as a vocative that begins the third strophe of the poem (vv. 8c-18), a strophe whose characteristic theme is the joy of the bridegroom: 'O, oil of joy above thy fellows' (*cf.* Ct. 1:3; 4:10-16). The king himself is thus seen (in vv. 8c-9a) as embodying 'all precious ointments' and 'delightful odours and plants' (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Psalms* [with E. G. Briggs] [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1906], I, 383, 387; *Messianic Prophecy* [New York: Scribner's, 1886] 142 and n. 1).

king or friend of the bridegroom had ever experienced.¹²

One of the most celebrated *cruces interpretum* in the OT is found in v. 7a. How are the words כְּסֹאךָ אֱלֹהִים to be understood? It should be noted immediately that not a few scholars, daunted by what they consider to be insuperable grammatical or conceptual difficulties in the text as it stands (such as the anarthrous state of אֱלֹהִים or its application to a human being, if it is a vocative), have resorted to various conjectural emendations. For the sake of completeness these may be briefly listed, before we consider in detail the main ways of understanding the MT.

(i) C. Bruston suggests that an original יְהוָה was read as יְהוּה which was then subject to an Elohist alteration to אֱלֹהִים. The text should therefore be rendered 'Your throne will be eternal' (cf. 2 Sa. 7:13,16; Ps. 21:4; 72:5; 89:4, 29, 36f.).¹³ Cf. Moffatt's translation: 'Your throne shall stand for evermore.'

12. מִחֲבֵרֶיךָ here may mean (i) 'above your fellow-kings' (or, 'wedding-guests', cf. Mt. 9:15); (ii) 'in greater measure than other men' (cf. v. 3a); or, less probably (iii) '(God, your God, has anointed you,) rather than your companions. . .'. P. C. Craigie (*Psalms 1-50* [Waco, Texas: Word, 1983] 336; cf. *BDB* 582, 6a, s.v. מִן) supports this latter view.
13. *Du texte primitif des psaumes* (Paris: Sandoz & Fischbacher, 1873) 91f. Bruston was followed *inter alios* by J. Wellhausen, *The Book of Psalms* (London: Clarke, 1898) 45, 183; B. Duhm, *Die Psalmen* (Leipzig: Mohr, 1899) 129; and Podechard, 'Notes' 28, 29, 33. This view was subjected to a lengthy critique by O. T. Allis ('"Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever". A Study in Higher Critical Method', *PTR* 21 [1923] 236-266). On the whole matter of the 'Elohist redaction' of the Psalter, see R. D. Wilson, 'The Names of God in the Psalms', *PTR* 25 (1927) 1-39 (esp. 7-10); 'The Names of God in the Old Testament', *PTR* 18 (1920) 472-475.

- (ii) S. R. Driver expressed (at least in 1892) a hesitant preference for P. de Lagarde's conjecture of **כָּעַד** for **וְעַד** (*cf.* Pr. 20:28): 'Your throne Elohim has established for ever'.¹⁴
- (iii) T. K. Cheyne proposes **נִשְׂאֵךְ יְהוָה**: 'Yahwè lifts thee up for ever and ever'.¹⁵
- (iv) **אֱלֹהִים** could be omitted as a gloss or later addition to the text (GK, § 128d, 'most probably').
- (v) Following earlier suggestions, T. H. Gaster supplies the verb **דָּכִין**: 'Thy throne hath some god [set firm] to endure for all time!'.¹⁶
- (vi) Reading **וְעַד עוֹלָם אֱלֹהִים** (*i.e.* with enclitic *mēm*) and vocalising **כְּסֹאךָ** as a denominative piel (**כִּסְּאָךְ**) from **כִּסֵּא**, M. Dahood translates 'The eternal and everlasting God has enthroned you', a proposal which creates a parallelism between vv. 3, 7 and 8 ('God has blessed you . . . God has enthroned you . . . God has anointed you').¹⁷

Confronted by all these conjectures and knowing that the text as it stands may be understood satisfactorily in several different ways and that the ancient versions uniformly construed **אֱלֹהִים** as a vocative (see below), the exegete may be excused for viewing any resort to emendation as an ill-advised counsel of despair. There are, in fact, at least five ways of translating the phrase **כְּסֹאךָ אֱלֹהִים**.

14. *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1892) 260 §194 II. (referring to de Lagarde, *Prophetæ Chaldaice* [Leipzig: Teubner, 1872] XLVII, who cites Pr. 20:28 and Is. 9:6 in support).
15. *The Book of Psalms*. Vol. I (London: Paul, 1904) 199, 203; but *cf.* his earlier edition (1888) 124, and his 1891 volume, *The Origin and Religious Contents of the Psalter* (London: Paul, 1891) 1820
16. 'Psalm 45' 244, 250.
17. *Psalms*. Vol. I (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1966) 273, followed by Craigie, *Psalms*, I, 336f. On this proposal, see Mulder, *Psalms* 45, 70-72, 80; A. M. Harman, 'The Syntax and Interpretation of Psalm 45:7' in *The Law and the Prophets* (ed. J. H. Skilton *et al.*) (Nutley: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1974) 340-342.

1. 'Your divine throne' (RSV)

On this view אֱלֹהִים is genitival - 'your throne of God' means 'your throne established and protected by God',¹⁸ or 'the throne that God has given you' (GNB), or 'your God-like (or, godly) throne'.¹⁹ Proponents of this view²⁰ frequently cite such parallels as the phrases יַעֲקֹב בְּרִיתִי, literally 'my covenant, Jacob', in Leviticus 26:42, and מַחֲסֵי עֹז, literally 'my refuge, strength', in Psalm 71:7.

This translation, popularised by the RSV, is not without serious difficulties. If כִּסֵּא is in fact qualified by two different types of genitive (viz. a pronominal suffix *kaph* denoting possession, and an adjectival genitive, אֱלֹהִים 'divine'), we have a construction that is probably unparalleled in the OT (see GK §128d)²¹ With regard to Leviticus 26:42, if is not simply an archaic marker of the construct state or a case of dittography, either בְּרִית has the suffix because the following proper name (unlike אֱלֹהִים could not be so qualified or the expression is an ellipsis for בְּרִית יַעֲקֹב.²² What is more, 'my covenant [made with] Jacob' is not parallel to 'your throne [established by] God'; God may be said to establish a throne, but not Jacob the covenant. As for Psalm 71:7 and comparable parallels often adduced,²³ the two nouns involved are usually related by apposition, so that מַחֲסֵי עֹז means 'my refuge, which is strength (or strong)', Sometimes the second noun may be classed as an accusative of definition: מְדוּבָד (Lv. 6:3) means 'his

18. Thus H. Hupfeld-W. Nowack, *Die Psalmen*. Vol. I (Gotha: Perthes, 1888) 627.

19. A variation of this is 'Your throne is like God (in that it is) for ever and ever', where אֱלֹהִים is predicative and stands for אֱלֹהִים, the כ having been omitted by haplography or for the sake of euphony after the final כ of כִּסֵּאךְ.

20. E.g. T. C. Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1960) 220 n. 1.

21. Cf. the view of H. L. Fleischer cited by Driver, *Tenses* §§193-194.

22. See the discussion in GK §128d, 131r; E. W. Hengstenberg, *Commentary on the Psalms* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1846) 133f.

23. *Viz.* Lv. 6:3; Num. 25:12; 2 Sa. 22:18, 33; 2 Ki. 23:17; Ps. 79:5; Ezk. 16:27; Hab. 3:8.

garment, in (= made of) linen'.²⁴ If, in these two instances, the second noun can be appropriately translated by an adjective ('my strong refuge', 'his linen garment') this is not because the substantive thus rendered is genitival. Furthermore, if it be argued that **כסא אלהים** stands for the more regular **כסא אלהיך**, this latter means 'the throne of your God' (cf. 1 Ki. 1:20, 27, 37; 2:12, 24), not 'your throne is from God' or 'your divine throne'.

2. *'God is your throne' or 'Your throne is God (or, divine)*²⁵

Here **אלהים** is subject or predicate and the sense is either that God himself is the creator and sustainer of the king's rule or that regal power is securely founded on and supported by the immovable rock of divine authority.

Grammatically, no valid objection may be raised against these renderings, but conceptually they are harsh. An Eliakim, son of Hilkiah, may 'become a throne of honour to his father's house' (Is. 22:23) but God could scarcely 'be a throne' to a king, for the concept of 'God' and the idea of 'throne' (= dynasty) are too dissimilar to permit even a bold metaphor such as is found elsewhere in the Psalter - 'You are my rock and my fortress' (Ps. 71:3; cf. 91:2,9; Is. 26:4), 'Lord, you have been our dwelling-place in all generations' (Ps. 90:1; cf. Dt. 33:27). And, given the Hebrew word-order, 'God is your throne' could not be taken as brachylogy for 'God will establish (יכין) your throne'. With regard to the translation 'Your throne is God', where **אלהים** is predicative, it seems unfitting to assert that any human throne, however **כסא** be interpreted, belongs to the category of divine beings ('is God'). And it is unlikely that the notion of 'founded on God' or 'protected by God' or 'having divine qualities' may be abbreviated to the single word **אלהים**.

24. Cf. Driver, *Tenses* §193.

25. Cf. R. A. Knox's rendering, 'God is the support of your throne'.

3. 'Your throne is God's throne'²⁶ or 'Your throne will be a divine throne'.²⁷

In this case כסא has been supplied from כסאך before אלהים. The construction may be explained as follows.²⁸ In the expression קיר עץ, 'a wall of wood', עץ is used absolutely as part of the subject. But the absolute עץ could also be used predicatively, without any copula, as in the phrase קירתי עץ (Ezk. 41:22), lit. 'its walls, wood', *i.e.* 'its walls [were] wood(en)'. This represents, in expanded form, 'its walls [were walls of] wood', with קירות supplied from קירתי before עץ. Similarly כסאך אלהים, lit. 'your throne, God', means 'your throne [is the throne of] God.' This concept of a royal throne being God's throne is paralleled by 1 Chronicles 29:23 (*cf.* 28:5; 1 Ki. 3:28) where Solomon is said to sit 'on the throne of Yahweh'. Psalm 45:7-8a would thus affirm that since the king rules in equity and righteousness, his kingdom will always remain secure; it will be a kingdom of God.

26. A. F. Kirkpatrick, *The Book of Psalms* (Cambridge: CUP, 1902) 248 (tentatively) ('Thy throne [is the throne of] God'); R. Tournay, 'Le Psaume CX', *RB* 67 (1960) 7f.; 'Affinités' 185-188; *cf.* A. Robert and R. Tournay, *Le Cantique des Cantiques* (Paris: Gabalda, 1963) 434; Mulder, *Psalm 45* 54-65, 73-80 (with the qualification that this is 'an unusual construction, without any really reliable parallel in the Old Testament' [p. 65]); T. N. D. Mettinger, *King and Messiah* (Lund: Gleerup, 1976) 264f., 273; J. H. Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms* (SBT, 32) (London: SCM, 1976) 142f. ('Your throne, the throne of God'; *cf.* his *Psalms* 125). The RSV mg makes the supplied כסא indefinite in meaning: 'Your throne is a throne of God'.
27. Similarly W. Gesenius, *Gesenius's Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures* (ET by S. P. Tregelles) (London: Bagster, 1846) 50 (who paraphrases 'divine' as 'guarded and made prosperous by God'); G. H. A. von Ewald, *Syntax of the Hebrew Language of the Old Testament* (ET by J. Kennedy) (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1881) 133; König, *Psalmen* 474. But M. Bittenwieser prefers to supply an optative (as also in vv. 6a,b, 7b) (*cf.* GK §§141f.): 'May thy throne be a throne divine forever' (*The Psalms* [New York: Ktav, 1969] 82, 91).
28. *Cf.* Ewald, *Syntax*, 132f.

The problem with this translation is less grammatical than conceptual. In the following texts that are sometimes adduced as parallels to Psalm 45:7 there are (in Hebrew) two or more nouns in juxtaposition without a copula, the first noun being the subject and the other(s) predicative. A literal translation is given to illustrate our point.

'The whole earth [was] one language' (Gn. 11:1)

'The barley [was] ear and the flax [was] flower' (Ex. 9:31)

'Your bars [shall be] iron and bronze' (Dt. 33:25)

'The season [is] heavy showers' (Ezr. 10:13)

'All your robes [are] myrrh and aloes and cassia' (Ps. 45:9)

'Our vineyards [are] blossom' (Ct. 2:15)

'One basket [was] very good figs' (Je. 24:2)

'Hamath and Arpad [are] confusion' (Je. 49:23)

'Its walls [were] wood' (Ezk. 41:22).

Although these instances may be considered formally parallel to Psalm 45:7, there is one significant difference. In each case there is implied a certain identity between subject and predicate, so that the second (and any subsequent) noun denotes the material of which an object is made or a characteristic which an object possesses. Thus the copula ('be') supplied in the literal translations may be paraphrased or better expressed by phrases such as 'consists of', 'is made of', 'contains', 'is filled with', or 'is characterised by'.²⁹ But God is neither the material of which the throne is composed nor a characteristic it possesses. Between this subject and predicate there may be certain likenesses (such as eternity) but any form of identity is lacking. What this rendering in fact presupposes is the ellipsis not simply of כסא but of ככסא '[is] like the throne of (see #4 below)."

Grammatically there is no objection to finding ellipsis in v. 7a but it is remarkable that in v. 7b, where there would have been no ambiguity of meaning without the repetition of the nominative, the subject actually repeated in the predicate (שבט . . . שבט), whereas in v. 7a, where the repetition would have

29. Cf. the similar comments in Driver, *Tenses* §§187f., 194.

30. H. Herkenne renders v. 7a this way: 'Dein Thron gleicht dem Jahves immer and ewig' (*Das Buch der Psalmen* [Bonn: Hanstein, 1936] 172),

removed any ambiguity, the subject is not repeated.³¹ That is, if in fact v. 7a meant 'Your throne is the throne of God', we might have expected (considerations of metre apart) the poet to have written either כסא אלהים in v. 7a³² (to parallel v. 7b) or שבט מלכותך in v. 7b³³ (to parallel v. 7a, *ex hypothesi*). In any case, as T. K. Cheyne remarks,³⁴ given the simple style of the poet, the idea of the king's sharing the rule of God might have been more directly expressed by 'You sit beside Yahweh on his throne'.

4. 'Your throne is like God's throne' (G. R. Driver; NEB).³⁵

This rendering, which reflects the conceptual tendency of #3 above, represents a fusion of two

31. This point is made by E. B. Pusey, *Daniel the Prophet* (Oxford: Parker, 1869³) 476 n.
32. Perhaps Ex. 32:16 affords the closest parallel to this: המכתב מכתב אלהים הוא.
33. Or if שבט מלכותך is the subject of v. 7b, שבט מלכותך מלכותך might have been expected.
34. *Psalter* 182.
35. G. R. Driver, 'The Modern Study of the Hebrew Language', in *The People and the Book* (ed. A. S. Peake) (Oxford: Clarendon, 1925) 115f.; 'The Psalms in the Light of Babylonian Research' in *The Psalmists* (ed. D. C. Simpson) (Oxford: OUP, 1926) 124. Driver was followed by C. R. North, 'The Religious Aspects of Hebrew Kingship', *ZAW* 50 (1932) 30 (tentatively, since 'it is still possible that *Elohim* is a vocative addressed to the king'); M. Noth, 'Gott, König, Volk im Alten Testament', *ZTK* 47 (1950) 186f. (reprinted in *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament* [München: Kaiser, 19663] 225f.); A. R. Johnson, *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel* (Cardiff: University of Wales, 1955) 27 n.1; D. Winton Thomas, *The Text of the Revised Psalter* (London: SPCK, 1963) 16; J. A. Emerton, 'The Syntactical Problem of Psalm XLV.7' in *JSS* 13 (1968) 58-63 (whose aim is to defend Driver's rendering as a 'possibility').

distinct Hebrew idioms. After the preposition כ ('like') there may occur an ellipsis of a word or words necessary to the sense. Thus *הציו כגבור* (Je. 50:9) means 'his arrows will be like [those of] a warrior'. Secondly, in comparisons Hebrew sometimes omits the preposition כ. For example, *ראשו כהם פז* (Ct. 5:11), 'his head is [like] the finest gold'. Accordingly, Driver's translation of Psalm 45:7a simply 'presupposes a natural development of idioms that are well attested in Hebrew'.³⁶

To support this translation appeal has been made to three main texts. C. R. North refers to the expression *עיניך יונים*, 'your eyes are doves', in Canticles 1:15 and 4:1, which, in light of 5:12a (*יעיניו כיונים*, 'his eyes are like doves'), he takes to mean "'thy eyes are like doves' eyes" for softness and innocence'.³⁷ The comparison, however, may equally well be between the whiteness of the eyes and the whiteness of doves (cf. 5:12b, 'bathed in milk'; 4:2, 'your teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes')³⁸ or between the eyes and the gentleness and purity of doves themselves. In either case, 'your eyes are doves' means simply 'your eyes are like doves'.

In appealing to Psalm 80:11, J. A. Emerton expands the RV (text) rendering of the verse to illustrate the parallel: 'The mountains were covered with the shadow of it [*viz.* Israel as a vine planted in Canaan], And the boughs thereof were like the boughs of cedars of God' (similarly NEB). 'Just as the boughs of the vine are said to be like cedar trees because they offer shade, so the king's throne may be compared to God either because he is eternal or because his throne is eternal (*cf.* Lam. v. 19)'.³⁹ But we maintain that the immediate context in v. 10b (the vine 'filled the land') suggests that vv. 11f. together illustrate the remarkable expansiveness of the vine rather than its compass (vv. 11a, 12) and its protectiveness (v. 11b; 'offering shade', as Emerton puts

36. Emerton, 'Psalm XLV.7' 60. My summary of this view is drawn from Emerton.

37. 'Religious Aspects' 30.

38. J. R. Porter, 'Psalm XLV.7', *JTS* 12 (1961) 52f.

39. Emerton, 'Psalm XLV.7' 61-63 (citation from p. 63).

it). כסה (v. 11a) may indicate height and שלח (v. 12a) breadth, and just as the latter verb is to be supplied in v. 12b, so the former is to be supplied in v. 11b.⁴⁰ We may therefore safely follow the RSV (similarly RV margin) in its rendering of the verse: 'The mountains were covered with its shade, the mighty cedars [were covered] with its branches'.⁴¹ But even if וענפיה ('and its boughs') is nominative, as Emerton alleges, there is more than one possible interpretation of the text: as JB notes (*ad loc.*), "'the branches were cedars of God" (*i.e.* the highest of cedars, *cf.* 36:6; 68:15)'.⁴²

We conclude that although both the Hebrew idioms referred to (*viz.* an ellipsis after כ; the omission of כ in comparisons) may be separately attested, the purported conflation of the two idioms in Psalm 45:7 lacks any unambiguous parallel in the OT⁴² and therefore remains an unconvincing explanation.⁴³

5. 'Your throne, O God'

Such a rendering, where אלהים is a vocative,⁴⁴ is found in all the ancient versions,⁴⁵ the majority of English translations (AV, RV, RSV mg, NASB, NAB, JB, NIV, Knox, Berkeley), and many modern commentators.

40. I owe this observation to Dr. Craig C. Broyles of Cambridge.
41. As for the Hebrew word-order on this view (nominative-accusative-accusative-nominative), it is a case of ABBA.
42. G. R. Driver himself called the construction in Ps. 45:7 'an archaic form of *comparatio compendiaria* which has survived unaltered in an early poem . . . a rare relic of a primitive syntax' ('Hebrew Language' 115, 116). On Driver's appeal to an 'identical construction' in the Babylonian Creation Epic (4:4,6), see Porter, 'Psalm XLV.7' 52.
43. It would be somewhat strange to have a simile in v. 7a ('your throne is like . . .') but an identification in v. 7b ('your royal sceptre is . . .') (*cf.* A. A. Macintosh, 'The Meaning of אלהים in Psalm 45:6', in *Trivium* 1 (1966) 182.
44. אלהים occurs as a vocative in some 47 other places in the Psalms, 1. אדני 4 or 5 times, and יהוה 3 times (Allis, 'Throne' 250 n. 30).
45. On Ps. 44:7-8 in the LXX, see the Additional Note below. It is not impossible that the uniform

But to whom does אלהים refer? If we regard this vocative as an address to God himself, as does the Targum,⁴⁶ we ignore the presence of a series of second person singular pronominal suffixes in the preceding and following verses that can refer only to the king. What is more, a sudden apostrophe to God in v. 7a would be singularly out of place when the next verse speaks of God in the third person (v. 8b). Only slightly less difficult is the suggestion that אלהים is an apostrophe to the messianic King, for it involves the unlikely supposition that embedded within a poem addressed to the royal couple is a brief messianic prophecy found in v. 7⁴⁷ or vv. 7-8.⁴⁸

But not all those who regard אלהים as an address to some contemporary king agree that this vocative should be rendered 'O God.'⁴⁹ Alternative translations include:

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- testimony of the ancient versions in support of the vocative may reflect 'a messianic re-reading which stresses the transcendence of the King - Messiah' (Robert and Tournay, *Cantique* 434), but it is at least equally possible that all these versions testify to the most natural way of construing אלהים, whether they understood the word in reference to the Messiah, or, as Mulder believes (Psalm 45 48), to God.
46. 'Thy throne of glory, O Lord, endures for ever and ever'. The targumist understands מלך in vv. 2, 6, 12, 15f. as referring to God, 'the King of the world' (v. 15), 'the Eternal King' (v. 16). Verse 3 contains the one explicit reference to the Messiah: 'Your beauty, O King Messiah, surpasses that of ordinary men'. See S. H. Levey, *The Messiah: An Aramaic Interpretation* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1974) 109-113.
47. Thus J. B. Payne, *The Theology of the Older Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1962) 262.
48. Thus Harman, 'Psalm 45:7' 343-347 ('The eyes of the inspired psalmist were suddenly lifted beyond the contemporary occupant of the Davidic throne to the kingly glory of the messianic ruler', p. 344).
49. Scholars who render אלהים by 'O God' include Hengstenberg, *Psalms* 133-135; Pusey, *Daniel* 473-478; J. J. S. Perowne, *The Book of Psalms* (London: Bell, 1873) 363; H. Gunkel, *Die Psalmen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1926⁴) 189, 190; Allis, 'Thy Throne' 236-266; W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Psalms*. Vol. I (London: SPCK, 1939) 251, 252f.; J. de Fraine,

'o Ruler',⁵⁰ 'o majesty',⁵¹ 'o divine one',⁵² 'o Divine One',⁵³ 'O god',⁵⁴ or 'O Elohim'.⁵⁵ Behind this variety of renderings are differing views about the meaning of **אלהים** when the term is applied to beings other than the sovereign God. We shall return to this point below.

L'aspect religieux de la royauté israélite (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1954) 25 n.4, 203; Schedl, 'Neue Vorschläge' 314, 316; D. Kidner, *Psalms* 1-72 (London: IVP, 1973) 172.

50. S. R. Hirsch, *The Psalms*. Vol. I (New York: Feldheim, 1960) 326.
51. Macintosh, 'Psalm 45:6' 182f., who, citing G. R. Driver's view that the Aramaic **אלהים** could be used as an ideogram for the Persian *bagan* ('majesty') (*Aramaic Documents of the Fifth Century B.C.* [Oxford: OUP, 1957] 85; but see the 1954 edition, p. 35), suggests that in the Hebrew term **אלהים**, as in the Aramaic equivalent, there might have been a confusion of the concepts of divinity and majesty.
52. Briggs, *Messianic Prophecy* 141 and n.4 (but *cf.* his later *Psalms* 387: 'Yahweh'); Goulder, *Psalms* 129, 130; Allen, 'Psalms 45:7-8' 225 (but *cf.* p. 226, 'God').
53. R. Kittel, *Die Psalmen* (Leipzig: Deichert, 1914²) 170, 175 ('du Göttlicher'); Jacquet, *Psaumes*, II, 38 (8 Divin'); A. Bentzen, *King and Messiah* (London: Lutterworth, 1955) 40, apparently; *cf.* pp. 17, 38, 85f., 96 n, 10; S. Mowinckel, *Psalmenstudien*. Vols. III-VI (Amsterdam: Schippers, 1966) III, 98; *cf.* his *Psalmenstudien*. Vols. I-II (Amsterdam: Schippers, 1966) II, 302; and *The Psalms in Israel's Worship* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) 73, 75; A. Weiser, *The Psalms* (London: SCM, 1962) 360, 363 ('divine king' translating Göttlicher); H. Ringgren, *Israelite Religion* (London: SCM, 1966) 230 (the original has 'o Göttlicher', p. 211); *cf.* 'אלהים' in *TDOT*, I, 282; H. J. Kraus, *Psalmen*. I (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978³) 486, 487, 490 ('o Göttlicher'); similarly in his *Theologie der Psalmen* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1979) 138, 231.
54. Kissane, *Psalms*, I, 198, 200 ("god" in the sense of "magnate", "noble").
55. F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*. Vol. II (London: Hodder, 19022) 84, 95-98; J. Calès, *Le Livre des Psaumes*. I (Paris: Beauchesne, 1936) 466, 467, 470; E. Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament* (New York: Hodder, 1958) 236, 237 n.1.

Perhaps the attempt to defend this traditional interpretation is best made by considering the various objections raised against it. Such objections fall naturally into four categories - grammatical, structural, contextual and theological.

On the grammatical side it is alleged that **אלהים** as a vocative would 'without doubt' have the article.⁵⁶

Now it is true that since a person addressed is always definite the vocative is generally articular, but, as P. Joaon rightly points out, especially in poetry and elevated prose it is quite often omitted.⁵⁷ In reference to the one true God, **אלהים** is a proper name and therefore is determinate in itself and does not take the article (GK §125a,f).⁵⁸ In reference to supernatural or non-earthly beings or to persons standing *in loco dei*, **אלהים** becomes titular and is always anarthrous.⁵⁹ So, as a vocative referring to the king, **אלהים** in v. 7 cannot be said to require the article. One might also note that the other two titular vocatives in the psalm (*viz.* **גבור**, v. 4; **בת**, v. 11) are anarthrous.

Another grammatical objection is this: if **עולם ועד** were a 'direct predicate' (1 [is] for ever and ever'), **לעולם** as in v. 3 (*cf.* v. 18) rather than the simple **עולם** would have been expected.⁶⁰

It is a fact that the phrase **עולם ועד** is never used elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible as an adverbial accusative of time ('for ever and ever') in the predicate of a verbless sentence. In defence of this rendering, however, we may point out⁶¹ that: (i) this phrase is

56. Podechard, 'Notes' 33.

57. *Grammaire de l'Hébreu biblique* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1947) §137g.

58. The only case where **אלהים** as a vocative referring to God is articular is Jdg. 16:28.

59. See the passages cited below, pt\$.86f.

60. *Cf.* Hupfeld-Nowack, *Psalmen*, I, 627. In Ps. 106:1 **לעולם** is a 'direct predicate' ('Yahweh's steadfast love endures for ever'); in Ps. 10:16 **עולם ועד** is an 'indirect predicate' ('Yahweh is king for ever and ever').

61. The four points listed are drawn largely from observations made by Allis, 'Throne' 254-258 and Mulder, *Psalm* 45 40-43.

used adverbially in verbal sentences (Ps. 21:5; 52:10; 104:5) and as an adverbial modifier of the predicate in verbless sentences (Ps. 10:16; 48:15); (ii) a substantive used as an adverbial predicate may replace a prepositional phrase (*e.g.*, 2 Sa. 2:32; Ps. 52:3; Je. 15:18); (iii) elsewhere in the Psalter עולם is equivalent to לעולם (Ps. 61:8; 66:7; 89:2, 3, 38); and (iv) other temporal adverbs may stand as sole predicates in verbless sentences (Jb. 8:9; 2 Ch. 12:15).⁶² While admitting that a prepositional phrase would have been a more regular construction in a 'direct predicate' (*cf.* La. 5:19), one may fairly claim that the translation of ועד עולם by '(is) for ever and ever' is quite admissible from a grammatical point of view.⁶³ It is of interest that the LXX renders עולם in v. 7, as it does לע(ו)לם in vv. 3 and 18, by εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα. But it is also possible that the phrase ועד עולם forms an emphatic predicate nominative,⁶⁴ 'Your throne, O God, is perpetuity and eternity (*i.e.*, permanent and eternal)'.

62. The research of F. I. Andersen on *The Hebrew Verbless Clause in the Pentateuch* (Nashville, New York: Abingdon, 1970, 42-45, 'Rule 3') suggests that if ועד עולם were predicative, the word-order would probably have been ועד אלהים כסאך. It is uncertain, however, whether Andersen's rules apply outside the Pentateuch and to poetic material. See the extensive review of Andersen's book by J. Hoftijzer ('The Nominal Clause Reconsidered', *VT* 23 [1973] 446-510) who points out that 'the syntax pattern of poetry is often quite different from that of . . . non-poetic material'.
63. M. Held cites examples of the poetic usage in biblical Hebrew of נצח (as well as its synonym עלם) without a preposition where the meaning is 'for ever', and shows that the same phenomenon is observable in Ugaritic and Moabite ('Studies in Biblical Homonyms in the Light of Akkadian', *Journal of the ANE Society of Columbia University* 3 [1970] 50f.; I owe this reference to Mr. Philip P. Jenson).
64. Thus Allis, 'Throne' 254f., 258 (citing *GK*, §141b).

From the standpoint of structure, J. S. M. Mulder has argued that a vocative in v. 7a would destroy the symmetry of the two halves (vv. 4-10, 11-16), each beginning with an address (v. 4, גבור; v. 11, בת).⁶⁵

L. C. Allen has issued the rejoinder that while there is no second vocative in vv. 11-16 to match a vocative אלהים in vv. 4-10, a double reference to the king in vv. 4a and 7a would match the twofold reference to the princess in vv. 11a and 14a, and that the personal nouns אלהים (v. 7a) and בת-מלך (v. 14a) may mark the beginning of the second half of their unit.⁶⁶ One might also observe that v. 7a is not only related to vv. 3b and 8b by the use of אלהים, but is also connected with vv. 3b and 18b by the occurrence of (ל)ע(ו)לם (ועד), just as v. 8b has על-כן in common with vv. 3b and 18b. If, then, vv. 7a and 18b are linked structurally, it should occasion no surprise that v. 7a applies the language of divinity to the king since the poet does precisely the same thing in v. 18 by his use of the two liturgical expressions 'I will cause your name to be celebrated (יהודך) and '(the peoples) will praise you' (אזכירה שמך).

A third type of objection is drawn from contextual considerations. The studied parallelism of vv. 3b, 7a, and 8b shows, it is said, that the word אלהים must have the same referent in v. 7a as it does in vv. 3b and 8b, viz. God; by using אלהים of the king, the poet would have created an intolerable ambiguity.⁶⁷

That there is verbal parallelism between these three lines is incontestable.⁶⁸ But it does not necessarily follow that there must be an identity of reference in parallel terms. Indeed, one explanation of the somewhat awkward repetition in v. 8b אלהים אלהיך which actually destroys any precise parallelism, is that the poet recognises that he has given the term אלהים a distinctive meaning in v. 7a and therefore seeks to

65. *Psalms* 45:13, 23, 25, 43f., 46.

66. 'Psalms 45:7-8' 225.

67. Mulder, *Psalms* 45:43-47. In 1888 T. K. Cheyne had argued that because אלהים in v. 8 refers distinctly and solely to Yahweh, it would be unnatural to interpret the word differently in v. 7 (*Psalms* 126).

68. This may be shown as follows:

לעולם	אלהים	על-כן ברכך	(v. 3b)
עולם ועד	אלהים	כסאך	(v. 7a)
אלהיך	אלהים	על-כן משחך	(v. 8b)

clarify the relation between the king as אלהים and Yahweh as אלהים: the king himself, however elevated his person or office, must never forget that Yahweh is his אלהים '.

This brings us to the fourth and perhaps the major objection to our view. Given the vigorous monotheism of Israelite religion, would any court poet ever have addressed an earthly monarch as אלהים?⁶⁹

It should be observed, to begin with, that to address the king as אלהים was not to deify him. As surely as Israelites believed that the king was distinct from other men, they believed he was distinct from אלהים.⁷⁰ In whatever sense the king was 'divine', it was not an actual or intrinsic divinity that he possessed.⁷¹

69. If the psalm is taken to be directly messianic (thus Allis, 'Throne' 260f.), no difficulty is occasioned by the address 'O God', but as long as the exegete sees the psalm as a nuptial ode for a particular king and אלהים is taken as vocative, a problem remains in the use of אלהים, whether or not the psalm be deemed messianic. Certainly it is preferable to find a second, messianic meaning in the whole psalm (cf. Craigie, *Psalms*, I, 340f.) than to restrict the messianic allusion to one or two verses within the psalm (see above, nn. 47,48).
70. Cf. S. Mowinckel, 'General Oriental and Specific Israelite Elements in the Israelite Conception of the Sacral Kingdom', in *The Sacral Kingship (Numen Supplement, 4)* (Leiden: Brill, 1959) 283-293; R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*. Vol. I (London: Darton, 1961) 112, citing 2 Ki. 5:7; Ezk. 28:2,9; K.-H. Bernhardt, *Das Problem der Altorientalischen Königsideologie im Alten Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1961) 304; cf. 263; Kraus, *Psalmen*, I, 491. Concerning Ps. 45:7 E. Jacob writes: 'Royal ideology reaches its highest point in this passage, but doubtless it is entirely right to remember in connection with this text that "one swallow does not make a summer", and that Old Testament teaching viewed as a whole always clearly asserts the king's subordination to Yahweh' (*Theology* 237).
71. Similarly J. Schildenberger, 'Zur Textkritik von Ps 45 (44)', *BZ* 3 (1959) 37; Schedl, 'Neue Vorschläge', *VT* 14 (1964) 317 (אלהים here alludes to divine election). On conceptions of kingship in the Ancient Near East, see Bernhardt, *Problem* 67-90; de Fraine, *Royauté* 217-263.

Nor was the king regarded as an incarnation of deity. Rather, he was 'Yahweh's anointed', in the sense that he served as Yahweh's deputy on earth, exercising a delegated yet sovereign authority.⁷² And as anointed leader of God's chosen people, the king was, by the gracious divine will, God's adopted son (2 Sa. 7:14; Ps. 2:7; 89:26f.). Yet in accounting for this unique application of the title אלהים to a king, we must reckon with more than simply the king's divine election and his unique role in standing *in loco dei*. The king may exceptionally be addressed as 'God' also because, endowed with the Spirit of Yahweh, he exhibits certain divine characteristics. In Psalm 45 'glory and majesty' are ascribed to him (vv. 4-5a), as they are to God (*e.g.*, Ps. 96:6); he is a defender and lover of truth and right (vv. 5b, 8a), just as God is (Ps. 33:5; 99:4; Is. 61:8); he judges with equity (v. 7b),⁷³ as God does (Ps. 67:4; 99:4); just as God's rule is eternal (Ps. 10:16; 93:2; 145:13), so is the dynasty to which the Davidic king belongs (v. 7a).⁷⁴ Some weight must also be given to

72. See Mettinger, *King* 104, 259-265, who, commenting on the relation between vv. 20-28 and vv. 6-19 in Ps. 89, observes that since the king does on earth what God does in heaven 'one is almost tempted to speak of the king as "the image and likeness of God" on earth' (p. 263). According to A. R. Johnson ('Divine Kingship and the Old Testament', *ExpT* 62 [1950-51] 42), 'in Israelite thought the king was a potential "extension" of the personality of Yahweh'.
73. שֶׁבֶט ('sceptre', v. 7) denotes the king's functions as judge (de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, I, 103).
74. Hengstenberg (*Psalms* 133) proposes that v. 7b is the cause and v. 7a the effect: righteous judgment leads to eternal rule (*cf.* Is. 9:7; Pr. 29:14). On the permanence and stability of the Davidic (messianic) dynasty, see 2 Sa. 7:13, 16; Ps. 18:51; 45:18; 89:4f., 21f., 30, 37f.; 132:12; I Ch. 28:7; Is. 16:5. Sometimes 'the permanency attributed to the dynasty in the language of court etiquette was freely wished to the king himself' (Sabourin, *Psalms* 337). De Fraigne goes further and finds in Ps. 45:7, along with Ps. 21:5; 61:7; 72:5,17; 110:4 among the royal psalms, 'exuberant promises of immortality' (*Royauté* 25).

the influence of the exuberant style of an oriental court (*cf.* v. 2, 'my heart is bubbling over'). Psalm 45 is noteworthy for its superlatives in its description of the qualities and achievements of the king (vv. 3-8); **אלהים** is not the only instance of hyperbolic language in the poem (see especially vv. 3, 6, 8). But v. 7 remains distinctive in that here 'the royal compliments suddenly blossom into divine honours'.⁷⁵ With this said, it should also be emphasized that an occupant of the Davidic throne represented a dynasty with which God had made an eternal covenant (2 Sa. 7:13,16) and from which God's ideal vicegerent would come, so that these 'divine honours' should not be explained simply as verbal extravagance. A king of David's line could be addressed as **אלהים** because he foreshadowed the coming one who would perfectly realise the dynastic ideal, a godlike ruler who would embody all the ideals described in the psalm.

The poet's exuberance is tempered, however, by his theological propriety. It has been suggested above that the insertion of **אלהיך** after **אלהים** in v. 8 may reflect the poet's awareness of an extraordinary use of **אלהים** in v. 7. He forestalls misunderstanding by indicating that the king is not **אלהים** without qualification.⁷⁶ Yahweh is the king's 'God'.⁷⁷ Such an explanation of the expression 'your God' does not rule out the possibility that the poet is also stressing the intimate and unique relationship that exists between the king and Yahweh, although **אלהיך** is also used in reference to individual

75. Kidner, *Psalms 1-72* 170. For a judicious analysis of 'The Psalms and the king', see D. J. A. Clines, *TFSB* 71 (1975) 1-6.
76. Similarly Kittel, *Psalmen* 175; Bernhardt, *Problem 255* n.6; Kraus, *Psalmen*, I, 491. On this phenomenon of 'permutation' see GK §131a,k.
77. This is not to endorse the commonly held view (e.g., Gunkel, *Psalmen* 189,191; North, 'Religious Aspects' 29; Mowinckel, *Psalmenstudien*. III, 98; A. A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*. I [London: Oliphants, 1972] 350; *cf.* 336) that originally **אלהיך יהוה** stood in v. 8b, the present text being the Elohist's editor's equivalent.

prophets (e.g., 1 Ki. 17:12).⁷⁸ What is improbable, however, is that אלהים in v. 8 is a vocative and that אלהיך is the subject: 'Therefore, O God, your God has anointed you . . .'.⁷⁹ Rarely, if ever, is the vocative אלהים found between the verb and the subject,⁸⁰ such a view would comport with a different word-order, viz. אלהיך על-כן אלהים משחך אלהיך (metrical considerations apart).

Another consideration that may partially explain this unique form of address is the relative fluidity of the term אלהים in the Hebrew Bible,⁸¹ where on occasion it is used of the heavenly beings around Yahweh's throne (Ps. 8:6 [LXX, ἄγγέλους]; 97:7; 138:1), judges (Ps. 82:1,6; cf. Ps. 58:2, אלהם, and also Jn. 10:34-36),⁸²

78. See de Fraine, *Royauté* 268-270.

79. This interpretation is espoused by Ridderbos, 'Psalms' 74; Jacquet, *Psaumes*, II, 38 (ô Divin'), 47 (ô divin'); and tentatively by B. Couroyer, 'Dieu ou roi?', *RB* 78 (1971) 236, and in his review of A. Barucq, *L'expression de la louange divine et de la prière dans la Bible et en Égypte* (Le Caire: Institut Français D'Archéologie Orientale, 1962) in *RB* 72 (1965) 284-285. As Dahood rightly remarks (Psalms, I, 273), metrical considerations rule out the possibility that אלהים אלהיך is a case of dittography.

80. For example, although 49 of the 164 uses of אלהים in Book II of the Psalter (Pss. 42-72) are in the vocative case (Ps. 45:7-8 apart), there is no instance where אלהים stands after the verb and before the subject. (The nearest parallel is Ps. 69:30: subject-אלהים-verb). On the contrary, there are five cases where אלהים stands outside the subject-verb combination: once where the word-order is אלהים-subject-verb (72:1) and four times where the order is verb-subject-אלהים (65:2; 67:4, 6; 68:25).

81. See the discussion of J. L. McKenzie, 'The Appellative Use of El and Elohim', *CBQ* 10 (1948) 170-181, who rightly insists that poetic language shows a certain indifference to 'the severe canons of logic and metaphysics' (p. 177).

82. Against this category (in which Ex. 21:6; 22:7f. are sometimes included) see C. H. Gordon, 'אלהים in its Reputed Meaning of Rulers, Judges', *JBL* 54 (1935) 139-144, and his later short note, 'History of Religion in Psalm 82' in *Biblical and Near Eastern*

Moses (Ex. 7:1; cf. 4:16), and the apparition of Samuel (1 Sa. 28:13; cf. Is. 8:19). It is also relevant to note that Isaiah 9:5 combines the two terms used in Psalm 45 to address the king (*viz.* גבור, v. 4; אלהים, v. 7) and applies the title to the ideal king of the future (אל גבור, 'Mighty God', used of Yahweh himself in Is. 10:21).

Because, then, Israelites regarded the king as God's viceroy on earth, his legitimated son who exhibited divine qualities, it is not altogether surprising that, in a burst of lyrical enthusiasm but with the appropriate qualification, a Davidic king should exceptionally be given a title that was in fact not reserved exclusively for Deity.⁸³

We conclude that the objections to taking אלהים as a vocative in Psalm 45:7, whether they are drawn from grammar, the structure of the poem, the context of v. 7, or from general theological considerations, are by no means insuperable. The traditional rendering, 'Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever', is not simply readily defensible but remains the most satisfactory solution to the exegetical problems posed by the verse. In addition, we have proposed that in this verse it is a king of the Davidic dynasty who is addressed as אלהים

Studies. Essays in Honor of William Sanford LaSor (ed. G. A. Tuttle) (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 129-131. On the other hand, C. Schedl believes that it is perhaps in Ps. 82:6 ('You are gods [אלהים], sons of the Most High') that we find the spiritual milieu that most closely corresponds to the use of אלהים in Ps. 45:7a ('Neue Vorschläge' 316).

33. It is proper to speak of an 'identity' between the king and God (as I. Engnell does in his *Studies in Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East* [Oxford, Blackwell, 1967²] 175) only in the sense that ideally the king is godlike in his character and conduct. He is not 'one' with God by nature but may become partially 'one' with him in practice and may therefore not inappropriately, if only exceptionally, be called 'God'.
34. If this is so, Psalm 45 is unique not only as the one genuine hymn to the king found in the Psalter but also as an instance where the title אלהים is used in direct address to the king. Cf. Mowinckel, *Psalms* 74f., who notes that elsewhere in Israelite psalm poetry the hymn is reserved for Yahweh himself.

In Psalm 45:8, on the other hand, אלהים should almost certainly be construed as a nominative: 'Therefore God (אלהים), your God, has anointed you'.⁸⁵

Additional Note: Psalm 44:7-8 in the LXX

In general we may characterise the LXX rendering of this psalm as consistently literal. For instance, the thrice-repeated על-כן, standing at the beginning of clauses in vv. 3,8 and 18, is rendered each time by διὰ τοῦτο in the same position, and the slight differences between לעולם (v. 3), עולם ועד (v. 7) and לעולם ועד (v. 18) are reflected by εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα (v. 3), καὶ εἰς αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος (v. 7), and εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα καὶ εἰς αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος (v. 18).⁸⁶ Or again, the translator reproduces the distinctively Hebrew word-order (e.g., vv. 3c, 8b, 9b) and personal pronouns even when Greek would not normally require them (e.g., vv. 3, 4, 5, 10, 11). The double accusative (σε . . . ἔλαιον) with ἔχρισεν in v. 8 reflects a Hebrew idiom with משה (see GK §117 dd,ee), although the normal LXX construction after χρίω would have led us to expect σε . . . (ἐν) ἐλαίῳ (cf. Ps. 88:21; 151:4). Such examples could be multiplied.

Several features of the LXX translation are noteworthy, especially in light of the citation of vv. 7-8 in Hebrews 1:8-9.

1. Verse 6a reads τὰ βέλη σου ἠκονημένα δυνατέ ('your weapons are sharpened, o mighty warrior'), where δυνατέ has no corresponding גבור in the MT,⁸⁷ as it does in

85. Unfortunately, in preparing this paper neither of the following resources was available to me: P. J. King, *A Study of Psalm 45* (44) (Rome: Pontificia Universitas Lateranensis, 1959); A. Neuwirth, *Kis'akh elohim. Dein Thron, o Gott* (Ps.45,7). *Untersuchungen zum Gottkönigtum im Alten Orient und im AT* (dissertation in the University of Graz, 1964).

86. On these uses of αἰών, see H. Sasse, 'αἰών' *TDNT* 1, 200.

87. But Briggs (*Psalms*, I, 383, 386, 391) reads גבור in v. 6, following the LXX 'as required by measure' (p. 386) and assuming that a copyist has omitted the word from the Hebrew text.

- v. 4a.⁸⁸ This dual address to the king as a 'mighty warrior' or 'hero' in vv. 4 and 6 of the LXX heightens the probability that in the next verse ὁ θεός is also a vocative.⁸⁹
2. As in the MT, so in the LXX, it is extremely unlikely that God (not the king) is addressed in v. 7, for a sudden apostrophe of this sort would involve an awkward transition from an address to God in v. 7 to a statement about God in v. 8, and from σου as referring to God in v. 7 to σου as referring to the king in v. 8 (as in v. 6).
3. To render ὁ θρόνος σου ὁ θεός by 'Your throne is God' is implausible in light of the articular θεός: an anarthrous θεός would have been expected in the predicate (cf. ῥάβδος in v. 7b). No more probable is the translation 'God is your throne', given the word-order and the ambiguity of subject if the two articular nouns θρόνος and θεός were both nominative.
4. In v. 7b the anarthrous state of ῥάβδος εὐθύτητος shows ἡ ῥάβδος τῆς βασιλείας σου to be the subject.
5. The exact parallelism of vv. 8b and 3c (*viz.* διὰ τοῦτο - verb - σε - ὁ θεός) suggests that in v. 8b ὁ θεός is nominative, not vocative: 'Therefore God (ὁ θεός), your God, has anointed you'.⁹⁸
88. La^R and Augustine read *sagittae tuae acutae potentissimae* but La^G has (correctly) *potentissime*. See A. Rahlfs, *Septuaginta Societatis Scientiarum Göttingensis. X. Psalmi cum Odis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1931) 38; M. Caloz, *Étude sur la LXX Origenienne du Psautier* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978) 141-143.
89. In the LXX the vocative of θεός is generally ὦ θεός (not θεός, as is usual in Attic Greek), although it is sometimes found, even in the literary books (see R. Helbing, *Grammatik der Septuaginta. Laut- und Wortlehre* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1907] 34). In Ps. 45:7 Symmachus and Theodotion have ὦ θεός, and Aquila θεέ (F. Field, *Origenis Hexaplorum guae supersunt . . .* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1875], II, 162).
90. I have greatly benefited from comments on parts of this paper kindly given by Dr. R. P. Gordon, Dr. C. C. Broyles and Dr. L. J. McGregor.