CANADIAN-AMERICAN THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

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Is the Garden of Eden a Sanctuary?

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Abstract

The idea that the Garden of Eden was a sanctuary, with Adam as priest, is increasingly widespread. The most commonly cited source for this idea is G. K. Beale, who gives as evidence for this the idea that God's "walking" in the Garden (Gen 3:8) is the same as his "walking" in connection with the sanctuary in Lev 26. Other Biblical texts where "walking" using the term דלה in the *hithpaʾel* are cited in support. However, on closer examination, these texts do not speak of God walking in a sanctuary, and other uses of the *hithpaʾel* have no connection with God or the Garden of Eden or the sanctuary. Thus there is no technical term in view which carries this meaning. It is a standard term used in multiple ways simply meaning "walk" or in the *hithpaʾel* "walk about," which (even with God as the subject) gives no support for the idea that the Garden of Eden was a sanctuary, and consequently calls into doubt the idea that Adam was a priest.

Introduction

The idea that the Garden of Eden was a sanctuary, where Adam [האדם *ha-adam*] served as priest,[1] has become increasingly widespread in the interpretation of Genesis 1–3 in recent years. A widely cited source for this idea is the work of G. K. Beale, principally *The Temple and the Church's Mission* (2004).[2] He com-

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[1] While the Hebrew could indicate either a personal name or a designation (perhaps an office-bearer), I will use "Adam" throughout since in the present study it refers to the person Adam and his tasks in the Garden of Eden.

[2] G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004). A popular version of his view is found in G. K. Beale and Mitchell Kim, *God Dwells Among Us: Expanding Eden to the Ends of the Earth* (Nottingham, UK: InterVarsity, 2014). Beale acknowledges (*The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 66, n. 87) the influence "to a significant extent" of Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue* (South Hamilton: Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 1989). See also *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 170, n. 1, and 371, n. 12, where Beale indicates that Kline's work may have been the origin of his idea. M. Barker, *The Gates of Heaven* (London: SPCK, 1991) and D. W. Parry, "Garden of Eden: Prototype Sanctuary,' in *Temples of the Ancient World*, ed. D. W. Parry (Salt Lake City:

ments: "From the late 1990s onward, it has become widely accepted that Genesis 1–3 depicts Adam as a priest serving in a garden sanctuary."[3] Each time this claim appears the same Biblical verses used by Beale are cited in support.[4] Careful scrutiny of this exegetical argument is therefore warranted,[5] especially in light of Block's criticism:

> While impressive collectively, each of these observations is capable of another and in many instances more natural interpretation that removes it from the priestly conceptual realm and transfers it to the realm of an ancient royal garden. In the end the temple interpretation is illusory and can be maintained only by reading later realities into the earlier text.[6]

Beale adduces a number of reasons why we should interpret the story of the Garden of Eden as the establishment of a sanctuary, a temple, and that Adam was

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Deseret Book Company, 1994). Beale has also summarised his argument in "Eden, The Temple, and the Church's Mission in the New Creation," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48 (March 2005): 5–31; and "Adam as the First Priest in Eden as the Garden Temple," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 22 (2018): 9–24. The basic ideas appear again in G. K. Beale, *Union with the Resurrected Christ: Eschatological New Creation and New Testament Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2023), 193–202. Detailed analysis of Beale's view (mostly positive) can be found in Jahisber Peñuela Pineda, "Sanctuary/Temple in Genesis 1–3: A Reevaluation of the Biblical Evidence" (PhD Thesis, Andrews University Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 2019), and Charles Robert "Chet" Harvey, "A Templed Creation: Application of Gregory K. Beale's Cosmic-Temple Motif to a Theology of Creation" (PhD Thesis, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018).

3 G. K. Beale, *Union with the Resurrected Christ*, 197. He cites as evidence his own book, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 66–80; and L. Michael Morales, *The Tabernacle Pre-Figured: Cosmic Mountain Ideology in Genesis and Exodus* (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 97–100, 258-261. However, this is not independent support for the idea since Morales (110, n. 183 continued on 111, and 111) is quoting Beale, "The Final Vision of the Apocalypse and Its Implications for a Biblical Theology of the Temple," in *Heaven on Earth: The Temple in Biblical Theology*, ed. S. Gathercole and T. D. Alexander (Carlisle, England: Paternoster, 2004), 191–209, where the same arguments are given.

4 Umberto Cassuto comments: "The *Hithpaʿēl* of the verb hālakh ['walk'] often occurs in connection with the Lord, e.g., Lev. xxvi 12; Deut xxiii 14 [Hebrew, verse 15])." *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, part 1 (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961), 152. This is a reprint of a translation from 1953, with the Hebrew original dating from 1944, predating Beale's views. Beale does not cite Cassuto here, although he cites Cassuto in other connections. See *The Temple and the Church's Mission*.

5 This view appears in both academic works (where Beale is cited) and in more popular material including sermons, magazines, and blogs where the ideas are presented often with no sources referenced.

6 Daniel I. Block. *Covenant: The Framework of God's Grand Plan of Redemption* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021), 28. See below for Block's criticisms of the interpretation of Ezekiel 28.

appointed to be a priest in this sanctuary,[7] to cultivate it (עבד *'ābad*) and keep it (שמר *šāmar*) (Gen 2:15).[8]

While there is much that could be debated about the various exegetical arguments Beale advances,[9] here I want to examine in detail just one of them.[10]

Beale claims that the reference to God "walking" in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:8) using the *hithpa'el* התהלך is one of the many indications that Eden was a temple, since the same term is used for walking to and fro outside the tabernacle to guard it, and for God walking in the camp of the Israelites. This claim is repeated throughout his works, but it is not developed in greater depth. A typical comment:

> Israel's temple was the place where the priest experienced God's
> unique presence, and Eden was the place where Adam walked and
> talked with God. The same Hebrew verbal form (stem) מִתְהַלֵּךְ

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7   In his extensive thesis on the "land" in Biblical theology, Munther Isaac argues for Eden as "proto-promised land" and as a sanctuary. "If Eden was a sanctuary, it follows that Adam was a priestly figure." Munther B. I. Isaac, "From land to lands, from Eden to the renewed earth: a Christ-centred biblical theology of the promised land" (PhD thesis, Middlesex University, 2014), 3. Now published as *From Land to Lands, from Eden to the Renewed Earth: A Christ-Centred Biblical Theology of the Promised Land* (Carlisle: Langham Academic, 2015). Note that Isaac sees Eden as sanctuary, as covenanted territory, and as royal garden. This three-fold focus operative throughout his thesis (including in his study of the themes in the NT) mitigates the one-sidedness of seeing Eden as first and foremost a sanctuary.

8   Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 66–70. The task of "cultivating" and "keeping" is part of human "stewardly" responsibility for the whole of creation, with careful and accountable management expressed in Genesis 1:26–28 by "rule" [רדה *radah*] and "keep" [כבש *kabaš*]. There is extensive literature around what is meant by "rule" and "keep," with some blaming this passage for human responsibility for environmental damage. I cannot enter into that debate here, but suffice it to say that I do not believe God would, after his careful work of creation, relinquish it for people to exploit and abuse. Unfortunately, Beale blunts the force of this allocation of creation-wide responsibility before God by seeing it as primarily a priestly task related to the (garden) temple. The suggestion that עבד *'ābad* and שמר *šāmar* when used together refer to priestly work seems overdrawn. They are admittedly used to refer to the work of priests, but the nature of this work is not stated and so they cannot be referring to specifically priestly tasks. It means simply that there is work to be done which only the Aaronic priests may do [Numbers 16:1–7]. Therefore, use of these terms in Genesis 2–3 does *not* indicate that the garden was a tabernacle, or that Adam was a priest.

9   He lists them as follows: (1) God's "walking back and forth" (Gen 3:8); (2) The command to Adam to "cultivate" and "keep" the garden, seeing the terminology as a reference to priesthood; (3) Adam lost his priestly role by failing to keep out the serpent, so cherubim were appointed in his place; (4) The tree of life was the model for the lampstand in the sanctuary/temple; (5) The temple wall cladding in Jerusalem was carved to resemble a garden; (6) The entrance to the garden and to the temples faced east; (7) Rivers flow out of Eden, the eschatological temple in Ezekiel and Revelation; (8) the Garden of Eden and the temple both had a tri-partite structure. See the helpful concise summary in G. K. Beale, *Union with the Resurrected Christ*, 198–99. These arguments are discussed in *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 66–80.

10 J. Alexander Rutherford critiques Beale's book regarding methodology and interpretation, focusing on issues other than those discussed here. Review of the *Temple and the Mission of God*, Teleioteti Book Reviews, https://www.teleioteti.ca/2021/02/16/review-of-the-temple-and-the-mission-of-god/. David G. Firth critically evaluates Beale's interpretations and methods in *European Journal of Theology* 18:2 (2009): 195–96.

(hithpael) used for God's "walking back and forth" in the Garden (Gen 3:8) also describes God's presence in the tabernacle (Lev 26:12; Deut 23:14 [15]; 2 Sam 7:6–7).[11]

Beale has argued that the verbal form is significant, although he strangely undercuts his argument by suggesting that this applies to only three out of eight instances.

> The precise hithpael form that is used is in Gen 3:8 is a participle (*mithallek*), which is the precise form used in Deut 23:14 [15] and 2 Sam 7:6. Outside of these three uses, the hithpael participial form occurs only in five other passages, which have nothing to do with the tabernacle or temple.[12]

Richard Davidson suggests that the "expression used to describe God 'walking around' (Hithpael התהלך) in the Garden (Gen 3:8) is a technical term for God's presence in the sanctuary," citing the usual texts, Lev 26:12 and 2 Sam 7:6–7. He references Wenham and Parry for this idea.[13] But treating the *hithpael* of הלך as a technical term cannot be sustained, given that it is never used **explicitly** in this way.[14] Another approach is offered by Peter Beckman, who says that "When the subject of 'walking about' (a hithpael verb) is the Lord, the action's context is always either in the tabernacle or in the Garden."[15] This is inaccurate since the context is never **in** the tabernacle (nor associated with it).

Gordon Wenham is often cited in this connection. He stated in his commentary on Genesis,

> The term "walking" (hithpael participle of הָלַךְ) is subsequently used

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11 Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 66. This same claim is made in 111, n. 68, where Beale says that "'walking' is used figuratively in Exodus, Numbers and Deuteronomy for God's presence with Israel (apparently in the tabernacle) during the wilderness wanderings." Beale then cites the same texts as in the quotation above, with no indication as to which texts in Exodus and Numbers might be referred to here. The *hithpaʿel* הלך is in fact not used anywhere in Numbers, and there is only one citation in Exod 21:19 which concerns whether or not an injured man is able to *walk around* with the aid of a staff. Other references to God "going" with Israel refer to the pillar of cloud and fire, or the "angel" of the Lord going with them use forms of הלך other than the *hithpaʿel*.

12 Beale, "Adam as the First Priest," 22, n. 3. See table 1 for the use of התהלך in the OT.

13 Richard Davidson, "Earth's First sanctuary: Genesis 1–3 and Parallel Creation accounts," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 53 (2015): 74, citing Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story" and Parry, "Garden of Eden: Prototype Sanctuary," in *Temples of the Ancient World,* 126–151.

14 Note also that the Septuagint gives a number of different translation equivalents for the *hithpaʿel* of הלך, which we would not expect if this were a technical term specially related to God's actions or the sanctuary. The LXX uses forms of *peripatéō* in Gen 3:8, Lev 26:12, Deut 23:14, 2 Sam 7:6; and Esth 2:11. See T. Muraoka, *A Greek-Hebrew/Aramaic Two-Way Index to the Septuagint* (Louvain: Peeters, 2010), 187. In Ezek 28:14 the LXX has *égenēthēs* (exists) instead of a verb for "walking."

15 Peter Beckman, "The Garden of Eden: An Archetypal Sanctuary" (M.Th. Thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 2017), 42.

of God's presence in the Israelite tent sanctuary (Lev 26:12; Deut 23:15 [14]; 2 Sam 7:6–7) again emphasising the relationship between the garden and the later shrines.[16]

Elsewhere, Wenham argues that the garden of Eden is "an archetypal sanctuary, that is a place where God dwells and where man should worship him."[17] He sees parallels between features of the garden and later sanctuaries, the tabernacle and the Jerusalem temple, which suggest to him that "the garden itself is understood as a sort of sanctuary."[18] However, Wenham does not develop his arguments to any extent. It is Beale who makes this connection a linchpin for his perspective on the Old Testament.

The Biblical texts repeatedly cited (with little variation) can be tabulated for ease of reference (NIV 1988 translation).[19]

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16 Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, vol. 1 of Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 76. See also his earlier article, "Sanctuary symbolism in the Garden of Eden story," in *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies, Division A: The Period of the Bible* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1986) 19–25. Reprinted in Richard S. Hess and David Toshio Tsumura, eds., *I Studied Inscriptions from Before the Flood: Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1–11* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 399–404. Here Wenham made a limited comment on this, saying simply that "The same term is used to describe the divine presence in the later tent sanctuaries in Lev 26:12, Deut 23:15, 2 Sam 7:6–7. The Lord walked in Eden as he subsequently walked in the tabernacle." "Sanctuary symbolism in the Garden of Eden story," 20. He adduces other evidence for the Garden being a sanctuary which also needs careful appraisal.
17 Wenham. "Sanctuary symbolism in the Garden of Eden story," 19.
18 Ibid.
19 The NIV 2011 edition is identical for these verses.

Table 1. Use of דלהתה *in the OT*

Verse	Use	Context
Gen 3:8	דְּלְהַתְמִ	Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was <u>walking</u> in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.
Lev 26:12	דְּלַהַתְהָ	I will <u>walk</u> among you and be your God, and you will be my people.
Deut 23:14 [H 15]	דְּלַהַתְמִ	For the LORD your God <u>moves about</u> in your camp to protect you and to deliver your enemies to you. Your camp must be holy, so that he will not see among you anything indecent and turn away from you.
2 Sam 7:6	דְּלַהַתְמִ	I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been <u>moving</u> from place to place with a tent as my dwelling.
2 Sam 7:7	דְּלַהַתְהָ	Wherever I have <u>moved</u> with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?"'
Ezek 28:14	דְּלַהַתְהָ	You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you <u>walked</u> among the fiery stones.

Leaving aside Gen 3:8 for the moment, we will examine the other texts to evaluate the extent to which they provide support for Beale's argument.

Leviticus 26:11–12

Peñuela Pineda comments on this text, that "the hitpaʿel of הָלַךְ is related to God's sacred dwelling, and therefore to God's presence."[20] Similarly, Munther states: "Lev. 26:12 says that God will 'walk among' the Israelites in the land, using the same verb form (יִתְהַלֵּךְ) which echoes the 'walk' of God with Adam and Eve in Eden in Gen. 3:8."[21] Wenham states that the blessings of the covenant for God's

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20 Pineda, "Sanctuary/Temple in Genesis 1–3," 92.
21 Munther B. I. Isaac, From land to lands, 152, citing C. J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 185. It is curious that although both Adam and Eve were given the same commandments, and equally suffered punishment, I have found only one commentator who states that Eve would also have been a priest (and a king!). Williamson sees the garden as the inner sanctum of the whole creation as a sanctuary, and comments: "Thus understood, Adam is portrayed as a priest in Genesis 2, just as he is portrayed as a king in Genesis 1. Hence Adam and Eve were made kings and priests to serve God." Paul R Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God's Unfolding Purpose*, NSBT (Nottingham,

faithful people include God walking with them "as he did in the garden of Eden before the fall."[22]

While the tabernacle is mentioned, it does not speak of God walking *in* the *tabernacle*, the place where his presence was manifest, but in the camp among the people—who would *not* be in the tabernacle! Of course, it does not exclude God walking in the tabernacle but that is not what this Biblical text states. Both the tabernacle and the "walking" are described as being "among" the people, as is clear from the next verse to consider (Deut 23:14). Harper cites Milgrom's view that "The clear implication is that… YHWH is not confined to a sanctuary but is present everywhere in the land."[23]

Deuteronomy 23:14 [H 15]

Here the context is the camp of the army when it has gone out to battle against their enemies (Deut 23:9).[24] While the camp must be holy since God is walking through it, that does not make it a sanctuary—the tabernacle where the ark was housed remained with the main encampment of the people; it was not taken with the warriors when they went out to battle. The "indecent" thing referred to is human excrement. The Israelites were told to designate a place outside the camp where they could relieve themselves, dig a hole, and cover it up so there is nothing offensive in the camp as God moves among them (vv. 12–13). This is clearly a reference to God "walking" (NIV "moves about") through the military camp, not the encampment where the Israelites lived, ate, played, and worked.

Note Craigie's comment though, that this verse is not speaking of God moving about in the camp itself, but may allude to the presence of God symbolised by the presence of the ark in the camp.[25] I consider that this does not do justice to the text, which required the people to keep the camp clean since God is moving about in it. This would not refer to the ark being moved about the camp: that remained behind in the tabernacle. We also have a specific reason why God is moving among them: 'to protect you and deliver your enemies to you.' This image of God as a warrior is unconnected to his "walking" in a tabernacle.

UK: Apollos; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 49, n. 22. I would claim that if Adam is to be seen as a priest, then in the pre-fall condition Eve would also have been a priest.

22 Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 330. See also Nobuyoshi Kiuchi, *Leviticus*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary (Nottingham, UK: Apollos; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 478–79.

23 Harper, *"I Will Walk Among You,"* 194, citing J. Milgrom, Leviticus 23–27, *The Anchor Bible* 3B (New York: The Anchor Bible, 2001), 2301.

24 Peter C. Craigie refers repeatedly to the "military camp" in *The Book of Deuteronomy*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 299–300.

25 Craigie, *Deuteronomy,* 300.

2 Samuel 7:6–7 = 1 Chronicles 17:5–6

God here says that he had not required a fixed temple (one made of cedar), but was content with the portable tabernacle. We can question whether 2 Sam 7:6 is relevant, since it does not refer to God "walking around" but "moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling." We cannot see this as referring to God walking alongside the tent as it was transported from place to place, and in the occasional relocation of the tabernacle once they were in the land.[26] If anything it is the opposite of walking in a tabernacle: it is walking where there is no tabernacle erected since it was packed for travel. When the tent was re-erected, God's presence "moved" (relocated) to the new site (most prominently in the pillar of fire and of cloud, e.g., Exod 13:21-22, Num 14:14; Neh 9:19).

Ezekiel 28:14

In a later article, Beale adds this text to the list of places where "walking" is an indication of a sanctuary. "The same Hebrew verbal form (hithpael) used for God's 'walking back and forth' in the Garden (Gen 3:8), also describes God's presence in the tabernacle (Lev 26:12; Deut 23:14 [15]; 2 Sam 7:6-7; Ezek 28:14)."[27] But here in Ezekiel, it is the "anointed guardian cherub" who is walking among the stones of fire. There is no indication that this cherub was a priest—all the imagery relates to a "ruler," the king of Tyre (Ezek 28:1, 12).[28] Nor does it refer to God walking, in a sanctuary or anywhere else. This occurrence of התהלך provides no support for Beale's argument.

Beale depends on Ezek 28 for many of the details of his interpretation of Gen 3 as a garden to be guarded by Adam, as the priest-king in a sanctuary, with the mandate to exclude from this sanctuary everything that is "unclean."[29] Beale claims: "Ezekiel 28:18 is probably, therefore, the most explicit place anywhere in canonical literature where the Garden of Eden is called a temple and Adam is viewed as a priest."[30] That is not a straightforward conclusion and remains a tenuous basis on which to construct a theology of the garden of Eden as a temple. Block states that this chapter is probably the most difficult one in the entire book

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26 The tabernacle was erected at Bethel (Judg 20:26–28), then at Shiloh (1 Sam 4:3), and subsequently at Jerusalem (2 Sam 6:17). The ark was taken from there to the temple of Solomon (1 Kgs 8:3–8).

27 Beale. "Adam as the First Priest" 10.

28 This passage, a prophecy against the king of Tyre, follows the prophecy against Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia and Tyre and a lament for Tyre, and is followed by prophecies against Sidon and Egypt, the Pharaoh of Egypt. Ezekiel 28 is highly symbolic but this context suggests it refers to Tyre. This raises a question over its interpretation as a reference to a cherub in Eden. Genesis 3 gives no description of the cherub appointed to guard the way to the tree of life. Cf. Isaiah 45:1 for the same description of the pagan king Cyrus as the Lord's "anointed."

29 This mandate applied to the Aaronic priesthood. There is no textual basis for suggesting Adam had to exercise a similar mandate.

30 Beale. "Adam as the First Priest," 13.

of Ezekiel.[31] We cannot, then, take it as read that Ezek 28 is a straightforward reference to Gen 1–3, or that it provides insights into the interpretation of Gen 1–3 which are not apparent in the actual text of that passage.[32] Does the use of creation imagery in the tabernacle/temple mean that the creation account uses temple imagery?

Other texts using the hithpa'el

Reviewing the use of the *hithpa'el* of הלך elsewhere will ascertain whether they contribute to the "garden-sanctuary" interpretation. The texts cited by Beale and others in connection with "walking" in a sanctuary are marked with * after the verse.[33] I have separated the participle usage as this is claimed to be of significance.

Table 2. Narrative Usage of hithpa'el

Narrative usage		
Use	**Verse**	**Context**
התהלך	Exodus 21:19	An injured man walks about with a staff to aid him
	Leviticus 26:12 *	God moving about
	Joshua 18:4, 8	Spies sent to walk through the land and describe it
	Judges 21:24	Israelites went home
	1 Samuel 23:13 (2x)	David and his men moving from place to place
	1 Samuel 25:15	Nabal's servants walking in the fields accompanied by David's men
	1 Samuel 30:31	David and his men walked about
	2 Samuel 7:7 // 1 Chronicles 17:6	God moving about
	2 Samuel 11:2	David walking on the roof of his palace

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31 Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 25–48*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 87. The views of Block on Ezek 28 are of particular significance since he has challenged Beale's interpretation of Genesis 1–3 as a sanctuary/temple, as a former advocate of that position. He states: "I acknowledge at the outset that in presenting this response I am swimming against an overwhelming current of scholarly opinion, and even against positions I once held." (3). "Eden: A Temple? A Reassessment of Biblical Evidence," in Daniel M. Gurtner, ed., *From Creation to New Creation: Biblical Theology and Exegesis* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2013), 3–29. Block has repeated his questioning regarding the use of temple imagery in Genesis 1–3, asserting instead the presence of royal imagery (e.g., Adam as God's administrator). *Covenant: The Framework of God's Grand Plan of Redemption*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021), 27–28.

32 Block, *The Book of Ezekiel*, gives a good survey of the problems entailed in the interpretation of this chapter.

33 Biblical texts listed from Solomon Mandelkern, *Veteris Testamenti Concordantiae Hebraicae atque Chaldaicae* (Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1978), 331.

Narrative usage		
Use	**Verse**	**Context**
	1 Chronicles 21:4	Joab went throughout Israel
	Job 1:7, 2:2	Ha-satan walking about the earth
	Job 18:8	The fate of the wicked who are ensnared[34]
	Job 22:14	God walks on the vault of heaven
	Job 38:16	Walk in the depths of the sea[35]
	Psalm 35:14	Go about mourning
	Psalm 39:6 [H 7]	Go about like a phantom[36]
	Psalm 43:2	Go about mourning
	Psalm 105:13 // 1 Chronicles 16:20	Israel wandered from place to place
	Ezekiel 28:14 *	Anointed cherub walking among the fiery stones
	Zechariah 1:10, 11, 6:7 (3x)	Men on horses going throughout the earth[37]
מתהלך Participle	Genesis 3:8 *	God moving about
	Genesis 13:17	Walk through the land (Abram)
	Deuteronomy 23:14 [H 15] *	God moving about
	2 Samuel 7:6 *	God moving about
	Esther 2:11	Mordecai walking outside palace
	Ezekiel 1:13	Fire flashing (going about)

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34 While this has a metaphorical meaning, it uses the narrative sense of walking into a trap.

35 Compare Ps 77:19.

36 Note Benton's comment on the sole niphal use of הלך "I fade away [נהלכתי] like an evening shadow" [Ps. 109:23a, NIV]. Richard Charles Benton Jr., "Aspect and the Biblical Hebrew Niphal and Hitpael" (PhD Thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2009), 265.

37 While this is a vision of men on horses, they are said to have journeyed through the world. It is thus a narrative usage and not a metaphorical one.

Table 3. Metaphorical Usage of hithpa'el

Narrative usage		
Use	**Verse**	**Context**
התהלך	Genesis 5:22, 24	Enoch walked with God
	Genesis 6:9	Noah walked with God
	Genesis 17:1	Walk before (God) and be blameless
	Genesis 24:40	Abraham's steward walking before the Lord
	1 Samuel 2:30	A priest walking before God (ministering)
	1 Samuel 2:35	A faithful priest will walk before God's anointed
	1 Samuel 12:2	Walk as leader (Samuel)
	2 Kings 20:3 // Isa 38:3	Hezekiah walked before God faithfully
	Psalm 12:8 [H 9]	The wicked prowl about
	Psalm 26:3	Walk in God's truth
	Psalm 56:13	Walk before God in the light of life
	Psalm 58:7 [H 8]	Water flowing
	Psalm 68:21 [H 22]	As a way of life (going on in their sins)
	Psalm 77:17 [H 18]	Lightning flashed in the sky
	Psalm 82:5	The wicked walk in darkness
	Psalm 101:2	Walk with a blameless heart
	Psalm 116:9	Walk before the Lord
	Psalm 119:45	Walk about in freedom
	Proverbs 6:22	As a way of life (guided by parents' teaching)
	Proverbs 20:7	As a way of life (lead a blameless life)
	Proverbs 23:31	Of wine flowing
	Ezekiel 19:6	Prowl among the lions (princes of Israel likened to lions)
	Zechariah 10:12	Walk in the name of the Lord
מתהלך Participle	Genesis 48:15	Abraham and Isaac walked before God
	1 Samuel 12:2	Walk as leader (walking before those being led)
	1 Samuel 25:27	Walk as follower (David's men)
	Proverbs 24:34	Poverty will come upon you like a prowler

Linguistic issues

From these references we see that the participle מתהלך is used not only of God, but also for Mordecai walking back and forth each day outside the palace, waiting for news of Esther.[38] It is used of lightning flashing, and of Abram walking through the land.[39] None of these usages of the *hithpa'el* participle relate to sanctuaries. The narrative use of the *hithpa'el* refers simply to travelling about from one place to another. Metaphorical uses likewise have no connection with sanctuaries or priesthood, being used as a reference to a "way of life," of repeated or accustomed behaviour. Those who are faithful to God are said to walk "before" him (Enoch, Gen 5:22, 24) or "with" him (Noah, Gen 6:9). Abram was commanded to walk before God (Gen 17:1; see also Micah 6:8 and Mal 2:6).[40]

In his speech, Samuel (1 Sam 12:2) announces that a king has been appointed as leader of Israel, and asserts his integrity in leading Israel. There is no suggestion that this is related to walking in a sanctuary—rather, Samuel walked throughout the land while the sanctuary remained at Shiloh—a metaphorical use indicating leadership.

There is then no special significance for this *hithpa'el* form as meaning "walking" within the tabernacle.

Nor can there be a claim that it has special significance when it speaks of God as the subject who undertakes this walking (Gen 3:8; Lev 26:11; and Deut 23:14; see also Job 22:14, which has no connection with a sanctuary). The same term is used in other contexts for "walking to and fro" where nothing remotely resembling a sanctuary is in view. In other words, התהלך is not a technical term with a specific meaning[41]—it refers to any general human movement, as well as speaking of God moving among us, but even that has no special significance. Its metaphorical meanings are again related to movement.

Peñuela Pineda acknowledges critics who "maintain that none of the

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38 Also, neither Lev 26:11 nor Ezek 28:14 use a participle.

39 I discuss below the claim that the latter refers to "assertion of sovereignty."

40 Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 127.

41 Baxter argues that we should consider "technical usage" for terms rather than refer to "technical terms," since any term could be used non-technically. "Rather than suggesting that words in-and-of themselves can be technical, it may be best to say that an author is able to use a word in a technical sense in their writings." Benjamin J. Baxter, "In the Original Text it says… A Study of Hebrew and Greek Lexical Analyses in Commentaries" (M.A. Thesis, McMaster Divinity College, 2008), 13. Also in Benjamin J. Baxter, "The Meanings of Biblical Words," *McMaster Journal of Theology and Ministry* 11 (2009–2010): 99. "Context is ultimately key for determining the meaning even of technical words. It is difficult, therefore, to see how so-called technical words are any different than nontechnical words that can be used referentially." Ibid., 99, also 94. Baxter asserts that "one must find evidence that an author is using a particular word in a technical sense, rather than merely assuming it to be true." Benjamin J. Baxter, "The Meanings of Biblical Words, *McMaster Journal of Theology and Ministry* 11 (2009–2010): 99, n. 33.

occurrences of מִתְהַלֵּךְ depicts God's residence in the sanctuary,"[42] an idea which depends on its use elsewhere. Peñuela Pineda admits:

> The argument for the sanctity of the garden of Eden is dependent upon the meaning of מִתְהַלֵּךְ, where the 'primary evidence for the garden's sanctity is the presence of the deity.' The semantic domain that surrounds God's pervasive presence (going to and fro) describes a repeated or habitual action in the garden of Eden. God's presence is known and manifested by his walking. The walking motif is later employed in the Old Testament when Israel acknowledges that God requires holiness and obedience if he is to continue to 'walk' among his people.[43]

The argument here is that a linguistic form (the *hithpa'el*) and the "semantic domain" surrounding God's presence indicate the special sanctity of the garden. It is not clear what the "semantic domain" refers to, as the single verb is all that is cited—God's presence is known by his walking. But "walking" in itself does not refer to God's presence. Certainly he has to be present to be able to walk, but God's presence was no less real for Cain, when there is no mention of *how* God was present (he is not said to walk). If God can be said to be present without "walking," is it not true then that התהלך or מתהלך has no special relationship to God's presence? It refers to how he is present *in some instances* (cf. Gen 18 for an extended description of God's presence where he is not said to walk except implicitly, v. 16 where Abraham walks along with the Lord and the angels as they leave).

Peñuela Pineda argues that "the walking motif seems to be associated with the sacred character of the garden of Eden."[44] Then, "the *hithpael* of הָלַךְ is related to God's sacred dwelling, and therefore to God's presence. Leviticus 26:11–12 shows this reality."[45] He claims that "the motif of God walking among his people is the means by which his presence is known"[46] and thus "Therefore the *hithpael* of הָלַךְ, describing God's customary action in the Garden of Eden and therefore even before the entrance of sin, speaks of God's presence and/or God's dwelling."[47] Then, in a strange turn of logic, he argues that the presence of God known

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42 Pineda, "Sanctuary/Temple in Genesis 1–3," 90, citing Daniel I. Block as one of these critics. "Eden: A Temple?" 7.
43 Pineda, "Sanctuary/Temple in Genesis 1–3," 91, citing David P. Wright, "Holiness, Sex, and Death in the Garden of Eden," *Biblica* 77 (1996): 307. Earlier Pineda had stated that "the most significant syntactic and literary characteristics" which link the sanctuary to Eden include the use of mith-hallek, 89. He also says: "God's presence in the gan-eden has been construed from the participle mith-hallek," 90.
44 Pineda, "Sanctuary/Temple in Genesis 1–3," 92.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid., 92–93.
47 Ibid., 93.

by his walking in the camp and the presence of the ark, makes the camp a sacred space, thus Deut 23:14 is "concerned with the purity of God's מִשְׁכַן, since in the military camp the Israelites walk to and fro, and up and down."[48] But there is nothing in this verse about the Israelites walking to and fro; it is God who does that! He concludes from this that "the divine presence is known and manifested in the Israelite camp via the interconnectedness between the walking motif and the dwelling place of God…. The *hithpael* of הָלַךְ does not explicitly describe YHWH's activity within the tabernacle, but it certainly alludes to the divine presence manifested by God's מִשְׁכַן."[49] But the *hithpa'el* meaning "walk up and down" does not entail God's presence—it can refer to movement of either God or others. This is the kind of semantic overload which Barr fulminated against. Porter points out that despite Barr's *The Semantics of Biblical Language*, published in 1961,[50] it has been difficult to bring linguistic analysis to bear on Biblical studies.[51] Traditional views show in the reading of an entire theological framework into a single instance of a word's usage, as we have here.

We then come full circle (literally) and discover: "The sacred space that מִתְהַלֵּךְ creates in Gen 3:8 simply signifies the holy status of the God-humankind relationship."[52] The conclusion of these various exegetical moves is summed up nicely:

> The question that remains to be answered explicitly is whether מִתְהַלֵּךְ can be considered an unequivocal indication of a sanctuary/temple setting. The answer that I would suggest admittedly carries the semantic logic presupposed above in relation to its context and domain: there is nothing in the post-Fall Eden narrative (and in the rest of the Old Testament) that would exclude מִתְהַלֵּךְ from the semantic framework of the holiness of the sanctuary/temple motif.[53]

Except that the *hithpa'el* does not appear in that semantic framework: it is a simple verb meaning "to walk up and down." Thus, it cannot *on its own* indicate a sanctuary or temple setting.

It seems then that "walking to and fro" (the sense of the *hithpa'el* form of the

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48 Ibid., 94.

49 Ibid.

50 James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961).

51 Stanley E Porter, *Linguistic Analysis of the Greek New Testament. Studies in Tools, Methods and Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 87. For other ways in which linguistics can assist in Biblical interpretation, see *Linguistics and the Bible: Retrospects and Prospects*, ed. Stanley E. Porter, Christopher D. Land, and Francis H. G. Pand (Eugene: Pickwick, for McMaster Divinity College Press, 2019). Stanley E Porter, *Linguistic Analysis of the Greek New Testament, Studies in Tools, Methods and Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015). *Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew,* ed. Walter R Bodine (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992).

52 Pineda, "Sanctuary/Temple in Genesis 1–3," 94.

53 Ibid., 95.

verb) has been connected to the tabernacle, since in reference to the tabernacle there is a mention of "walking to and fro." Since the tabernacle signifies God's presence with his people, anything associated with the tabernacle also signifies God's presence. Therefore, since we have a mention of "walking" by God in Gen 3:8, there is a tabernacle implied; no, proven. He says (in the quote above) "there is nothing to exclude [walking] from the semantic framework of the sanctuary/temple motif." On the contrary, I would argue that based on the evidence before us, there is nothing to *include* "walking" in the semantic framework of the sanctuary/temple motif. We have a series of tenuous connections all strung together as if they support each other. However, Pineda admits that "critics of this interpretation maintain that none of the occurrences of מִתְהַלֵּךְ depicts God's residence in the sanctuary."[54] Even more critically, Pineda concedes that

> it must be acknowledged that critics of the sanctuary/temple motif seem to be right in the sense that none of the occurrences of מִתְהַלֵּךְ explicitly depicts God's residence in the sanctuary. However, this inference seems unnecessary, at least in part. The hitpa'el of הָלַךְ has the common meaning of "going to and fro," suggesting the repeated or habitual presence of someone.[55]

This stands in conflict with the claim made by Davidson that מתהלך is a technical term.[56] How can this be if it has a common meaning with reference to anyone's walking? Pineda then suggests that the primary reference to Eden as a sanctuary depends on God's presence.[57] But this seems back to front. Not everywhere where God's presence was manifested thereby became a sanctuary; consider Abraham's tent where he entertained three strangers one of whom was the Lord (Gen 18).

We need to pay careful heed to the view expressed by Harper around methodological problems in discerning connections between texts.

> [T]here is an evident proclivity to build conclusions on genuine, yet in the end insignificant, connections. The problem is exemplified in Moskala's intertextual examination of Lev. 11. As part of his study, Moskala performs a detailed lexical comparison of the Leviticus pericope and the text of Gen. 1-3. Then, having established genuine overlap in vocabulary, he proceeds to discuss exegetical and theological significance. However, and crucially, Moskala does not consider the commonality of lexemes throughout the remainder of the Old Testament. Thus, for instance, he asserts that the use of כֹּל [*kol*, all]

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54 Ibid., 90. However, he refers only to Block, "Eden: A Temple?" 7.
55 Pineda, "Sanctuary/Temple in Genesis 1–3," 91.
56 Davidson, "Earth's First sanctuary," 74.
57 Pineda, "Sanctuary/Temple in Genesis 1–3," 91.

thirty-six times in Lev. 11 "points back to creation where the word כֹּל is used twenty-nine times." Yet, in so doing, Moskala fails to address the ubiquitous use of כֹּל throughout the Hebrew canon, leaving open the possibility that Lev. 11 likewise "points" to a host of Old Testament texts. What becomes apparent is that lexical overlap alone is insufficient to demonstrate significance in relation to a given connection.[58]

Is this problem, then, evident in the argument for התהלך as evidence for the presence of a sanctuary? The verb הלך appears in its various forms over 1,500 times in the OT. Do each of these carry implications of a "sanctuary"? Obviously not. So which occurrences are then relevant to this claim? How do we decide? What of the *specific* texts adduced to support this argument that the garden of Eden is a temple, since God went "walking" in it?

Although this verb occurs elsewhere as a *hithpael*, the "temple" argument focuses on the *hithpael* as a participle.

> The same *hithpael* participle form of the verb הָלַךְ appears in the following passages: Deut 23:15; 1 Sam 12:2; 2 Sam 7:6; Esth 2:11; Ps 68:22; Prov 20:7; 24:34. All these references have a common nuance of "going to and fro." Lev 26:11-12 is also included, although here הָלַךְ is only a *hithpael* and not a *hithpael* participle.[59]

But is this a legitimate interpretation? Jeffrey Leonard has developed a methodology for analysing intertextual relationships[60] which Harper says is a "comprehensive and widely applicable methodology." The criteria are, in summary:[61]

1. *Shared language is the single most important factor for establishing a textual connection*. This primary indication involves comparison of the vocabulary used.

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58 G. Geoffrey Harper, "'I Will Walk Among You.' The Rhetorical Function of Allusion to Genesis 1–3 in the Book of Leviticus," *Bulletin for Biblical Research*, Supplement 21 (University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2018), 36–37, citing J. Moskala, *The Laws of Clean and Unclean Animals in Leviticus 11: Their Nature, Theology and Rationale. An Intertextual Study*, ATSDS (Berrien Springs: Adventist Theological Society, 2000) 202. Harper indicates that כֹּל [kol, all] appears 40 times in Leviticus 11, and over 5,400 times in the Old Testament. See the discussion by Jacobus A. Naudé, "The Interpretation and Translation of the Biblical Hebrew Quantifier *Kol*," *Journal for Semitics* 20 (2011): 408–21. See also Douglas K. Smith, "Whom, Where, or What Could 'All the Earth' Mean? A Case Study in the Implications of Context and Intertextuality for Translating and Interpreting *Kol Ha-Aretz* in the Pentateuch," *Interdisciplinary Journal on Biblical Authority* 1/2 (2020): 135–53.

59 Pineda, "Sanctuary/Temple in Genesis 1–3," 94.

60 J. M. Leonard, "Identifying Inner-Biblical Allusions: Psalm 78 as a Test Case," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127 (2008): 241–65.

61 Harper, "I Will Walk Among You," 50–51.

2. *Shared language is more important than non-shared language.* Any vocabulary which is not shared (in addition to that which is shared) does not discount connections between texts.

3. *Shared language that is distinctive or rare suggests a stronger connection than does language which is widely used.* Some vocabulary is so common that it is difficult to prove a genuine connection, while shared use of rare words or uncommon forms indicates a more probable connection. Harper notes that shared clusters of common words may still indicate a connection.

4. *Shared phrases suggest a stronger connection than shared words alone.* A shared phrase is less likely to come about by happenstance, whereas shared words alone are lesser proof of common connections.

5. *An accumulation of shared language indicates a more likely connection than does a single shared term or phrase.* That is, multiple points of contact are stronger evidence of connection than shared phrases or shared words.

6. *Shared language used in similar contexts suggests a stronger connection than does shared language alone.* Overlap at a conceptual level strengthens the connection.

7. *Shared language need not be accompanied by mutual ideology to establish a connection.* Reference to other texts by use of shared language does not mean that the authors share the same viewpoints, and different viewpoints do not prove a lack of connection. An author may use the same language as that of someone expressing an opposing viewpoint, to pursue their own agenda.

8. *Shared language need not be accompanied by shared form to validate a connection.* While not all these criteria are relevant to the present discussion, the set of criteria proposed is helpful to ensure that we are discussing genuine connections between texts. Harper cites Beale himself as saying "All such proposed connections have degrees of possibility and probability."[62] He further adduces from Hays that "the more criteria fall into place, the more confident an interpreter can be that an intertextual connection is present in a given text."[63] However, he also draws on Beale again, saying "Thus the cumulative effect of multiple criteria becomes

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62 Harper, "I Will Walk Among You," 52, citing G. K. Beale, *We Become What we Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 24.
63 Harper, "I Will Walk Among You," 52, citing R. B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 32.

persuasive."[64] However, as we will see with Beale's interpretation of Genesis 3 in the light of other passages, the cumulative effect of a number of merely possible connections does not produce a persuasive result. If a chain (including an exegetical one) is only as strong as its weakest link, then a chain with multiple weak links is unlikely to withstand stresses.

Regarding the claims about God "walking around" in the garden, and in the Israelite camp, the question must be asked: is the connection with a sanctuary dependent on the common use of the *hithpael* form הִתְהַלֵּךְ?

The use of the *hithpa'el* seems to have no significance beyond indicating repetitive, iterative or habitual actions.[65] This is a common understanding of the form, noted by Koehler-Baumgartner, "to go to and fro, walk about,"[66] and Clines, "Go, walk, go about, go to and fro."[67] Waltke and O'Connor state that "The *hithpael* indicates iterative or frequentative aspect with a number of verbal stems, while הלך presents special problems," citing Lambdin who gives only הלך as an example of the iterative use.[68] Van der Merwe, Naudé and Kroeze see it as a reflexive or reciprocal action.[69] Williams lists it as "reflexive-iterative."[70] Garr says that "scholars agree that the hithpael expresses the reflexive voice… reflexivity is a prominent if not primary function."[71] Benton notes "The Hitpael demonstrates a meaning often called 'iterative' or 'durative' by Hebraists."[72] He stresses (in connection with הלך, the most common root with this sense) "As an intransitive verb of motion, it cannot be construed clearly as reflexive or passive or 'act as X' in the ways we have defined them. Thus, scholars unanimously see the

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64 Harper. "I Will Walk Among You," 53, citing Beale, *We Become What We Worship*, 25.
65 Pineda, Sanctuary/Temple in Genesis 1-3, 90, n. 8, citing E. A. Speiser, "The Durative Hithpael: A Tan Form," in J. J. Finkelstein and Moshe Greenberg, eds., *Oriental and Biblical Studies* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1967), 507. He also cites W. E. Vine, "הָלַךְ" Merrill F. Unger and William White, eds., *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1996), 279, which gives the sense as repeated or habitual action.
66 Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, rev. Walter Baumgartner and Johann Jakob Stamm, study edition, trans. and ed. M. E. J. Richardson (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 248.
67 David J. A. Clines, ed., *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, vol. 2 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 557.
68 Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 427, 428–29 and n. 18. See also Victor P Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 192. Thomas O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), 250.
69 Christo H. J. van der Merwe, Jacobus A. Naudé and Jan H. Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, 2nd ed. (London: Bloomsbury; New York: T&T Clark, 2017), 84.
70 Ronald J Williams, *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 28.
71 W. Randall Garr, "Reflexivity: The Cases of the Niphal and Hithpael," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 80 (2021): 342.
72 Benton, *Aspect,* 83.

iterative or durative sense of the Hitpael here without any reflexive or passive sense."[73] Further, he comments (referring to the root הלך),

> [w]ith "go" the Qal expresses the simple action of going, while the Hitpael refers to walking around literally or to walking around as a metaphor for moral conduct, and there is no specific goal in mind in either case. The Hitpael is completely focused on the activity with no endpoint in its purview.[74]

Gesenius gives the idea of "long continuance" as a frequent use of הלך, including the metaphorical sense, thus to "go on" or "continue."[75] Wenham suggests that the *hithpa'el* is an "unusual form" of the verb "to go" is used here; it often has the meaning "to walk to and fro."[76] Given the number of times the *hithpa'el* is used in the OT in both narrative (35x) and metaphorical (29x) statements,[77] it is hardly unusual. Benton also notes that הלך has the most occurrences of the *hithpa'el*.[78]

Cassuto states that the *hithpa'el* of הלך "often occurs in connection with the Lord, e.g., Lev 26:12, Deut 23:14 [Hebrew 15]."[79] Even adding in the other passage in 2 Samuel, not mentioned by Cassuto, this is hardly *often*, nor surprisingly does he mention Gen 3:8. The point to be made here is that frequency of use (high or low) does not affect the sense of the term. Greater usage is obviously helpful in determining the sense in which a term is used, compared to the difficulties in relation to understanding a *hapax legomena,* but that problem does not affect us here.

Merrill sees the *hithpa'el* of הלך as having special significance, but does not mention walking in the context of a sanctuary.

> A special instance of hlk occurs with the hitp. stem, which views walking or stepping as tantamount to an exercise of sovereignty. Whether this is expressed in literal or metaphorical terms, the symbolism of dominion remains the same. In its first occurrence with this meaning God is described as "walking in the garden," a clear allusion to his appearance to Adam and Eve as their Creator and Lord (Gen 3:8). The

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73   Benton, *Aspect*, 84.
74   Benton, *Aspect*, 265. Benton notes that the niphal of הלך (in its single occurrence, Ps 109:23) "differs from the Hitpael because it refers to the end of the 'walk' activity; the speaker has reached the end of the path." Benton, *Aspect*, 265.
75   E. Kautzsch, ed., *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, 2nd enl. ed., rev. A. E. Cowley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), 344.
76   Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 330, n. 8.
77   Counting parallel passages as separate instances.
78   Benton, *Aspect*, 76.
79   Cassuto, *Genesis*, part 1, 152.

same imagery is used in Job where God is said to walk (yithallāk) on the "circle" (or "vault") of heaven (Job 22:14).[80]

This is to read a meaning from a specific context into other uses of the same term, a process that Barr called "illegitimate totality transfer."[81] Seeing the *hithpa'el* of הלך as having special relationship to sovereignty is unwarranted: such a meaning is dependent on context. In actuality, *none* of the Biblical texts which use the *hithpa'el* of הלך have any connection with asserting sovereignty over land (undisputed right to govern).

Strangely, Merrill immediately states "Satan also walked about on the earth,"[82] which raises the question, was that an exercise of sovereignty by Satan? Surely not. Satan said that he was "roaming" (שׁוט) through the earth and "going to and fro" (התהלך) on it (Job 1:7; 2:2). Hartly comments that "roaming" suggests that "he moved randomly about the earth, perhaps like an emperor's spy looking for any secret disloyalty to the crown."[83] Satan was up to no good, not exercising sovereignty, as that is not implicit in the use of the *hithpa'el* of הלך and is not specified in the text.

Merrill returns to the theme of "sovereignty" when discussing the use of the *hithpa'el* of הלך in Ezek 28. The king/cherub is "manifesting incredible hubris by seeking to arrogate to themselves the sovereignty that belongs to God. The hitp. stem of the vb. *hlk* and the context of the entire pericope put this beyond any doubt."[84] He repeats this claim in connection with Genesis 13:17 and Josh 18:4, 8, asserting that "To walk about on the land, then, was to recognize one's claim to it."[85] He buttresses this with the statement, "The prophet Zechariah uses *hlk* in the hitp. 4x as a way of describing divine sovereignty."[86]

> The use of the Hithpael of *hlk* suggests the totality of the territory covered by this equine scouting expedition. The horses and their riders have gone to and fro, and, by the force of such an implicit merism, have looked everywhere. Cf. Job 2:2, where Satan appears before

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80 Eugene H Merrill, הלך, William A vanGemeren, ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, vol 1. of *NIDOTTE* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan. 1997), 1032. Here we see how external theological views are brought to the text and to indicate word meanings. Merrill privileges "sovereignty" in his analysis just as Beale and others privilege "sanctuary."

81 "The error that arises, when the 'meaning' of a word (understood as the total series of relations in which it is used in the literature) is read into a particular case as its sense and implication there, may be called 'illegitimate totality transfer.'" Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language,* 218.

82 Merrill, הלך. *NIDOTTE* Vol. 1, 1032.

83 John E. Hartley, *Job*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 73.

84 Merrill. הלך. William A vanGemeren, ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan. 1997), 1032.

85 Merrill. הלך. *NIDOTTE* Vol. 1, 1032.

86 Merrill. הלך. *NIDOTTE* Vol. 1, 1032. He also makes this claim in connection with Zech 1:10–11; 6:7–8; 10:12, but the riders on horses were sent to assess the state of the earth and found it at peace (1:10-11). The other verses also do not explicitly assert sovereignty.

> Yahweh in the Divine Council after having "roamed to and fro" in all the earth.[87]

This is again to commit the "totality transfer" fallacy, as the use of the *hithpa'el* of הלך in connection with assertion of sovereignty (if this can be demonstrated from the context) does not permit that meaning to appear every time it is used. Abraham and the spies sent by Joshua were not asserting sovereignty, but viewing the land which they would subsequently possess.[88]

There is no suggestion here of sovereignty, but nor does the *hithpa'el* of הלך suggest the extent of someone's travels. This is evident in both Zechariah and Job which refer to going to and fro through the whole earth, which would be redundant if the *hithpa'el* of הלך already included the meaning of the extent of their travels.[89] We also have to consider how this might apply to Genesis 3:8. Is God's walk in the garden for the purpose of "asserting sovereignty," or does it refer to the extent of his walk? Neither, it seems.[90] While the discussion of whether the *hithpa'el* of הלך expresses an exertion of sovereignty is something of a by-path, I include it to indicate that it cannot be specified as meaning "walking in a sanctuary." Other interpretations are possible (if unlikely).

There are multiple instances where הלך is used in the *hithpa'el*. There are variations in the lexical form—infinitives, perfect and imperfect, singular and plural, participle, etc. No special significance seems to attach to the variations—they all speak of some form of movement either metaphorical ("walking in integrity" as a way of life) or literal movement.[91] Metaphorical use does not change the

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87 Carol L Myers and Eric M Myers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City: Doubleday, 1987), 115.

88 There is also the danger of "adding up the usages" of a word, since "you are now adding up the semantic effects of various contexts and not the specific contributions which the word made to these contexts." Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language,* 71. Thus claiming that God, Abraham, the spies sent by Joshua, Satan, and the horsemen of Zechariah are all claiming sovereignty by moving through the land/earth is unwarranted.

89 The comment of Barr is apposite here. Barr suggests that with regard to one issue discussed, "many of the same conclusions which are in fact reached [from this discussion] could be reached from actual *statements* made explicitly in the OT and NT and without the attempt to draw evidence from the significance of particular *words*. In other words, what may be a good theological case is spoiled by bad linguistic argument; and is not supported by actual exegetical argument from texts which say things from which the general thesis could be supported." Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language,* 127. Merrill's argument is another instance of "illegitimate totality transfer."

90 Barr points out "the danger of taking a case of a word along with its context and suggesting that the significance which is given through associations of the context is in fact the indicator value of that word." *The Semantics of Biblical Language,* 69.

91 A similar error occurs with Bornkamm. Feiler argues that Bornkamm's claim that Matthew's use of ἀκολουθεῖν indicates discipleship is overdrawn. Bornkamm admits that it has the simple sense of "follow after" but the context (Matthew 8:23) gives it "a deeper and figurative meaning." "The stilling of the storm in Matthew," in G. Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth, and Heinz Joachim Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), 55. It is hard to see what "deeper" meaning it can have in 8:23, "Jesus got into the boat and his disciples followed him." In a number of the passages, it means simply "walking behind" Jesus, ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ

sense of "walking," but has the sense of a "way of life," that is, one's accustomed (continued or repeated) behaviour. Benton gives sound advice on the interpretation of verbs.

> Even linguistic analysis should not try to extract from verbs information that is not there. If one overgeneralizes on the information supplied by verbs, one may mishandle the information coming from the context. Therefore, when we analyze the meaning of a verb, we must be aware of the source of information. A given verb in Biblical Hebrew combines information from 1) the verb stem or form (morphological), 2) the verbal root (semantic), and 3) the context (contextual). Clear exegesis recognizes where information comes from.[92]

With this injunction in mind, it is apparent that none of these texts give any support to the idea that the *hithpa'el* התהלך—walking, especially repeatedly or habitually, hence, walking to and fro, or metaphorically, walking consistently (in righteousness)—has any special significance beyond its use to refer to ordinary walking around, or metaphorical "walking in integrity."[93] There is no indication that in itself it refers to holiness, or to the presence of God, or the presence of a sanctuary, tabernacle or temple, or other form of sacred space or location or activity.

Beale summarises his own view concisely, but even then, this raises new questions.

> The temple later in the OT was the unique place of God's presence, where Israel had to go to experience that presence. Israel's temple was the place where the priest had experienced God's unique presence, and Eden was the place where Adam walked and talked with God. The same Hebrew verbal form (Hithpael) used for God's "walking back and forth" in the garden (Gen 3:8) also describes God's presence in the tabernacle (Lev 26:12; Deut 23:14 [23:15 MT]; 2 Sam 7:6–7).[94]

However, even in this short text, questions arise. Did **Adam** really "walk and talk

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(Matthew 4:25; 8:1; 19:2; 20:29) not "becoming a disciple." Those who followed included the curious or sensation-seekers as well as those seeking God or seeking healing [Matthew 9:2, 27]. Paul F. Feiler, "The Stilling of the Storm in Matthew: A Response to Gunther Bornkamm," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 26 (1983): 402. Even where it has the sense of "becoming a disciple" it still means that this is done by "walking with" Jesus and learning from him [Matthew 4:20, 22; 8:23].

92 Richard Benton. Verbal and Contextual Information. The Problem of Overlapping Meanings in the Niphal and Hitpael. *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 124 (2012) 385, where he notes further: "Hebraists almost unanimously agree that the Niphal and Hitpael stems can bear multiple meanings depending on context."

93 We should note the consequences of David's "walking around" on the roof of his palace: adultery and murder.

94 Beale, *Union with the Resurrected Christ,* 198.

with God" in the garden? The text does not say so explicitly, except for his speaking in response to the discovery of his disobedience, so at best it is an assumption (admittedly a common one). Otherwise, the text seems to indicate that God walked on his own. To explicitly indicate Adam walked and talked with God, the text could have read along the line that is used with Enoch who "*walked faithfully with God*" (Genesis 5:22, 24), or Noah, who "*walked with God*" as reported in Genesis 6:9.[95] We have the well-known call in Mic 6:8, "He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk [הלד qal] humbly with your God." From Abraham onward we hear of the call to "walk *before* God" rather than *with* him (Gen 17:1; 48:15; 1 Kgs 8:25; Ps 56:13). Block comments: "[Ezekiel 28:15] The use of תָמִים immediately after הִתְהַלֵּךְ invites comparison with Noah, who also was 'blameless' and 'walked with God' (Gen 6:9), and Abraham, who was charged by God: 'Walk (הִתְהַלֵּךְ) before me and be blameless (תָמִים)' (Gen 17:1)."[96]

We turn now to see what we can make of all this with respect to the key verse cited to demonstrate that the Garden of Eden was a sanctuary.

Genesis 3:8

There are many difficulties with this verse that have a bearing on how we interpret it with respect to "walking in a sanctuary." I have left discussion of this until after considering the other issues, on the basis that the more difficult text should be interpreted in the light of the texts that are more easily understood.

Perhaps "walking around" would convey the sense of the participle here better than simple "walking." The idea that the garden is a tabernacle is supported by the use of the term for "walk" as used in Lev 26:11–12, but as we saw above, there is no reference there to God walking *in* the tabernacle but rather **outside** it. Therefore, there is no reason why this term must support the interpretation of Gen 1–3 as a reference to a tabernacle or temple. It is a garden. The Israelites were camped in the wilderness—hardly a counterpart to the garden of Eden. So "walking around" in the garden of Eden cannot be compared on contextual grounds with "walking around" in the Israelite camp. Thus, Harper's indicator of allusion, the "similarity of narrative settings," does not seem to apply here.[97]

We also have the difference in purpose behind the "walking around." In Genesis 3 it is probably with the intent of meeting Adam and Eve to talk with them (hence God called out "Where are you?"); in Leviticus 26 it is to give protection to the people of Israel and to be with them in their journey, and to assure them that God would still be with them when they arrive in Canaan.

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95 Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17,* 258.
96 Block*, Ezekiel,* Vol. 2, 116.
97 Harper, "I Will Walk Among You," 54.

It is commonly stated that the "cool of the day" (רוח היום) would be the later part of the day when the heat of the sun was lessened. Thus, Hamilton states: "Such walks would take place in the early evening (*the cooler time of day*) rather than 'in the heat of the day' (cf. 18:1)."[98] Wenham opines (and connects Genesis 3:8 with the usual texts of interest):

> [I]t seems likely that it was not unusual for [God] to be heard walking in the garden 'in the breeze of the day,' i.e. in the afternoon when cool breezes spring up and the sun is not so scorching. Maybe a daily chat between the Almighty and his creatures was customary. The term 'walking' (hithpael participle of הלך) is subsequently used of God's presence in the Israelite tent sanctuary (Lev 26:12; Deut 23:15 [14]; 2 Sam 7:6–7) again emphasising the relationship between the garden and the later shrines. It is not God's walking in the garden that is unusual, but the reaction of the man and his wife.[99]

Cassuto argues that the interpretation "in the cool of the day" is a misunderstanding. It is an extended anthropomorphism in which "God came into the garden to take a stroll and refresh Himself, as it were, in the coolness of the breeze."[100] He asserts that רוח היום *ruah ha-yom* "cannot possibly indicate a wind blowing *at a specific time of the day*. This apart, seeing that the verse expressly comes to fix the *time*, there must doubtless be a reason for this, and it is inconceivable that this time should have no relation to the actual narrative, but the usual interpretation fails to establish such a connection."[101] Cassuto argues that the term refers to the afternoon.[102]

Wenham comments: "God will *walk* with his people, as he did in the garden of Eden before the fall."[103] This implies a repeated walking together by God with Adam and Eve prior to God's coming in judgment in Gen 3:8. While possible, it is an assumption not explicitly supported by the text. The *hithpa'el* of הלך is cited with an iterative sense to indicate that God walked in the garden each day. But this verb does not always indicate that a repeated walking is taking place. In 2 Samuel 11:2 it is explicitly a single occasion: "*One evening* David… walked around on the roof of his palace." In Esther 2:11 the repeated walking around of Mordecai is specified as happening "every day" (וּבְכָל־יוֹם וָיוֹם). The iterative

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98 Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17,* 192.

99 Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, Vol. 1, 76.

100 Cassuto, *Genesis*. Part 1, 151.

101 Ibid., 153.

102 Ibid., 153–54. Curiously, John Calvin suggests that רוח היום referred to the breezes stirred by the warm morning sun, the breeze of the *day*, at which time God appeared, rather than in the afternoon or evening. The sin of Adam and Eve took place on the previous afternoon. *Commentary on Genesis*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 160–61.

103 Wenham, *Leviticus,* 330.

sense of the *hithpaʾel might* indicate repeated walking. The other biblical texts cited here do not indicate the frequency with which the walking occurred. Thus, it should not be claimed that the *hithpaʾel* on its own indicates a repeated activity; it may indicate a single occasion in which someone walked "to and fro." It is then iterative in the sense of a repeated walking one way then the other, on a single occasion (as with David) or on multiple occasions (as with Mordecai).

Niehaus argues that the sound of God walking in the garden should perhaps be translated "in the wind of the storm." The text would thus read: "Then the man and his wife heard the thunder (*qwl*)[104] of Yahweh God as he was going back and forth (*mthlk*) in the garden in the wind of the storm (*lrwḥ hywm*), and they hid from Yahweh God among the trees of the garden."[105] While this may make more sense of this event than traditional interpretations, it is of interest here in that God's "going back and forth" in theophanic majesty (indicating that God already knew of the sin of Adam and Eve, and did not call out to ask where they were, but summoned them to stand before him)[106] is scarcely compatible with the idea of God "walking back and forth" like a priest in a sanctuary.

If we accept, for the sake of the argument, Niehaus' interpretation that sees God coming in a storm to the Garden of Eden (and it has been challenged),[107] then it is possible that this "coming" of God was not a regular walk in the garden with the people he had placed there but a singular event that had not happened before. We have no indication that this was a regular practice of God; this is the only time in which he is said to go walking there, and so the possibility that the use of the *hithpaʾel* participle of *halak* to indicate frequentative or repeated walks may need to be discounted. Perhaps if the *hithpaʾel* has any significance here, it may be that the man heard the Lord God "walking back and forth" in anger, seeking out his disobedient servants.[108] Wenham cites Cassuto to argue that "the brusque 'the

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104 Against this, however, see Psalms 77:18 and 104:7 which should be understood as "the sound of your thunder," קוֹל רַעֲמְךָ rather than "the thunder of your thunder," perhaps indicating that קוֹל in Genesis 3:8 should retain the sense of "sound."

105 Jeffrey J Niehaus, "In the wind of the storm: Another look at Genesis 3:8," *Vetus Testamentum* 44 (1994): 263–67. See also Jeffrey J Niehaus, *God at Sinai: Covenant and Theophany in the Bible and Ancient Near East* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 155–59, 248. Note that Niehaus accepts the interpretation of the Garden of Eden as a sanctuary. *Biblical Theology, Vol. 1: The Common Grace Covenants* (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2014), 74–75.

106 There may be the sense of God's grace even here, when they were asked to give an account of themselves: would they confess their sin and seek forgiveness, or would they seek to exonerate themselves? They chose the latter, blaming others for their sin.

107 Grundke in particular took issue with this interpretation and responded to Niehaus. He argued that: "there is no compelling logical connection between the textual features of Gen. iii 8 and its status as a storm theophany. Although Niehaus' proposal is not groundless, the cumulative power of his arguments seems insufficient to establish the case convincingly. Despite the admitted shortcomings arising from the lack of other biblical examples of the expression *ruah ha-yom*, the traditional translation-'at the windy time of the day'-remains the preferable option." C.L.K. Grundke. A Tempest in a Teapot? Genesis III 8 Again. *Vetus Testamentum*, 51 (2001) 4:552.

108 I am not assuming here that God did not know where Adam and Eve were hiding. Rather, it is a

Lord God called' suggests the Judge of the whole earth is calling man in order to demand an account of his conduct."[109] He comments further: "Their reply to God's inquiry shows that they understood the question as an invitation to come out and explain their behaviour."[110]

In Gen 3:10 Adam says, "I heard your voice in the garden… so I hid." The NIV has "I heard you in the garden." Could the Hebrew קֹלְךָ be translated "your sound" or "the sound of you" in the garden? Hamilton cites 2 Sam 5:24; 1 Kgs 14:6; 2 Kgs 6:32 and 11:13 as using קול "to refer to the sound of marching feet, and most likely we have that idea here."[111] Westerman also cites 2 Sam 5:24; 1 Kgs 14:6; 2 Kgs 6:32 and suggests the meaning "the noise of footsteps."[112]

> The usual interpretation is, the *sound of His feet*, which is based on the sense of the word in other Biblical passages [2 Sam 5:24; 1 Kings 14:6; 2 Kings 6:32]. But it is precisely these verses that rule out this interpretation here, since in all these instances the word קול *qōl* ['sound'] is expressly followed by the word for feet or marching, that is, in verses of this kind קול *qōl* is not used by itself without an accompanying explanation of the nature of the sound referred to in the passage… [the torah] chose instead a phrase whose anthropomorphism is not excessive by Biblical standards.… Our passage does not go into great detail, but leaves the matter shrouded, as it were, in reverent ambiguity. The heard the Lord walking; precisely what they heard is not stated.[113]

Lust suggests that 1 Kgs 19:21 should be translated "a roaring and thunderous voice."[114] This may help in understanding Gen 3:8. What "sound" would be made by God as he walked in the garden? Is this the sound of his footsteps? Some other phenomenon accompanying him? There is nothing to indicate that. Could it be that already in v. 8 we have the sound of God calling "Where are you?" That is, God's call to Adam does not follow his hearing the sound of God walking in the

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device in the narrative to emphasise that they were seeking to conceal themselves from God, and to point out the futility of this action. God was not enquiring where they were, playing a game of "hide and seek," but issuing a summons for them to appear before him. Cf. Gen 4:9; 16:8; Deut 32:37; 2 Kgs 18:34; 19:13; Jer 2:28; 37:19.

109 Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, Vol. 1, 76, citing Cassuto, *Genesis*, Part 1, 155.

110 Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 77. Wenham comments: "a very close parallel is found in Gen 4:9, where 'Where is Abel your brother?' is followed by 'Listen, your brother's blood is crying to me from the land,' showing that God knows perfectly well what has happened to Abel."

111 Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17,* 192, n. 1.

112 Claus Westerman, *Genesis 1–11: A Commentary*, (London: SPCK, 1984), 254. One must ask, what caused the noise? Did the garden of Eden have a gravel path on which footsteps made a crunching sound? What does that imply about God's manifestation – did it have a physical form?

113 Cassuto, *Genesis*, Part 1, 152.

114 J. Lust, "A gentle breeze or a roaring thunderous sound? Elijah at Horeb: 1 Kings xix:21," *Vetus Testamentum* 25 (1975): 110–15.

garden, it **is** the sound Adam and Eve heard. It could be paraphrased as "Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God calling to them, 'Where are you?' as he walked in the garden."

We note then that the man and his wife did not hide until they heard God. This may indicate that it was not bashfulness about their nakedness (cf. Gen 2:25) that caused them to hide, but the terrible sound of God coming like the storm, a sound they had not heard previously. If it was just God taking his usual evening stroll through the park, would they have been sufficiently frightened as to hide, just because they now knew they were naked? This "coming" follows immediately on from their realisation that they were naked, when they sought to clothe themselves with fig leaves. Adam did not hide to cover his bashfulness at being naked when he heard the sound of God's coming.[115] Perhaps he realised that the fig leaves did not truly address his newfound nakedness. He may well have connected his newfound awareness of being naked with the memory of the warning given by God: the day you eat of the fruit, inescapable death will come upon you. Was he afraid then that the coming of God so soon after eating the fruit and becoming aware of his nakedness indicated that he was about to face judgment?

Regardless of how we translate Genesis 3:8, it is perhaps less likely that this refers to God's repeated walking in the garden; it was only a single occasion. Whether this walking was an ordinary approach to the man and his wife (who heard his voice calling them), or they heard the terrific theophanic storm presaging judgment, does not affect the outcome either way. We cannot see this passage as a presence of God equivalent to his presence in the sanctuary. God walking in the garden then did not make it holy ground; it was not sanctified by his presence. No connection can be made here with other texts which speak of God's walking: it is an occasion *sui generis*. If then this text does not indicate that the Garden of Eden was a sanctuary, does that not mean then that Adam was not a priest? That is my conviction.

This terminology therefore fails to provide any support to the claim that the Garden of Eden was a temple. Genesis 3:8 does not have that meaning without this being imported from other texts, but as we have seen, the other texts typically adduced in support fail also.

Conclusion

While this appears to be an obscure discussion over the use of a Hebrew verbal form, and an equally obscure (for many) discussion about whether Adam was a priest in a temple in Eden, the conclusions drawn from this approach affect the legitimacy or otherwise of the concept of a cultural mandate for Christians in

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115 Note that while it is assumed, nowhere does the text say that the man and the woman came out from their hiding place to stand before God.

caring for and developing the creation as God's stewards. The "priesthood" of Adam was seen to include the "cultural mandate," but when he fell into sin, he was deprived of his priesthood and cast out of the temple-garden of Eden. He no longer could exercise the cultural mandate. This mandate was then assumed by Christ and completed by him in obedience to the Father. Since it is now completed by Christ, there is nothing for Christians to do with regard to the cultural mandate, as this would be to act as if Christ's work was incomplete or insufficient. Thus, if the garden of Eden was a temple, and Adam was a priest, this has significant consequences for the way we conceive of our discipleship.

I argue that the image of God in humanity is a royal image in a kingdom. There was no need of a temple in the original Edenic setting, since humanity and God interacted directly without mediators or need of cultic activity. Arguing that Adam was a priest immediately demands an answer to the question: priest for whom? A priest stands in for God to represent him to humanity, and to represent humanity to God (primarily in the offering of sacrifices and worship; cf. Hebrews 5:1). There was nobody else for whom Adam could serve as a priest. After the expulsion from Eden, his sons Abel and Cain offered sacrifices, seemingly on their own behalf—there is no indication Adam acted as priest with regard to their sacrifices, or that they acted as priests. There were no designated priests in Israel prior to Aaron.[116] Another problem with seeing Adam as a priest is that it ignores Eve, who is equally a recipient of the commandments, commissions, and blessings of Genesis 1–2, communicated presumably by Adam after her formation. She was a "helper," not a subordinate. Adam was not "priest" to Eve, or to his sons. To see the cosmos (or Eden within it) as a temple sacralises the world within which we live, thus elevating the cultic characteristics of human life above other characteristics, in a typically dualistic manner.

As I hope I have shown, the interpretation of the texts claimed to support the idea that Eden was a temple on the basis of God "walking about" in a sanctuary does not in fact support it. Linguistic arguments fail, as do exegetical ones. Too much weight is placed on the use of the *hithpa'el* of הלך. Other arguments are offered in support of this view,[117] but without an appeal to the claim that God was "walking about" in a sanctuary the case is proportionally weakened. The other arguments claimed to support this view need also to be critically examined.

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116 Not counting Melchizedek (Gen 14:18).
117 See note 9.

"Does Psalm 12:6–7 Promise Perfect Manuscript Copies of the Bible? An Exegetical Examination and Multigenerational Interpretive Plebiscite."

Mark Ward
Logos

Abstract

Defenders of the exclusive use of the King James Version (KJV), in all their varieties, frequently appeal to Psalm 12:6–7 as a prooftext for their doctrine that God promised perfectly pure preservation of the text of Scripture: "The words of the Lord are pure words…. Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them" (KJV). Careful textual and exegetical examination proves the unlikeliness of this interpretation. This article will explore the novel theological idea of perfect biblical manuscripts preserved until the production of the KJV, as it has found support from this passage. It will then explore the reception history of Psalm 12:6–7 to uncover how the passage was, in fact, understood by interpreters throughout the Christian tradition. It will conclude with a proposed reading of the text in its literary and historical context. This article seeks to highlight the importance of sound exegetical practice as the basis for Christian doctrine.

Introduction

Defenders of exclusive use of the King James Version (KJV), in all their varieties, frequently appeal to Psalm 12:6–7 as a prooftext for their doctrine that God promised perfectly pure preservation of the text of Scripture.[1] Here is the text of those verses as they stand in the 1769 Blayney edition of the KJV. Notice, in particular, the two uses of the word "them":

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1   Masoretic Text (MT) versification is Psalm 12:7–8 for the verses relevant to this paper; English versification will be used, however, throughout the paper. For more details on this phenomenon, consult the (better) commentaries.

The words of the Lord are pure words:
as silver tried in a furnace

of earth,
purified seven times.
Thou shalt keep them, O Lord,
thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.

(Psalm 12:6–7 KJV)

Two of the words KJV defenders most often use to describe this act of God— "pure" (טְהֹרוֹת)[2] and "preserved" (תִּצְּרֶנּ)[3]—are drawn from the KJV's rendering of Psalm 12:6–7.[4] Many of the most influential and capable KJV defenders use Psalm 12:6–7 in this way.

In this paper, I will first establish that leading figures who defend exclusive use of the KJV do use the Psalm in the way just described. I will then canvass the textual and interpretive issues presented by the relevant verses in the Psalm. I will then conduct an interpretive plebiscite, a multi-century referendum on the meaning of these verses. Finally, I will propose my own interpretation of the passage. In all, I hope to demonstrate how English-only exegesis can give rise to falsehoods and unnecessary divisions within the body of Christ. This, in turn, points to the importance of sound exegetical practice as the basis for Christian doctrine.

Thomas Ross & Kent Brandenburg

Thomas Ross and Kent Brandenburg are indeed leading defenders of exclusive use of the KJV. The former has produced "A Declaration of My Own Position on the Inspiration and Preservation of Holy Scripture," to which the latter has given assent. The two men confess:

> The Bible promises that God will preserve every one of His words forever down to the very jot and tittle, the smallest letter (Psalm 12:6–7, 33:11, 119:152, 160; Isaiah 30:8, 40:8; 1 Peter 1:23–25; Matthew 5:18,

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2   *DCH* offers the glosses "pure" and maintains that "especially in ritual contexts," the glosses "pure, purified, clean, cleansed, free (of impurity)" are appropriate for this word. David J. A. Clines, ed., *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 1993–2011), 342. *HALOT* lists the use in Psalm 12:7 under its third sense: "ethically clean." Ludwig Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1994–2000), 369.

3   *DCH* (744) offers the glosses "keep (safely), preserve, protect," and it lists Psalm 12:7 under this sense. *HALOT* (718) offers the glosses "to keep watch, watch over, keep from," and it lists Psalm 12:7 under this sense.

4   KJV-Only doctrinal statements frequently refer to the KJV, or the MT/TR (or all three), as the "preserved Word of God." Note that Ps 119:140 ("Thy word is very pure") and Prov 30:5 ("Every word of God is pure") in the KJV are the two other passages that describe God's word as "pure."

24:35).… The Bible assures us that God's words are perfect and pure (Psalm 12:6–7; Proverbs 30:5–6).[5]

A footnote leads readers to an article arguing that the Masoretic vowel points are included among the objects of God's inspiration and preservation.[6]

Brandenburg has also argued in an edited volume focused on promoting a doctrine of perfect preservation,

> Inspiration is a miracle of God in which He supernaturally delivers every one and all of His Words to men.… Preservation is a miracle of God in which He supernaturally keeps every one and all of His Words for every generation of men.[7]

As a prooftext for the latter assertion, he cites Psalm 12:6–7.

Thomas Strouse

Thomas Strouse mounts one of the two most serious cases available that Psalm 12:6–7 promises perfect textual preservation of the Hebrew Bible and Greek New Testament.[8] His argument extends to the message of the entire Psalm. He argues that Psalm 12 is a chiasm, with verse 5 serving as the linchpin:

> The wicked asserted that their words would prevail, or be preserved indefinitely. The Lord's response to this boastful claim was that His Words, and not man's, would be preserved, each and every one of them, forever.[9]

Making verse 5, the verse that mentions the poor and needy, the linchpin serves, actually, to isolate it at the top of a peak from the rest of the context. In other words, it is Strouse's means of insisting that the Psalm is about divine words.

Strouse demonstrates some linguistic sophistication by handling a now common objection to his viewpoint, namely that the "them" in both "thou shalt keep them" and "thou shalt preserve them" is, in Hebrew, masculine, while the "words"

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5 Thomas Ross, "A Declaration of My Own Position on the Inspiration and Preservation of Holy Scripture," May 8, 2014, https://faithsaves.net/inspiration-preservation-scripture/

6 The standard reference work is I. Yeivin, *Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah*, ed. and trans. E. J. Revell SBLMS 5 (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1980). Cf. Yosef, Ofer, *The Masora on Scripture and Its Methods*, Fontes et Subsidia ad Bibliam pertinentes (FoSub) 7 (Boston: de Gruyter, 2020).

7 Kent Brandenburg, ed., *Thou Shalt Keep Them: A Biblical Theology of the Perfect Preservation of Scripture*, 2nd ed. (El Sobrante, CA: Pillar & Ground Publishing, 2003), Kindle loc. 1559.

8 He originally wrote his piece as a chapter in *Thou Shalt Keep Them*, but the Kindle edition of that book is typographically corrupted (perhaps ironically). Strouse has produced an expanded edition of his argument in a PDF online. See http://www.bbc-cromwell.org/dev/Seminary_Articles/Psalm-12-Expanded.pdf, acc. Jan 29, 2024.

9 Thomas Strouse, "The Permanent Preservation of God's Words: Psalm 12:6–7 Expanded Dr. Thomas M. Strouse;" (unpublished paper), 3.

of 12:6 are feminine—so that "words" is unlikely to be the antecedent of "them." Strouse has an explanation, however, for the gender discordance he acknowledges to be present in the text:

> It is important for the careful exegete of the Hebrew Scriptures to recognize the biblical phenomenon wherein the biblical writers employed masculine pronouns in reference to feminine antecedent nouns when those feminine nouns were synonyms for the Words of God (cf. Ps. 119). Since the words of Jehovah are an extension of this strong patriarchal God, the OT writers occasionally seemed to use masculine pronouns for [certain] synonyms [of "the word"]…. The biblical writers deviated from this "grammatical norm" for theological purposes, emphasizing specific truths.[10]

Peter Van Kleeck, Sr.

Peter Van Kleeck, Sr.'s *An Exegetical Grounding for a Standard Sacred Text: Toward the Formulation of a Systematic Theology of Providential Preservation* takes the case in Strouse further by referencing *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* (GKC).[11] He quotes these lines:

> Through a weakening in the distinction of gender, which is noticeable elsewhere… and which probably passed from the colloquial language into that of literature, *masculine* suffixes (especially in the plural) are not infrequently used to refer to *feminine* substantives.[12]

Van Kleeck, Sr., also demonstrates that five interpreters of standing either seriously entertained (Martin Luther, Matthew Poole) or actually advanced (Ibn Ezra, Michael Ayguan, John Wesley) an interpretation of Psalm 12:7 in which at least the first of the two relevant pronouns— "Thou shalt keep *them*"—refers back to the "words" of 12:6. Van Kleeck, Sr., also argues that the renderings in eight early English Bible translations adopt his view.[13]

Jeffrey Riddle

Jeffrey Riddle is a leading Calvinistic KJV defender. Riddle calls Psalm 12:6–7

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10 Ibid., 4.

11 Independently published, 2021.

12 Friedrich Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, ed. E. Kautzsch and Sir Arthur Ernest Cowley, 2nd English ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1910), §135.o, 440. Compare this assertion, however, to *BHRG* §36.1, 291–303, J/M §152, 522–24, and, lastly, *IBHS* §6.3.2, 101–02.

13 He is on shakier ground here; it is not always possible to divine with confidence the interpretation a translator is making of his source text. For more details, see Paul D. Wegner, *The Journey from Texts to Translations: The Origin and Development of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009).

"the jewel" of the "constellation of statements about providential preservation" in Scripture. He says after citing these verses,I think most Christians who are reading through the Bible would come to a kind of a commonsense understanding and expectation that God would preserve not just the concepts, not just the ideas in Scripture, but the actual words of Scripture—that these words would be preserved.[14]

The Grass Roots

"KJV-Only" churches frequently appeal to Psalm 12:6–7, as well, to defend their view(s). Bible Baptist Church of Oak Harbor, Washington, confesses formally that God's word has been

> divinely preserved in the English language and [is] commonly known
> as the authorized, King James Version of 1611 A.D.

Among many prooftexts they list for their bibliology section, the great majority of which will be found in any standard evangelical systematic theology, are prooftexts commonly used by KJV defenders, including Psalm 119:89 ("Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven"); Matthew 5:18 ("one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled"); and Psalm 12:6–7.[15] For good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, Landmark Baptist Church of Stamford, Connecticut, confesses: "The King James Bible of 1611 is the inerrant, infallible, inspired, preserved word of God."[16] They, too, cite Psalm 12:6–7.[17]

Textual/Interpretive Issues

One of the ironies created by the use of this passage to buttress a doctrine of perfect textual preservation is that the passage itself contains several textual (and grammatical) difficulties.[18] So we must work to establish the text we will then go on to interpret. There are two fairly significant textual/interpretive issues and two

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14 Jeffrey Riddle, "How does Dr Riddle respond to variants in the Traditional Text?," interviewed by Dwayne Green, posted June 2, 2022, YouTube, 08:11, https://youtu.be/n_BVyaM4W1Q.

15 Bible Baptist Church of Oak Harbor, WA, Statement of Faith, accessed Sep 2, 2023. https://www.bbcoakharbor.org/about-us/statement-of-faith.

16 Landmark Baptist Church of Stamford, CT, Statement of Faith, accessed Sep 2, 2023. https://landmarkbaptistct.com/about/statement-of-beliefs

17 Not all leading KJV/TR defenders appeal to Psalm 12:6–7. E.F. Hills, for instance, does not mention the passage even once in either *The King James Version Defended* (Des Moines, IA: Christian Research Press, 1967) or *Believing Bible Study* (Des Moines, IA: Christian Research Press, 1973), both of which are best-in-class defenses of the KJV/TR. Theodore Letis, likewise, in his *The Ecclesiastical Text: Criticism, Biblical Authority & the Popular Mind* (Philadelphia: Institute for Renaissance and Reformation Biblical Studies, 1997), fails to mention this passage. John Owen, too, who is often appealed to by Calvinistic KJV defenders, does not mention Psalm 12:7 anywhere in his collected works.

18 Aside from the standard reference works, a good overview of things may be found within the NET Bible notes.

noted grammatical ambiguities in the space of just the two verses being covered in this paper.

In A Furnace On/Of The Ground/Earth (12:6)

The first textual/interpretive issue in the psalm is the precise meaning of the phrase בעליל לארץ. The first word is a *hapax legomenon* that is most commonly taken to mean "furnace." But what is a "furnace of earth"? Is this a furnace upon the earth? A furnace made of earth? A furnace that spills its pure metals onto the earth?[19] A volcano? Or does the phrase have another reference entirely?

Interpreters have noticed that בעליל might possibly be a corruption of בעל "Ba'al." Perhaps, then, this phrase refers to the specially purified silver of a lord of the earth? McNeile is blunt: "The text in the second clause is corrupt."[20]

Gill resorts to allegory, seeing "furnace" as a reference to (1) Jesus, who purified all wisdom and knowledge by his sufferings and death; (2) gospel ministers, who endure fiery trials that harden the clay of their earthen vessels; and/or (3) to all the people of God, "who dwell in earthly tabernacles; and who, in the midst of various afflictions, have a comfortable and confirming evidence of the purity and truth of the words of God, of the promises of his covenant, and the doctrines of the Gospel."[21]

But most interpreters feel safe enough reporting the major views,[22] issuing an academic shrug, and pointing to the overall meaning of the verse, which is clear enough. Indeed, on any reading, the verse is saying that the words of the Lord have a special purity, a purity the psalmist then illustrates with some kind of metallurgical image, the precise nature of which is covered in some dross that has accumulated over the centuries.

"Them" vs. "Us" and "Them" vs. "Us" vs. "Him" (12:7)

Of utmost importance for our purposes is the next textual/interpretive issue, which has to do with the two pronouns in 12:7 (**bold** emphasis added).

> You, O Lord, will keep **them** [or "us"];
> you will guard **us** [or "him" or "them"] from this generation forever.

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19 A. F. Kirkpatrick, *The Book of Psalms*, The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1906), 62. Clines (424) prefers the rendering "crucible of earth." HALOT (833) offers, "a crucible on the ground, or in the ground."

20 A. H. McNeile, "The Psalms," in *A New Commentary on Holy Scripture: Including the Apocrypha*, ed. Charles Gore, Henry Leighton Goudge, and Alfred Guillaume, vol. 1 (New York: Macmillan, 1942), 348.

21 John Gill, *An Exposition of the Old Testament*, vol. 3 of *The Baptist Commentary Series* (London: Mathews & Leigh, 1810), 574.

22 William S. Plumer is especially adept at this. *Studies in the Book of Psalms: Being a Critical and Expository Commentary, with Doctrinal and Practical Remarks on the Entire Psalter* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott; Edinburgh: Black., 1872), 178.

I will refer repeatedly throughout the rest of this paper to these two pronouns. Major EVV of this are all over the map. Nearly every possible combination of the options is represented.

Table 1. Various Renderings of the Key Pronouns in Psalm 12:6–7

Pronoun Combination	Version
"them… us"	NIV,[23] ESV, LSV, YLT, JPS Tanakh, one Vulgate edition,[24] Matthew Bible of 1537
"them… them"	KJV, NKJV, NLT, ISV, WEB, ASV, ERV, Webster
"us… us"	Clementine Vulgate, Douay-Rheims, LXX, CSB, HCSB, CEV, Coverdale, BSB, CSB[25]
"them… him"	NASB, AMP, GWT, NET, Geneva, Bishop's
"him… him"	Alter[26]

There are multiple reasons for this variation, including a possible ambiguity in the consonantal text. In addition, multiple ancient versions—especially the big two, the Vulgate and LXX—clearly read "us… us" (as do the Ethiopic and Arabic).

And as for the (Qumran) Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS), two frustratingly fragmentary scrolls are relevant: the Nahal Hever Psalms have the first relevant phrase and not the second; 11QPs7c has one key letter of the second but nothing from the first. Put together, then, the DSS offer, "You, O Lord, will keep **them**" (Nahal Hever), "[you will guard **hi]m/u[s]** from this generation" (11QPs7c). As the bracket indicates, there is just one relevant letter left of the word at issue, and it could indicate either "him" or "us," just like the MT.[27]

To make matters yet more complex, the MT is pointed to read "them… him," but the consonantal text could just possibly be read as "them… us"—though Joüon considers the latter possibility "dubious."[28]

Adding to the textual uncertainty, Peter C. Craigie in his commentary opts for "us… us," and says that "there is good support in the Heb. MSS (De-Rossi, IV, 6)" for this textual choice.[29] Though *BHS* says only *pauci* manuscripts—between 3 and 10—give "us" in 7a and *nonnulli*—between 11 and 20—give "us" in 7b.

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23 Effectively: it glosses "them," as "the needy," specifying the antecedent of the pronoun, a common NIV practice.

24 At the time of the presentation of this paper, this writer was unable to track down which editions gave which readings. The apparatus criticus for the Vulgate to which I have access listed this verse but not this variant unit.

25 A footnote in the CSB on both pronouns reads, "Some Hb mss, LXX; other Hb mss read him."

26 *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary* (New York: Norton, 2019). Alter acknowledges in a footnote that the Hebrew reads "them… him."

27 *Naḥal Ḥever Psalms* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2010); *11Q7 Psalms c* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2010).

28 "In the 1st pers. pl.נו is dubious." J/M, 161.

29 Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, vol. 19 of *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated,

The united testimony of the LXX, (some editions of) the Vulgate, and a few Heb. MSS is powerful: "us… us" is appealing. It also fits the context well. But the general principle that has guided most English Bible translation since the Reformation is that the MT must be used except where it is unintelligible. And judging merely by the spread of renderings they have chosen, many of today's English Bible translators indeed see the MT as too difficult here.[30] Only the New American Standard Bible,[31] of all the major modern English versions, had the strength of conviction to match the MT with its difficult "them… him."

But where today's translators see confusion, many interpreters over the centuries have seen a fairly standard Hebrew method of poetic communication. The oddity of the MT was a known issue as far back as Calvin, who argues that the move from "them" to "him" "is a thing quite common in Hebrew."[32] Jacobson cites an example of a similar poetic variation in Isa 28:6 and 32:1, and he notes that

> even within the psalm, the faithful in v. 1 is singular while the trustworthy is plural, and the poor and needy of v. 5 are plural, but the pronoun translated here as on their behalf (*lô*) is singular.[33]

Interpretation will be left for a later section. Suffice it to say, "them… him" is more than sufficiently intelligible and that the MT priority (though not infallibility) will be assumed here.[34]

The Respective Antecedents of "Them" and "Him"

In the MT, "them" and "him" are both masculine. And, in general, though interpretation is still to come, this grammatical fact would seem to answer an all-important interpretive question: what are the antecedents for these pronouns? "Them" and "him" are masculine, but the "words" of 12:6 are feminine; the most recent possible masculine antecedents are the "poor" and the "needy" of 12:5. Waltke and O' Connor assert, "The primary function of gender marking is to bind parts of speech together by concord in the same sentence or discourse."[35]

1983), 137.

30 Time fails me to collect "votes" from other Indo-European language translations.

31 The 1995 and 2020 versions—and the Legacy Standard Bible, an update of the NASB—read the same way.

32 John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, vol. 1 trans. James Anderson (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 178–179.

33 Rolf A. Jacobson, "Book One of the Psalter: Psalms 1–41," in *The Book of Psalms*, ed. E. J. Young, R. K. Harrison, and Robert L. Hubbard Jr., *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 155.

34 Berlin is too pessimistic: "Unfortunately, the psalm's conclusion is likely corrupt and defies precise translation, though the general sense of God preserving the faithful from the evildoers is clear." Adele Berlin, Marc Zvi Brettler, and Michael Fishbane, eds., *The Jewish Study Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1295.

35 *IBHS,* 109.

We have already met the view of Thomas Strouse, who insists that it is common in Hebrew for a "gender discordance" to exist between pronouns and their antecedents—especially, he says, when those "words" are the words of God. God the Father exerts a masculinizing force on his words, Strouse argues.

Very few interpreters even note the possibility that the grammatical gender of the pronouns could have a bearing on the choice of antecedents for the two relevant pronouns in 12:7. That is likely because, as this paper will show, so few even consider "words" as a potential antecedent for either one.

Gill is one who tackles this issue directly, however. And he does not take Strouse's view:

> [The antecedent of "them" is] not the *words* before mentioned, as
> Aben Ezra explains it, for the affix is masculine and not feminine.[36]

In the interest, again, of establishing the text upon which interpretation will be based, it will be helpful to briefly evaluate the arguments of Strouse.

First, Strouse is right that gender discordance between nouns and pronouns occurs in the Hebrew Bible. He is right to point to Psalm 119 as containing a few instances of the phenomenon. I will bold relevant feminine words and italicize masculine ones:

> Your **testimonies [fem.]** are my heritage forever,
> for *they [masc.]* are the joy of my heart. (Psalm 119:111 ESV)

> Your **testimonies [fem.]** are wonderful;
> therefore my soul keeps *them [masc.]*. (Psalm 119:129 ESV)

But Strouse is unlikely to be right in his effort to read theology into grammatical gender, to say that God's masculinity leaches into pronouns referring to God's words. For then how would he account for the places in the same psalm in which there is no gender discordance?

> Give me understanding, that I may keep your **law [fem.]**
> and observe **it [fem.]** with my whole heart. (Ps 119:34 ESV)

> Oh how I love your **law [fem.]**!
> **It [fem.]** is my meditation all the day. (Ps 119:97 ESV)

> Your **commandment [fem.]** makes me wiser than my enemies,
> for **it [fem.]** is ever with me. (Ps 119:98 ESV)

> Your **promise [fem.]** is well tried,
> and your servant loves **it [fem.]**. 119:140

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36 John Gill, *An Exposition of the Old Testament*, vol. 3 of *The Baptist Commentary Series* (London: Mathews & Leigh, 1810), 574.

If theology about actual gender—biological sex—is to be read out of grammatical gender, what would it mean in the places where both the term denoting God's word and its pronoun are feminine? That "law" and "commandment" and "promise" are more feminine than the apparently tomboyish "testimonies"? Hopefully, to ask this question is to answer it. Grammatical gender simply does not work this way.[37]

Further study by a skilled Hebrew grammarian might uncover more grammatical patterns worth noting here. The grammarian might answer questions such as: How often does gender discordance occur, and under what circumstances? What is the linguistic reason for this discordance? For the purposes of this paper, however, it is sufficient to acknowledge that the possibility of gender discordance remains that: a possibility. It does not point to a specific antecedent for either "them" or "him" in Psalm 12:7.

In my judgment, the masculine gender of these two pronouns leans the careful interpreter toward the "poor" and "needy" as likely antecedents. But the closer proximity of "the words" (plus the demonstrated possibility of gender discordance) leans the careful interpreter the opposite direction. The question must be decided on other grounds.

Optative vs. Declarative in 12:7

There is a final interpretive problem in 12:7, one that comparatively few commentators mention, but one that has potential bearing on our main question (Does Psalm 12:6 promise the perfect manuscript copies of the Bible?). There is an ambiguity in the two *Qal yiqtol* (imperfect) verbs. In the words of Luther,

> The translator might have said more properly in the optative "Do thou keep," and "do thou preserve:" for this is properly a prayer of the prophet against the generation of justiciaries.[38]

But Hengstenberg disagrees, after specifically citing Luther: "The context demands the expression of firm hope, not of a wish."[39]

Interpreters pay very little attention to this question; the weight of consensus is definitely with Hengstenberg and the most important ancient versions (the LXX's φυλάξεις and διατηρήσεις are both future active indicatives; as are the Vulgate's *servabis* and *custodies*). And lovers of the Psalms know the (near-)requirements

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37 See all of section 6 in *IBHS*.
38 Martin Luther, *Select Works of Martin Luther: An Offering to the Church of God in "The Last Days,"* trans. Henry Cole, vol. IV (London: T. Bensley, 1826), 27. Prinsloo apparently sides with Luther. "The fifth strophe (12:7–8) balances with the first (cf. vv. 1–2) in that it is also a prayer to the LORD." Willem S. Prinsloo, "The Psalms," in *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*, ed. James D. G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 375.
39 E. W. Hengstenberg, *Commentary on the Psalms*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1869), 194.

of the psalmic form; an expression of hope is indeed required here. Because an inspired prayer for divine preservation could bear the same *doctrinal* import as an inspired statement of it, this grammatical question will be set aside.[40]

An Interpretive Plebiscite (Or: A Reception-Historical Analysis)

The question before us is whether the text as now established should be read to promise perfect manuscript copies of the Bible.[41] The primary way in which I will seek to answer this question is to demonstrate whether the text *has* been read to promise perfect manuscript copies of the Bible. I will execute something of a mass plebiscite of Bible interpreters throughout the centuries. My major question: who or what are the antecedents of the "them" (or "us") and the "him" (or "them" or "us") of Psalm 12:7?

Much of what follows will merely tabulate votes for the plebiscite. Quotations will be given when helpful for various reasons. Assessment will, of course, follow.

Ancient and Medieval Interpreters

Augustine commented on the Latin text available to him, which reads as he quotes it here, followed by his pithy comment:

> Thou, O Lord, shalt preserve us, and keep us from this generation to eternity: here as needy and poor, there as wealthy and rich.[42]

The objects of preservation and keeping for Augustine are clearly the poor and needy.

The Jewish Madras Tanhuma, of uncertain origin, takes the same view:

> "You, O Lord, will keep them," [i.e.], watch over their instruction in their hearts…. "You will guard each [of them from this generation unto eternity]," from the generation which is worthy of destruction.[43]

The Aramaic Targum likewise:

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40 It might be noted here only that 12:7 would be a more difficult prooftext to use for KJV/TR defense if it were a prayer. "Please keep them" would not ring in the ears the same as "Thou shalt keep them."

41 For an introduction to the state of the text, see Ellis R. Brotzman and Eric J. Tully, *Old Testament Textual Criticism: A Practical Introduction* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016).

42 Augustine of Hippo, *Expositions on the Book of Psalms: Psalms 1–150*, vol. 1 of *A Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church* (Oxford: John Henry Parker; London: J. G. F. and J. Rivington, 1847–1857), 104.

43 Sefaria.org, https://www.sefaria.org/Psalms.12.8?lang=bi&with=Commentary%20 ConnectionsList&lang2=en

> You, O Lord, will keep the righteous; you will protect them from this evil generation forever.[44]

Already we have seen what is most typical among the many dozens of interpreters surveyed for this paper: they assume but do not defend an answer to the question we are pursuing.

Theodoret of Cyrus took the same view as Augustine, as did Cassiodorus and Diodore of Tarsus.[45] Ibn Ezra is the earliest minority report. He issues a very brief comment in which he does refer the "them" of "you will keep them" back to the "sayings" of 12:6 (Ibn Ezra does not mention the second pronoun, 12:7b).[46]

> The *mem* of *tishmerem* (Thou wilt keep them) most probably refers to the words of the Lord (v. 7 [Heb.]).

Rashi, centuries later, takes the opposing view, explaining "shall guard them" as

> Those poor and needy people being pursued by this generation, who are informers.[47]

16th Century Interpreters

Moving into the Reformation period: Luther sees a full three possibilities for the antecedent of "them" in 12:7a. While in the midst of a close reading of the Hebrew, he seems to prefer the "words" of 12:6 as the antecedent; but he immediately follows up with the other two options: the saints and even the wicked. Luther also perceptively notes the gender of the Hebrew pronoun:

> And instead of "thou shalt preserve *us*" [as the Vulgate reads], it is in the Hebrew "thou shall preserve *them*"; and it refers to the words of God, as Hieronymus [Jerome] translates it. But it may also be referred to the saints, as it is in the masculine gender *servabis eos*. Nor should I reject the acceptation, if any one should understand it as referring to the ungodly: that God would preserve and guard them, that is, that

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44 Ibid. For more details here, see *The Targum of Psalms*, vol. 16 of *The Aramaic Bible*, trans. David M. Stec (M. Glazier, 2004), alongside Paul V. M. Flesher and Bruce D. Chilton, *The Targums: A Critical Introduction* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011).

45 Theodoret stated, "Guarded by your grace we shall not only escape the wiles of the present generation, but shall also be provided with everlasting salvation." Theodoret of Cyrus, *Commentary on the Psalms 1–72*, trans. Robert C. Hill, vol. 101 of *The Fathers of the Church* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 103. For quotations from Cassiodorus and Diode, see Craig A. Blaising and Carmen S. Hardin, eds., *Psalms 1–50*, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 102–103.

46 Sefaria.org, https://www.sefaria.org/Psalms.12.8

47 Ibid.

they might not any more speak vain things, nor destroy the saints from the sons of men.[48]

Whereas Van Kleeck, Sr., enlists Luther as a support for his viewpoint, when Luther comes to application, he actually conflates the first two of his three views:

> Here we see, that it is not our power that can cause the words of God to remain pure, or that can prevent the saints from failing from among men, but the power of God only.[49]

Calvin, too, is aware that there is some disagreement over the proper identification of the antecedents in Ps 12:7:

> Some give this exposition of the passage: "Thou wilt keep them," namely, thy words; but this does not seem to me to be suitable. David, I have no doubt, returns to speak of the poor, of whom he had spoken in the preceding part of the psalm.[50]

Calvin notes the unique shift from plural to singular in the Hebrew of Ps 12:7 (which he quotes as "them… him"), and effectually draws a (potential) theological point from this minor oddity:

> The import of his language is, Although only one good man should be left alive in the world, yet he would be kept in perfect safety by the grace and protection of God.[51]

Interestingly, this point recurs in the Geneva Bible[52] and (with minor variation)

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48 Martin Luther, *Select Works of Martin Luther: An Offering to the Church of God in "The Last Days,"* trans. Henry Cole, vol. IV (London: T. Bensley, 1826), 27.

49 Ibid.

50 John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, vol. 1, trans. James Anderson (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 178–79.

51 Ibid., 179.

52 The Geneva Bible follows the Hebrew precisely: "Thou wilt kepe them, ô Lord: thou wilt preserve him from this generaciõ for ever," and it has a footnote on the first pronoun ("them"): "That is, thine, thogh he were but one man" (Geneva: Rovland Hall, 1560).

through the centuries, being found in Joseph Addison Alexander,[53] A. F. Kirkpatrick,[54] Hengstenberg,[55] the NET Bible,[56] and Jacobson.[57]

17th Century Interpreters

The Westminster divines did not cite Psalm 12:6–7 in their confession; when they confess that the text of Scripture was "kept pure in all ages,"[58] they cite Matt 5:18's "every jot and tittle promise" and not Psalm 12. Though the Westminster Larger Catechism does list Psalm 12:6 as a prooftext for its statement that "the scriptures manifest themselves to be the word of God, by their… purity,"[59] it does not cite 12:7. Apparently, they did not see 12:7 as a promise of textual preservation.[60] Matthew Poole acknowledges the possible ambiguity in the pronouns of 12:7:

> Thou shalt keep them; either, 1. The poor and needy, ver. 5, from the crafts and malice of this crooked and perverse generation of men, and for ever. Or, 2. Thy words or promises last mentioned, ver. 6.

If one takes the second option, which Poole declines to do (he does not land on a specific view), he suggests this interpretation:

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53 "The plural pronoun in the first clause, and the singular in the second, refer to the same persons, viz., the sufferers mentioned in ver. 7 (6). By a licence common in the Psalms, they are first spoken of as a plurality, and then as an ideal person; see above, on Ps. 10:10." Joseph Addison Alexander, *The Psalms Translated and Explained* (Edinburgh: Andrew Elliot; James Thin, 1864), 57.

54 "The first Thou is emphatic: them refers to the poor and needy of v. 5: him in the second line singles out each one of the victims of persecution as the object of divine care." A. F. Kirkpatrick, *The Book of Psalms*, The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1906), 63.

55 "The singular suffix in the second clause is to be explained as a personification. In order to mark the contrast more pointedly between the pious and the ungodly, and to indicate that it is not one between certain individuals and certain others, 'the pious man' is often set in opposition to 'the ungodly man,' the righteous to the wicked; the former as the object of Divine care, the latter as the object of Divine punishment." E. W. Hengstenberg, *Commentary on the Psalms*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1869), 194.

56 "The third masculine singular suffix on the verb 'protect' is probably used in a distributive sense, referring to each one within the group mentioned previously (the oppressed/needy, referred to as 'them' in the preceding line)." Biblical Studies Press, *The NET Bible First Edition Notes* (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Ps 12:7.

57 "In both v. 5c and 8b, the singular pronominal suffix carries a collective sense, referring to the plural group on whose behalf the psalmist intercedes." Jacobson, *Psalms*, 155.

58 WCF 1.8.

59 They also list Psalm 119:140: "Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it."

60 Writing before the successful rise of the critical text of the New Testament, Charles and A. A. Hodge in their commentary on the confession do not see "kept pure in all ages" as a promise of perfect textual transmission. "The oldest existing Hebrew manuscripts date from the ninth or tenth century. The oldest Greek manuscripts date from the fourth to the sixth century. Many hundreds of these have been collated by eminent scholars in forming the text of modern Hebrew and Greek Testaments. The differences are found to be unimportant, and the essential integrity of our text is established." A. A. Hodge and Charles Hodge, *The Confession of Faith: With Questions for Theological Students and Bible Classes* (Simpsonville, SC: Christian Classics Foundation, 1996), 41.

> Thou wilt not only keep thy promise to me in preserving me, and advancing me to the throne, but also to my posterity from generation to generation.

18th Century Interpreters

H. Dimock makes a textual-critical comment that includes an interpretive one:

> One MS., with ό. Vulg. Ar. & Æth. Houbigant, &c., reads תשמרנו, which the context requires; "Thou O Jehovah, shalt keep us."[61]

In other words, "us" in 12:7a commends itself not only for textual but for contextual reasons.

Thomas Boston, too, writes,

> "Because iniquity shall abound the love of many shall wax cold." But the saints shall not be carried away with the stream, Psal. 12:7. "Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever."[62]

Matthew Henry, in his typical style, expands on what the reader may now fairly call the standard interpretation of the pronouns in Ps 12:7:

> Let God alone to maintain his own interest and to preserve his own people. He will keep them from this generation, (1.) From being debauched by them and drawn away from God, from mingling with them and learning their works. In times of general apostasy the Lord knows those that are his, and they shall be enabled to keep their integrity. (2.) From being destroyed and rooted out by them.[63]

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61 H. Dimock, *Notes Critical and Explanatory on the Books of Psalms and Proverbs* (London: J. F. and C. Rivington; Oxford: J. and J. Fletcher; Glocester: J. Hough, 1791), 13.

62 The Whole Works of Thomas Boston: *An Illustration of the Doctrines of the Christian Religion*, Part 2, ed. Samuel M'Millan, vol. 2 (Aberdeen: George & Robert King, 1848), 35.

63 Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 760. One more citation meriting a footnote: a rather obscure reference in Jonathan Edwards' Blank Bible—a portion of a "deleted" footnote—suggests that Edwards may have seen Psalm 12:7 as a cross-reference to Psalm 25:22, "Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles." This, in turn, suggests (though it certainly does not prove) that he saw the promise of Psalm 12:7 as referring to God's protection of the godly. This is the only reference to Psalm 12 in all of Edwards' available works in the famous Yale series. Jonathan Edwards, The "Blank Bible": Part 1 & Part 2, ed. Stephen J. Stein and Harry S. Stout, vol. 24 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 490.

19th Century Interpreters

Most of the exegetical and linguistic arguments regarding Ps 12:7 were established by the 19th century. It remains mainly to tabulate interpretive votes.

In favor of the standard view are Keil and Deilitzsch,[64] Tholuck,[65] Bellarmine (in a commentary on the Vulgate and Douay-Rheims),[66] Barnes,[67] Hengstenberg,[68]

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64 "The suffix ēm in v. [7]a refers to the miserable and poor; the suffix ennu in v. [7]b (him, not: us, which would be pointed תצרנו and more especially since it is not preceded by תשׁמרנו) refers back to the man who yearns for deliverance mentioned in the divine utterance, v. 6." Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 5 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 122.

65 "V. 8. Prayer, inspired by the Spirit of God, always comprehends universal need in the particular, and the pious, in praying for himself, actually prays for all the pious. So David, as the representative of the small band of the godly in his time, virtually prays for all godly men. He conceives of the human race as divided into two camps and two generations, the one of whom fight in huge masses and great strength, while the other, though small in number and with little strength of their own, advance under the banner of that God who has promised victory to the righteous cause." Augustus Tholuck, *A Translation and Commentary of the Book of Psalms: For the Use of the Ministry and Laity of the Christian Church*, trans. J. Isidor Mombert (Philadelphia: William S. & Alfred Martien, 1858), 98.

66 "He infers from the preceding, that God will fulfill his promises. You, our Redeemer and Lord, will guard us, for the Greek, as well as the Hebrew word, implies, not only salvation, but, furthermore, an extension of it in guarding and preserving. As if one asked, what will become of the wicked, while you protect us? He replies, 'The wicked will walk round about,' (while we are quietly reposing under your wings,) constantly running after the things of this world, yet never coming at the enjoyment of their desires; and they will be forever thus 'Walking round about,' while the world lasts." Robert Bellarmine, *A Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, trans. John O'Sullivan (Dublin, London: James Duffy & Co., 1866), 52.

67 "That is, the persons referred to in ver. 5—the poor and the needy who were suffering from the wrongs inflicted on them. The idea is, that God would guard and defend them. They were safe in his hands. Comp. Ps. 37:3–7." Albert Barnes, *Notes on the Old Testament: Psalms*, vol. 1 (London: Blackie & Son, 1870–1872), 108.

68 E. W. Hengstenberg, *Commentary on the Psalms*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1869), 194–195.

v. Ewald,[69] De Liguori,[70] Adam Clarke,[71] Murphy,[72] Jennings,[73] Horne,[74] Dickson,[75] Hawker,[76] Cowles,[77] Kirkpatrick,[78] Maclaren,[79] and Spurgeon.[80]

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69 "Ver. 8, them the good, and used after ver. 2, and ver. 6 c, rather him, the sufferer." G. Heinrich A. v. Ewald, *Commentary on the Psalms*, trans. E. Johnson, vol. 1 of Theological Translation Fund Library (London; Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1880), 200.

70 He glosses the verse: "Thou wilt always preserve us from this race of proud and deceitful men." Alphonsus de Liguori, *The Divine Office: Explanation of the Psalms and Canticles*, ed. Eugene Grimm, 3rd ed., The Complete Works of Saint Alphonsus de Liguori (New York, Cincinnati, Chicago: Benziger Brothers; London: R. Washbourne; Dublin: M. H. Gill & Son, 1889), 58.

71 "He notes the textual difficulties present in 12:7 but sees each major option as viable: "Instead of the pronoun *them* in these clauses, several MSS., with the *Septuagint*, the *Vulgate*, and the *Arabic*, have *us*. The sense is equally good in both readings. God did bring forth the Israelites from Babylon, according to his word; he separated them from *that generation*, and reinstated them in their own land, according to his word; and most certainly he has *preserved them from generation to generation* to the present day, in a most remarkable manner." Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, new ed., vol. 3 (Bellingham, WA: Faithlife, 2014), 252.

72 James G. Murphy, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (Andover: Warren F. Draper, 1875), 118.

73 "'Them:' viz. the 'afflicted' and 'needy' of ver. 5. The equiv[alent] to 'them' in [verset] *b* is sing.—'him,'—i.e. each one of such persons." A. C. Jennings and W. H. Lowe, *The Psalms, with Introductions and Critical Notes*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (London: Macmillan, 1884), 48.

74 "As if it had been said, Yes, blessed Lord, what thou hast premised shall surely be performed, since there is with thee no variableness, nor shadow of turning: thou wilt keep thy poor and lowly servants, as thou hast promised, from being circumvented by treachery, or crushed by power; thou wilt preserve them undefiled amidst an evil and adulterous generation; thou wilt be with thy church to the end of the world, and then admit her to be with thee for ever." George Horne, *A Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1856), 70.

75 "Let men persecute the godly as much as God pleaseth to suffer them, yet shall God preserve a church of godly persons at all times to the end of the world: for God shall preserve the godly from this generation for ever." David Dickson, *A Brief Explication of the Psalms*, vol. 1 (Glasgow: John Dow; Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes & R. Ogle; London: James Darling & Richard Baynes, 1834), 54.

76 "These verses seem to have no immediate connection with what went before; nevertheless they come in with a blessed conclusion, to ensure the faithfulness of Jehovah. What though bad men triumph and the faithful are minished, Jesus is the same, yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness, for by strength shall no man prevail. 1 Sam. 2:9." Robert Hawker, *Poor Man's Old Testament Commentary: Job–Psalms*, vol. 4 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2013), 198.

77 "The words of the Lord are put in contrast with the words of the wicked—pure while those are foul; true and perfectly reliable, while those are utterly treacherous. The inference just here is that when God promises to help his people or to cut off their oppressors, you need not fear that his words will fail. Therefore he will surely preserve his saints from all evil-doers forever." Henry Cowles, *The Psalms, With Notes, Critical, Explanatory, and Practical* (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1879), 51–52.

78 "The first Thou is emphatic: them refers to the poor and needy of v. 5: him in the second line singles out each one of the victims of persecution as the object of divine care." A. F. Kirkpatrick, *The Book of Psalms, The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1906), 63.

79 "The godly and faithful shall not 'cease from among the children of men,' since God will keep them; and His keeping shall preserve them." "The Psalms," in *The Expositor's Bible: Psalms to Isaiah*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll, vol. 3 of *Expositor's Bible* (Hartford, CT: S.S. Scranton Co., 1903), 37–38.

80 *The Treasury of David: Psalms 1–26*, vol. 1 (London; Edinburgh; New York: Marshall Brothers, n.d.), 143.

A few interpreters of this century, notably Plumer,[81] take the standard view and yet acknowledge that other interpreters refer one or more of the two pronouns at issue back to "the words" of 12:5. Two—Haydock[82] and Briggs[83]—dutifully report the various available views without landing on one.

Only Neale and Brown,[84] among all 19th century interpreters (that this writer found), openly dissent from the standard view. Neale cites with apparent agreement 15th century commentator Michael Ayguan as taking the first phrase ("thou shalt keep them") as a reference to the words of verse 6:

> Keep them: that is, not as the passage is generally taken, (Ay[guan]) Keep or guard Thy people, but Thou shalt keep, or make good, Thy words: and by so doing, shalt preserve him—him, the needy, him, the poor—from this generation.[85]

This is a quotation used by several KJV/TR defenders, including Brandenburg and Van Kleeck, Sr. But it must be noted that Neale goes on to see the second phrase ("thou shalt preserve them") as referring to the godly.

20th Century Interpreters

Those who take the standard interpretation of Psalms 12:6–7—namely, that the "them" and "him" pronominal suffixes refer back to "the poor and needy"—among

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81 William S. Plumer, *Studies in the Book of Psalms: Being a Critical and Expository Commentary, with Doctrinal and Practical Remarks on the Entire Psalter* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott; Edinburgh: Black, 1872), 178.

82 "This corrupt generation; or, both in this world and in the next. Heb. 'preserve them;' the just, or thy words. C.—'And thou wilt keep him.' Pagn.—Prot. marg. i.e. 'Every one of them.' S. Jerom reads, 'us.' H." George Leo Haydock, *Haydock's Catholic Bible Commentary* (New York: Edward Dunigan & Brother, 1859), Ps 11:8.

83 "sf. 3 sg.; but □ in both cases has ἡμᾶς. □, Aq., Θ agree with □, and refer sf. of the first vb. to the divine words. Probably all are interpretations of originals without any sfs. at all." Charles A. Briggs and Emilie Grace Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, International Critical Commentary (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1906–1907), 99.

84 "'Them' means God's *words* in previous verse. God will keep them and preserve (or rather *observe*) them from generation to generation for ever. Matt. xxiv. 35." Arthur Brown, *A Handy-Book of the Psalms for Plain People* (London: Partridge, 1884), 14.

85 J. M. Neale, *A Commentary on the Psalms from Primitive and Mediæval Writers: Psalm 1 to Psalm 38*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (London: Joseph Masters; New York: Pott & Amery, 1869), 177.

20th century interpreters include F. B. Meyer,[86] Arno Gaebelein,[87] Allen Ross,[88] and Willem VanGemeren.[89]

Kidner similarly sees "you will keep them" as possibly referring to the promises and "you will guard us" as referring to the godly.[90]

Joachim Kraus[91] and Erhard Gerstenberger follow the basic view of Neale:

> You, Yahweh, safeguard them [your words]; you protect him [or according to some Hebrew manuscripts and the LXX, *us*] always from that kind of person.[92]

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86 F. B. Meyer, *Through the Bible Day by Day: A Devotional Commentary*, vol. 3 (Philadelphia: American Sunday-School Union, 1914–1918), 52.

87 He viewed Psalm 12:7 as a promise that "Jehovah will keep His people in these coming dark days." Arno C Gaebelein, *The Annotated Bible: Ezra to Psalms*, vol. 3 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2009), 230.

88 "Therefore the psalmist trusted in God's word that He would keep them safe in the midst of proud people who strut about in smug self-confidence." Allen P. Ross, "Psalms," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1985), 801.

89 "Regardless of the circumstances of life, God's children are assured of the special protection of their heavenly Father from the evil of the world in which they live. The wicked may turn the world upside down, but God will guard his own. He keeps them 'safe' from the wicked." Willem A. VanGemeren, "Psalms," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 138.

90 Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1–72: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 15 of *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1973), 93.

91 "The MT reading 'you will protect him' is not to be corrected to תצרנו following Gk. The suffix refers to יפיח לו in v. 5." Hans-Joachim Kraus, *A Continental Commentary: Psalms 1–59* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 207.

92 Erhard Gerstenberger, *Psalms Part 1: With an Introduction to Cultic Poetry*, vol. 14 of *The Forms of the Old Testament Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 81. * Minor note: G. Campbell Morgan sends forth an uncertain sound in brief comments on Psalm 12—indicating that the Psalm is about "the preservation of the trusting" but then suggesting that the "them" in Psalm 12:7 (he doesn't specify which "them") refers to "the words." *G. Campbell Morgan's Exposition on the Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1959), 225.

21st Century Interpreters

The voters line up again in the 21st century for the standard view: Goldingay,[93] Longman,[94] Futato,[95] Dahood,[96] Eaton,[97] Harman,[98] Grogan,[99] and Jacobson.[100]

Samuel Terrien, however, takes "you will keep them" to refer to the promises God has just made.[101] Jim Hamilton sees 12:7a as a promise that Yahweh will guard his words and 12:7b as a promise that God will guard the "godly ones" mentioned already in 12:1a.[102]

Two more interpreters bear mentioning, the two writers who made the only significant academic attempts I could locate to evaluate whether Psalm 12:6–7 has any bearing on the textual criticism of either testament or on a doctrine of preservation.

John Feinberg is the only systematic theologian I could locate who so much as mentions Psalm 12:6–7 with reference to the question of textual preservation.

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93 "The crowd of dishonest confidence tricksters who seem to run the city seem set to do so forever, but now you know God will protect you." John Goldingay, *Psalms for Everyone, Part 1: Psalms 1–72*, Old Testament for Everyone (Louisville: Westminster John Knox; London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2013), 41.

94 "God has said that he will protect the needy and the psalmist confidently affirms the truth of his statement (v. 7)." Tremper Longman III, *Psalms: An Introduction and Commentary*, ed. David G. Firth, vol. 15–16 of *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries* (Nottingham, England: InterVarsity, 2014), 94.

95 "We too can have confidence that the LORD will protect and preserve us." Mark D. Futato, "The Book of Psalms," in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary*, Vol 7: The Book of Psalms, The Book of Proverbs (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2009), 65.

96 Mitchell Dahood S.J., *Psalms I: 1–50: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, vol. 16, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 75.

97 "The thought becomes explicit in v. 7, where there is some doubt about the object—'them,' 'him,' or more likely 'us' (so a few manuscripts and LXX)." John Eaton, *The Psalms: A Historical and Spiritual Commentary with an Introduction and New Translation* (New York: T&T Clark, 2003), 90.

98 Allan Harman, *Psalms: A Mentor Commentary*, vol. 1–2 of *Mentor Commentaries* (Ross-shire, Great Britain: Mentor, 2011), 159.

99 Though Grogan bases his commentary on the NIV and doesn't give any evidence of checking the Hebrew here: "The reiterated 'us' [of 12:7] shows [the psalmist's] community concern." *Psalms*, The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 58.

100 "In both v. 5c and 8b, the singular pronominal suffix carries a collective sense, referring to the plural group on whose behalf the psalmist intercedes." Jacobson, *Psalms*, 155.

101 "The psalmist renews his prayer, but asks for nothing. He knows that the Lord will keep his word (v. 8)." Samuel Terrien, *The Psalms: Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary*, The Eerdmans Critical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 156.

102 "The first-person pronominal suffix in 12:7b (MT 12:8b) is plural, "you will keep them," and the second is singular, "you will deliver him." I have taken these to refer to Yahweh's words and Yahweh's king. The ESV reads the second suffix as a first-person plural, "you will guard us," which is a valid reading of the text. The CSB renders the first as a first-person plural, which is not a valid reading of the text as it stands, and takes the second suffix the same way, "You... will guard us; You will protect us" (so also NIV 1984). The NIV 2011 takes the first suffix as a reference to the needy and the second as a first-person plural: "You... will keep the needy... and will protect us." James M. Hamilton Jr., *Psalms*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander, Thomas R. Schreiner, and Andreas J. Köstenberger, vol. 1 of *Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Academic, 2021), 191.

Feinberg feels that, on the whole, the Bible teaches or at least implies a doctrine of preservation. But after a very careful exegetical discussion mirroring points already made in this paper, he concludes,

> Even though verses 6–7, isolated from the rest of the psalm, seem "potentially" to comment about Scripture, in the context of the whole psalm, verse 7 isn't about Scripture at all.[103]

William Combs, second, dismisses the relevance of Psalm 12:7 to any doctrine of preservation. His argument hinges on the gender of the pronouns.[104]

Interpreting Psalm 12

Ironically, it is serious interpreters' dedication to a principle usually upheld by responsible KJV defenders that keeps them from reading the key phrase in Psalm 12:7 the way the KJV does. That principle is what I mentioned earlier: Masoretic Text priority. "Them… them," the reading in the KJV, is ambiguous in a way the Hebrew is not. The KJV's rendering may be an acceptable *translation*—a translator may feel that English speakers simply would not make a number switch ("them… him") in a circumstance like 12:7. He or she may quietly regularize the number according to English expectations, as the KJV translators apparently did. But this is precisely why the Reformers fought to maintain the authority of the originals over that of mere translations. Hebrew trumps English. The KJV translators' rendering innocently created potential for a doctrinal misreading.[105] This writer could not find a single interpreter before the advent of KJV-Onlyism who interpreted Psalm 12:6–7 to promise perfect manuscript copies of the Bible. Only a tiny minority of interpreters throughout history have seen both pronouns at issue (whatever they take them to be) to refer back to "the words of the Lord" in Psalm 12:6.

Given MT priority, it is essentially impossible for "him," the second pronoun in 12:7, to refer back to the words of 12:6. The object of "preservation," at least, is not the words of the Lord. But it is grammatically and contextually possible that the first pronoun in 12:7, "them," refers back to the content of 12:5. "Them" is genuinely but not (in this writer's estimation, and I speak here with regard to the human author) purposefully ambiguous.

"Keep," too, could point in either direction. Both people and things are "kept" (שמר) in the HB/OT: Adam must "keep" the garden, the angel later "keeps" the way to the Tree of Life, Abraham must "keep" God's covenant, God promises to

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103 John S. Feinberg, *Light in a Dark Place: The Doctrine of Scripture,* ed. John S. Feinberg, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 720.
104 "The Preservation of Scripture," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 5 (Fall 2000): 3–44.
105 But see coda below.

"keep" Jacob wherever he goes, the Israelites must "keep" the Passover and the Sabbath. Clearly, lexicography will not answer this interpretive question.

But if this paper may make a few observations that have not already been made in ages past, it is unlike Hebrew parallelism for "them" and "him" to point to different referents. It is too cute and more demanding of the reader than the form typically requires. In the context of the psalm, "them… him" both almost certainly refer back to the same referent(s): the poor/needy of 12:5.

> "Because the poor are plundered, because the needy groan,
> I will now arise," says the LORD;
> "I will place him in the safety for which he longs." (ESV)

And another (apparently new?) contribution: even if it were warranted to make the leap from these specific "words of the Lord" to all the words of the Lord, including Scripture (indeed, could any of God's words be "impure"?) context also delimits the meaning of the word "pure." Those who use Psalm 12:6–7 to defend the existence of perfectly pure Hebrew Old Testament and Greek New Testament texts have not acknowledged this. They appear to assume that "pure" means "free of textual corruption," or yet more specific "free of textual variants." But that cannot be the focus of Psalm 12:6. The psalmist cannot be saying, "The promises God just made to the poor in the previous verse will be copied perfectly down through the centuries—not a י nor a קֶרֶן will be lost." He has to be saying, "God's promises are completely reliable, unmixed with ulterior motives." Indeed, this is the way interpreters commonly take 12:6.

Augustine glossed "pure" to mean "without the alloy of pretense";[106] Craigie to mean "free from any falsity or impairment."[107] In this sense, God's word has certainly remained "pure in all ages," but not in the sense meant by KJV defenders.

Defenders of a perfectly pure textual tradition will be quick to say, "But how can God's promises be perfectly reliable if they are textually unstable? Does not the latter imply the former?" Does it? Do the kinds of variants generally found within the manuscript traditions of the testaments change the message of Scripture? If one textual variant said, "the poor are despoiled," instead of, "the poor are plundered"—would God's promises no longer be pure? This is the situation we frequently face in both testaments: variants that are, in the words of Dan Wallace, viable but not meaningful.[108] In other words, "despoiled" would be viable here,

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106 Augustine of Hippo, *Expositions on the Book of Psalms: Psalms 1–150*, vol. 1 of *A Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church* (London: Rivington; Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1847–1857), 104.

107 Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, vol. 19 of *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, 1983), 139.

108 Wallace states, "Only about 1% of the textual variants are both meaningful and viable." "The Gospel according to Bart: A Review Article of Misquoting Jesus by Bart Ehrman," *JETS* 49, no. 2 (2006): 330.

contextually. But it would not communicate something meaningfully different from "plundered."

There are more serious variants in the manuscript traditions for both testaments, of course, but if we may turn from special to general revelation, there is no perfect text to be had. All of the manuscripts we have of any size in either testament differ at least a little. A textual apparatus of a sort—the *kethib-qere*—is included in the very Masoretic Text commonly said to be perfect by KJV defenders.[109] There are no *urim* or *thummim* pointing to the Leningrad Codex over the Aleppo Codex; there are no apostles to draw straws to see which Textus Receptus edition is the perfect one or whether the NA28 should take the TR's office. Defenders of the KJV/TR are persuasive to their own when they use Psalm 12:7 as a prooftext only because the KJV translators chose to render the pronouns "them… them." If their translation had been one step more literal, or if they had kept the Bishop's Bible rendering during their revision process ("Thou wylt kepe the godly, O God: thou wylt preserue euery one of them from this generation for euer"), no KJV-Only doctrinal statements would be citing Psalm 12:7.

Athanasius Against the World

There are serious, accredited Bible interpreters who, over the centuries, have seen in the first clause of Psalm 12:7 a promise for God to keep his "words." Several of the most capable defenders of the KJV have collected these citations.[110] In my research among approximately sixty writers, six saw 12:7a that way, and another five at least felt the duty to report that view as an option selected by others. But only one (apparently?) Hebrew-reading interpreter I could find outside of the KJV defenders aforementioned—saw the second clause of 12:7 as a referring to the "words." That was Arthur Brown, writing in a popular-level book in 1884.

But an overwhelming majority of those surveyed, nearly fifty interpreters over the centuries, saw both pronouns as referring to the poor and needy. Majorities can be tyrannies; Bible interpretation is not a democracy. But if to the commentary tradition KJV defenders appeal, to the commentators we must go. KJV defenders often argue that God's use of a given text (the *Pericope Adulterae*, Mark 16:9–20, the Johannine comma) is indication of God's approval of that text; but what about his use of a given interpretation? The church has with great consistency seen Psalm 12:7a and b as a promise of God to defend the godly poor and needy.

And even when a few interpreters over the centuries have pointed to the "words"

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109 See Emmanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible: Revised and Expanded Fourth Edition* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2022).
110 Thomas Ross, "Psalm 12:6–7: Commentators On the Preservation of Words," Faith Saves, Feb 17, 2016. https://faithsaves.net/psalm-126–7-commentators/

and not to the poor and needy as the object of God's keeping, none to this writer's knowledge has ever drawn the conclusion KJV defenders do as to the application of these words. None has ever seen in the verse a promise of perfect textual preservation of the Bible. Charles Augustus Briggs, for example, who is quoted by several of the KJV defenders mentioned at the beginning of the paper, is an awkward champion for them to put forward—given that his argument is that the reason so many options exist among the manuscripts and ancient versions ("them… them," "them… him," "us… us," etc.) is that "probably all are interpretations of originals without any s[uffixes] at all."[111]

The defender of the KJV who uses Psalm 12:7 as a prooftext for his views is not quite Athanasius against the world; he is Athanasius against the vast majority of the world, minus a few footnotes mentioning the possibility that Athanasius may be half right in his interpretation but so wrong in his application that his application did not even occur to a single one of them before Athanasius came along in approximately 1980. Psalm 12:6–7 is a promise that God will defend the poor and needy, and that his promise to do so is reliable.

Coda

For admittedly rhetorical (persuasive efficacy) purposes, I omitted one key historical interpreter of Psalm 12:7. Four hundred years ago, the preeminent biblical scholars of England issued their judgment regarding the referent of both pronouns in Psalm 12:7. The KJV translators themselves have a footnote at 12:7b:
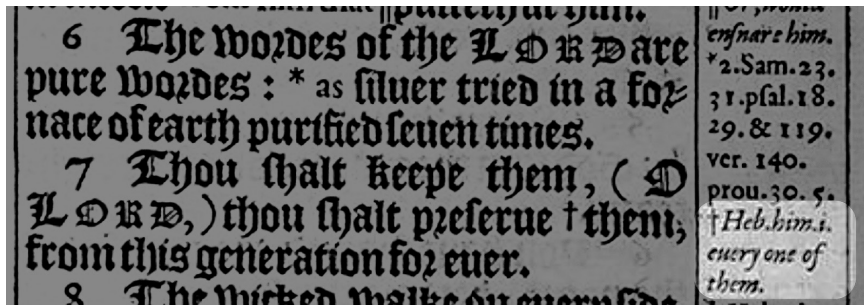
Norton's KJV expands slightly for clarification: "them: Heb. *him*, that is, *every one of them*."[112]

For the KJV translators to say "him" is to point at least the second pronoun of

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111 Charles A. Briggs and Emilie Grace Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, International Critical Commentary (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1906–1907), 99.

112 Norton also apparently accidentally puts the footnote on the wrong pronoun. David Norton, ed., *The New Cambridge Paragraph Bible with the Apocrypha: King James Version*, rev. ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), Ps 12:7.

12:7 back to the poor and needy; they would have said "Heb. it" if they felt that the 3MS suffix was referring back to the words. And given that they regularized "him" to "them" to match the first pronoun, this almost certainly means that they regarded that first pronoun, too, to refer to the poor and needy. If the King James Bible of 1611 is "the inerrant, infallible, inspired, preserved word of God," its footnotes, presumably also inspired (?), undercut the very prooftext used to add that word "preserved" to the list of its doctrinal descriptors. As this writer has, at sundry times and in divers manners, had occasion to say, the KJV translators were not KJV-Only.

Jesus Christ and Trajectories of Purity:
A Response to Thiessen's *Jesus and the Forces of Death*

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Abstract

Matthew's Thiessen's recent book *Jesus and the Forces of Death* aims to distinguish the domains of ritual and moral purity as part of a project to demonstrate the Jesus adhered to most Jewish ritual purity norms. However, Thiessen's work has theoretical, contextual, and exegetical issues that weaken his argument. This essay examines those weaknesses and proposes a different way to frame the analysis of ritual and moral purity within a diverse array of trajectories in a priestly cultural frame.

Most contemporary readers of the New Testament, despite their cultural distance, would recognize that Jesus and the early Christian movement lived within a Mediterranean world that was deeply shaped and informed by principles of ritual purity. At this point, cultural and theological evaluations tend to emerge. Popularly, such purity concerns are often construed as naively premodern. More dangerously, scholars and others can portray Jesus and the early Christians as opposed to first century Jewish purity practices because they are misguided, exclusionary, and oppressive.[1] Many argue that Jesus rejected such harmful purity systems and reframed "true" purity as moral and internal.[2] Such a move casts all external purity awareness in a negative light that can spill over into anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism. Matthew Thiessen, in his recent book *Jesus and the Forces of Death: The Gospels' Portrayal of Ritual Impurity within First Century Judaism*, offers a

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[1] While acknowledging the debates regarding the terminology of "Jewish" (vs. "Judean"), I find the language of "Jew/Jewish" the most suitable for designating the diversity of ethnic-geographical-religious identities of this people group for this essay.

[2] See the review of works by Wright, Crossan, and Borg that have this tendency in Matthew Thiessen, *Jesus and the Forces of Death: The Gospels' Portrayal of Ritual Impurity within First Century Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020), 2–4. See also Jonathan Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple: Symbolism and Supercessionism in the Study of Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 4–10. Particular examples abound, but one could cite Maloney's description of Jesus's rejection of purity codes in Elliot C. Maloney, *Jesus's Urgent Message for Today* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 17–22.

much-needed correction to this tendency. However, his arguments in the book have critical gaps and swing the pendulum too far in the other direction in the attempt to offset a long tradition that sets Jesus against all forms of ritual or cultic purity. The following paper takes up some of these weaknesses in Thiessen's book in order to further the goal of better understanding the purity frameworks of the Mediterranean world in which Jesus and the emerging Christian movement lived and worked. We will examine problems with Thiessens' theories of purity, issues of historical contexts and trajectories, and challenges to his exegesis. The paper will close with a brief recommendation of a better way forward for recognizing, appreciating, and assessing the role purity issues played in emerging Christianity and Judaism in the first century Mediterranean context.[3]

Theoretical Problems

Thiessen establishes two theoretical pillars for his study. First, ritual and moral purity, while obviously related in some way, can and should mostly be distinguished from one another. Second, the fundamental concern of purity is with death and all of its associated harmful forces. We consider these in turn. Thiessen begins by laying out a framework that distinguishes between the antimonies of holy::profane and pure::impure. He asserts that profane is not the opposite of pure and impure is not the opposite of holy, citing the pairing found in Lev 10:10 (pp. 9–12). While there may be times where this distinction plays a role, he fails to note multiple places in the Hebrew Scriptures that compare, align, or conflate these categories such as Lev 20:25 where impure items cause profanation, Lev 24:4–6 where the holy lampstand is made of pure gold, or 2 Chron 30:17 where the unclean is unconsecrated. Lev 10:10 itself can be read this way. The holy is pure and the profane impure—a synonymous parallelism rather than two separate domains (cf. Ezek 22:26 and 44:23).

This basic, but not fully sound, distinction leads Thiessen to distinguish sharply between ritual and moral impurity (pp. 12–14), drawing on the work of Jonathan Klawans.[4] Klawans's conclusion about the distinctness of the two domains primarily fits the construal of ritual and moral purity in rabbinic Judaism as expressed in the Mishnah; he acknowledges that the sectarian group at Qumran regularly combined or conflated the two domains and that early Christianity moved toward

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3   The use of the singular designations for "Christianity" and "Judaism" does not imply fully formed institutional religions, monolithic movements, or clearly separated religions. As the following investigation shows, a variety of streams and forms existed and overlapped in both. These terms are used as flexible umbrella labels that are linguistically convenient.

4   Klawans argues for a clear compartmentalization of bodily/ritual and moral impurity, arguing primarily from the Mishnah for rabbinic Judaism. See Jonathan Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 67–117. However, the Qumran community seems to have collapsed the two into one unit, so Thomas Kazen, *Jesus and Purity* Halakkah*: Was Jesus Indifferent to Impurity?* ConBNT 38 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 200–201.

an emphasis on moral purity.[5] Thiessen briefly notes that the categories of "ritual and moral impurity, bleed into each other" (p. 13) and devotes a footnote to how various scholars have problematized the distinction between ritual and moral purity (including Klawans; p. 13 n. 6). However, he states "this book will focus almost exclusively on what Klawans calls ritual impurity" (p. 13). Thiessen presents the following chart (derived from Klawans) to illustrate the differences:

Ritual	Moral
unavoidable	avoidable
from a natural substance	from an action
communicable	noncommunicable
bathed away	atonement/punishment
not an abomination	an abomination
not sinful	sinful

Again, as above, the distinctions in these categories regularly do not obtain, at least not so neatly. For example, ritual impurity is clearly avoidable in some cases, or else instructions to priests on how to avoid it (Lev 21) would be pointless. Similarly, at least parts of the early Christian movement viewed all humans as cosmically bound to commit moral impurities (e.g., Rom 3:9; 1 John 1:8–10). The Hebrew term for "abomination" (תּוֹעֵבָה) can be applied to both ritual (Exod 8:26, Deut 14:3) and moral (Lev 18:26, Deut 13:14) matters. John the Baptist employed ritual bathing as part of his proffered means to deal with sin (Matt 3:5–6).

Thiessen closes his discussion with the following graphic, where the ritual and moral domains of purity barely overlap.

Ritual   **Moral**

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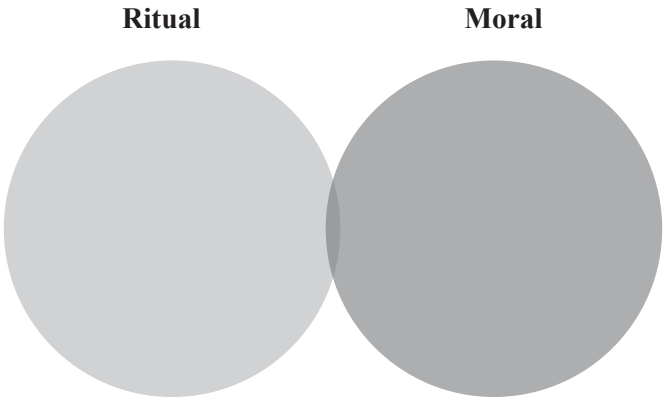
5   Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*, 75–88, 136–57.

While the two domains can be distinguished, this illustration is misrepresentative. First, different Jewish groups had differing views on the relationship of ritual and moral purity in this era (see further below).[6] Second, the Gospels in particular, and the Jewish context more broadly, often display a significant overlap of ritual and moral purity. For example, take the recurring accusation against Jesus in the Gospels regarding his table practices with "toll collectors and sinners" (Mark 2:16, Matt 11:19, Luke 15:1–2). Certain foods were ritually classified as "unclean" (Lev 11), but then the eating of such foods was viewed as not merely "defiling" (Lev 11:40) but "sinful" (4 Macc 5:19–21) because the willful disobedience of ritual guidelines in the Law is a direct affront to God (Ps 89:31–32; 1QS 8:15–17; m. Hor. 2:6). Knowingly eating unclean food or with unclean people was simultaneously defiling and sinful. Toll collectors themselves fell into a similar combination. They were morally culpable for their regular habits of dishonesty (b. Sanh. 25b), thievery (b. Šebu. 39a), and extortion (t. B. Meṣ 8:26). At the same time, toll collectors were ritually impure because they regularly dealt with Gentiles and had to enter unclean domains as part of their profession (m. Ṭehar. 7:6; y. Ḥag. 21a). The etiology of the different types of impurity may vary, but the domains overlapped for toll collectors. They were both ritually and morally impure; the two categories made sense together and reinforced one another. These examples demonstrate that Thiessen's division of ritual and moral impurity and an exclusive focus on ritual impurity may lead to a skewed or incomplete analysis.

The second theoretical pillar of Thiessen's study is the work of Jacob Milgrom. The title of Thiessen's study is drawn from Milgrom's insight that impurity is primarily associated with death.[7] While there is not time for a full critique of Milgrom's work and its application to first century Jewish faith and practice, two pertinent issues are relevant. The first is a categorical one: how analytically helpful is the category of "death" for impurity? As it turns out almost any aspect of human experience, negative or positive, can be associated with death: various animals, nonfatal skin disease, childbirth, demons, genital discharge, and so on. If anything can be associated with death, then it loses a significant amount of its explanatory power. Second, if impurity, especially the Jewish conception of impurity, is about death, then one must wonder at the narrow and peculiar concerns of a Jewish purity system that pays attention to nonlethal foods that are defiling (Lev 11), nonlethal aspects of childbirth (Lev 12), nonlethal skin and wall growths (Lev 13–14), and nonlethal bodily discharges (Lev 15) while almost no attention is given to lethal disease or injury as impure. Furthermore, while corpse

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6   This is also noted by David J. Rudolph, "Jesus and the Food Laws: A Reassessment of Mark 7:19b," *EQ* 74 (2002): 291–311, 296.

7   Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus: A Book of Ritual and Ethics*, CC (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 12–13, 121–24. See the connection of death and impurity also in Kazen, *Jesus and Purity*, 5–7.

impurity is assumed in Leviticus (e.g., 22:4; cf. Num 5:2), it is never dealt with at length. One does not learn how to address corpse impurity until Num 19, where water sanctified by a sacrificed red heifer is required. Thus, death may form a distant symbolic substratum for Jewish (and broader Mediterranean) conceptions of impurity, but one must deal with a Jewish purity system in the time of Jesus that does not systematically address death or fatal realities and has a particular set of very specific concerns about ongoing life.

Historical Contexts and Trajectories

Thiessen has made a titular claim to explore the Gospels' portrayal of Jesus in light of first century Judaism. This is a laudable goal as the rich body of material that he draws from the Qumran documents and rabbinic literature can often be underplayed in Christian interpretations of the Gospels. Thiessen illustrates how Jesus's practices, stances, and claims often fit into the range of debate about purity across the breadth of first century Jewish views. This situating provides helpful context for better interpreting the Gospels' portrayals of Jesus on these matters. It is also reasonable that Jesus, as a first century Jew, probably abided by the daily customs and purity practices of his surrounding community.[8] But again, Thiessen's approach entails unaddressed, problems: the caricaturing of Jewish purity concerns in the Gospels and the Gospels as part of emerging Christian views of purity.

Thiessen's situating of Jesus in the midst of first century Jewish debates about legal matters and purity is often helpful. Jesus's attack upon *unclean* spirits across the Gospels fits well within various other contemporaneous views of the death-dealing demonic (pp. 123–28 and 132–39). Jesus's perspective on the Sabbath as a time to heal and his insistence that caring for others trumps ritual purity rules were similar to other contemporaneous Jewish teachers (pp. 151–55, 162–71). However, this begs the question as to why the Gospel writers *would* and how the Gospel writers *could* consistently caricature the Jewish opponents of Jesus as so one-sidedly obsessed with the unimportant minutiae of Jewish purity codes. The question of why is perhaps simpler: casting a heroic and compassionate Jesus in contrast to his mean-spirited and small-minded opponents makes for effective storytelling and rhetoric. In light of this, we must beware of allowing the Gospels' rhetoric to slide into anti-Semitism. The how is more complicated. If Thiessen is right, and Jesus held positions that were at least known and perhaps common among his Jewish contemporaries, then would not the Gospels' portrayal ring hollow to anyone familiar with these traditions? The literary-rhetorical punch is lost if the audience can discredit the caricature and recognize that Jesus is merely repeating positions held by other Jewish teachers.

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8   Such as wearing fringes on his cloak in Mark 6:56 (Rudolph, "Jesus and the Food Laws," 299).

The Gospels' portrayal of narrow-minded, purity-obsessed Jewish teachers probably worked well because it fit into a stereotype of Jews found across the Mediterranean world (a fact unmentioned by Thiessen). The most common trope in this vein was Jewish abstention from pork. While this fact of Jewish dietary practice could be noted neutrally in ethnographic description (Pliny, Strabo), many authors used it to satirize or denigrate Jews.[9] Epictetus (*Diatr.* 1.22.4) noted that different cultures, particularly Jews, had different views of whether eating swine was holy or unholy in order to highlight that concerns about such matters were petty in contrast to the more significant role of virtue.[10] One of Plutarch's dinner conversations turns to why the Jews avoid pork, noting that the Jews themselves can offer no good reason for this peculiarity (*Quae. conv.* 4.5). Circumcision was noted as an oddity of the Jews (Petronius, *Sat.* 102), and Plutarch calls Sabbath observance a foolish superstition (*Super.* 8). Juvenal combines all of these and others (Sabbath, sky worship, pork abstention, circumcision), attributing them to a "mystic scroll of Moses" that the Jews jealously keep to themselves and share with no outsiders (*Sat.* 14.100–106). This characterization of Jews as secretive and superstitious went as far as many Hellenistic-Roman authors describing the Jews as hostile to outsiders and generally misanthropic (Diodorus Siculus 40.3.4; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.309 and 2.258).[11] Thus, the Gospels' caricature of the Pharisees, scribes, and other Jewish leaders would have worked well with any audience moderately conversant with these stereotypes. Contrasting Jesus with these "legalistic" Jewish teachers would have been an effective rhetorical move. In a way, this could buttress Thiessen's argument, for even in this rhetorical context we still see Jesus paying some heed to Jewish purity guidelines. However, it seriously complicates the matter of discerning the attitude and practice of Jesus through the refracted accounts of the Gospels (see further below).[12]

Alongside this stereotyped perspective of Jews as legalistic and misanthropic, we find at least some Jewish movements increasing their observance of ritual purity practices as part of their response to being a subjugated people within the

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9   Jordan D. Rosenblum, *The Jewish Dietary Laws in the Ancient World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 30–31. See further examples cited by Rosenblum, 32–37.

10 Peter Schäfer, *Judeophobia: Attitudes toward the Jews in the Ancient World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), 70 (and more broadly 77–81).

11 For further examples and discussion see Louis H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 125–30. Such stereotypes may have informed other public reactions against Jews like the attack on the Jewish community in Alexandria in 38 CE and Claudius's expulsion of Jews from Rome.

12 Thiessen denies that this is a book about the historical Jesus, instead framing his work on how the Gospel authors portrayed Jesus (*Jesus*, xi). However, his consideration of historical context is limited to the time and place of the historical Jesus and rarely considers the time, place, and purpose of the Gospel authors. Thus, when speaking of the context of first-century Judaism, we must consider how this was known and understood by the Gospel authors as much as by Jesus himself.

Roman empire. Purity rules for most peoples of the Mediterranean basin focused on sanctuaries and other clearly sacral times and people (see the surveys by Thiessen on pp. 76–78, 100–104). However, some Jews of the Second Temple era exhibited "expansionist" tendencies with regard to purity rules and practices (a fact never noted by Thiessen). This is reflected in the extended application of handwashing from very specific circumstances (Exod 30:17–21; Lev 15:11; Deut 21:6) to always washing before any eating.[13] Purity regulations were required for the Jerusalem Temple and its functioning, but the same ritual purity was encouraged (at least by some groups) for regular Jews in a way not characteristic of Gentile cultures.[14] For example, Josephus notes that Egyptian priests were circumcised and abstained from pork (*Ag. Ap.* 2.141) as a way to defend the fact that *all* Jews avoid pork and *all* Jewish men are circumcised (*Ag. Ap.* 2.137). Purity around table and food practices became a key way in which Jews distinguished themselves from Gentiles in the Hellenistic era (e.g., 3 Macc 3:4; Let. Aris. 139–142).[15] Sawicki has described the burgeoning of domestic *miqvoth* (ritual baths) during the Hasmonean and following eras as a tool of symbolic resistance against Roman cultural and military occupation.[16] The Pharisees were a broadly popular reform group that sought to promote communal Jewish life through stricter adherence to the covenant laws, including purity laws.[17] This response also characterizes the Qumran sectarians, who distinguished themselves from their Jewish kin by more meticulous observance of the Law, especially its purity regulations.[18] In a context where many Jews were amplifying their adherence to covenantal purity regulations as a way to shore up threatened Jewish identity, Jesus's moderate (merely following the basic requirement for a "leper's" cleansing) and potentially disruptive (eating with "sinners") practices with regard to purity would have put

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13 Rudolph, "Jesus and Food Laws," 294.

14 Kazen, *Jesus and Purity*, 72–78; Roger P. Booth, *Jesus and the Laws of Purity: Tradition and Legal History in Mark 7*, JSNTSup 13 (Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1986), 200–202; and James D. G. Dunn, "Jesus and Purity: An Ongoing Debate," *NTS* 48 (2002): 449–67.

15 For a survey of this "othering" function of food rules in the Hellenistic era, see David M. Freidenreich, *Foreigners and Their Food: Constructing Otherness in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Law* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 31–46.

16 Marianne Sawicki, *Crossing Galilee: Architectures of Contact in the Occupied Land of Jesus* (London: Bloomsbury, 2000), 99–101.

17 Anthony J. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society: A Sociological Approach* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1988), 280–87; and Kathy Ehrensperger, "Der Pharisäer Paulus under dem nomos," in *Die Pharisäer: Geschichte und Bedeutung*, ed. Joseph Sievers, Amy-Jill Levine, and Jens Schröter (Freiburg: Herder, 2024), 146–67. On the increase of purity practices across the population of Judea (beyond a limited set of *havurim*), see Kazen, *Jesus and Purity*, 75 and 85–86.

18 Werrett says, "As the Qumran community evolved over time it appears to have become more and more stringent in its approach to ritual purity." See Ian Werrett, *Ritual Purity and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, STDJ 72 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 303. Klawans (*Sin and Impurity*, 90–91) also advocates for a diachronic approach to Qumran that reveals movement toward stricter ritual purity regulations over time.

him out of step with the trends of his religious compatriots and could have easily been construed as being on a different trajectory with regard to purity.[19]

The final issue concerning historical context is to attend to the fact that the Gospels are products of emerging Christianity, which as a whole presents a different perspective on purity than is found in contemporaneously developing early Judaism. While rabbinic Judaism differentiated ritual and moral purity, emerging Christianity linked the notions of uncleanness and sin, purity and righteousness.[20] Luke's understanding of the Law is complex, but it is often acknowledged as one of the most conservative views of the Law in the New Testament.[21] Yet, even Luke portrays God declaring animals and people "clean" by fiat (Acts 10:15, 28) and cleansing/forgiveness coming by means other than the Law (Acts 13:19, 15:8–9). The trajectory of Luke's narrative arc is mostly away from ritual purity observance and toward salvation through Christ.[22] While Jesus is portrayed as faithfully attending Jewish festivals in John's Gospel, none of the standard ritual purity concerns from Leviticus (food, childbirth, "leprosy," bodily discharges, or corpses) play any significant role (e.g., there is no mention of any impurity surrounding Lazarus's death). When ritual purity concerns appear in the Pauline corpus, it is usually either to reject or spiritualize them (e.g., Gal 5:2–6, Col 2:8–19; 1 Tim 4:1–5) or to find a delicate way to allow those with "weaker" convictions to maintain their purity practices within a community that does not require them as part of following Christ (Rom 14; 1 Cor 8).[23]

This brings us to the context and implications of the editorial parenthesis in Mark 7:19 that Jesus's previous statement effectively indicated that all foods were clean. Thiessen devotes an appendix to Mark 7 where he argues that even if Jesus contests the Pharisees' definition of ritual purity around handwashing, he still maintains ritual purity around food. He has to resort to describing Mark as mistakenly "exaggerating" the claim to all food laws beyond the specific issue of

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19 See also Kazen, *Jesus and Purity*, 197–98 and Klawans, *Sin and Impurity*, 149.

20 Jacob Neusner, *Purity in Rabbinic Judaism: A Systematic Account*, SFSHJ 95 (Atlanta, Scholars Press, 1994), 56–58. However, Neusner has also said that concepts of purity and uncleanness were employed in prophetic and wisdom writings as metaphors for ethics and sin (e.g., Prov 15:26 and 20:11; Isa 1:16; Jer 4:14). See Jacob Neusner, *The Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 24–25. Additionally, the Qumran communities appear to have strongly linked and overlapped ritual and moral purity: cleansing comes by repentance *and* ablution (1QS 3.6–9), and those who break the community's rules become impure (1QS 5.14). See J. M. Baumgarten, "The Purification Rituals of DJD 7," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Forty Years of Research*, ed. D. Dimant and U. Rappaport (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 199–209, here 208–209.

21 Jacob Jervell, *Luke and the People of God* (Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress, 1972), 136–47; and S. G. Wilson, *Luke and the Law*, SNTSMS 50 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 59–61.

22 Craig L. Bloomberg, "The Law in Luke-Acts," *JSNT* 22 (1984): 53–80, 69–71; and Sigurd Grindheim, "Luke, Paul, and the Law," *NovT* 56 (2014): 335–58.

23 Klawans (*Sin and Impurity*, 152–54) says that Paul was not concerned with ritual purity at all and only uses purity language in moral contexts.

handwashing in a way that makes him a "bumbling" narrator who must be corrected by Matthew and Luke.[24] He effectively dismisses Mark's statement as an anomaly, erasing his statement from the diversity of early Christianity. Thiessen goes on to say that Peter never eats non-kosher food.[25] However, this ignores the logic of Acts 10 where Gentiles are not unclean just as foods are not unclean (vv. 15, 28) and the implication that Peter probably ate unclean food during his stay in Cornelius's Gentile household (v. 48). Even more directly, Paul says that Peter, at least for some time, was eating (unclean food) with Gentiles (Gal 2:12). Rudolph offers another approach where the parenthesis in Mark 7:19 was applicable only to Gentile Christians, who were exempt from the Lev 11 dietary laws according to Acts 15, while Jewish Christians still kept them as part of their loyalty to Torah.[26] However, this too is not accurate. First, as just noted, Peter appears to have disregarded Jewish food laws, at least occasionally. Second, Acts 15:29 prohibits Gentile believers from eating food sacrificed to idols, meat still retaining blood, and meat from animals that have been strangled. While this is not a list of certain animals being identified as clean or unclean as in Lev 11, it still represents concerns about food purity regulations that echo Lev 3:17 and 17:10, regulations that are applied to Gentile Christians. Finally, Strahan has argued that the "parenthetical" statement should be more integrated into its literary and social context, where it would mean that "Jesus made all [kosher] foods clean."[27] This means that Jesus would be making the point to a Jewish audience that eating with unclean hands does not defile food. This reads the statement as if it occurs within the context of Mark 7:1–13 in Jesus's debate with the Pharisees. However, Mark notes a change of audience and context in both v. 14 and even more in v. 17, where Jesus enters his house and addresses only his disciples. With this focus on the disciples, Mark turns the words of Jesus to his primarily Gentile audience, who would not assume all the Jewish context that Strahan notes from the original historical setting. We also see a generalization of the topic from eating practices in vv. 1–13 to "everything from the outside" (vv. 15, 18), which mitigates against Strahan's more restricted meaning. What we see across the diversity of emerging early Christianity is a variety of still developing postures regarding the ongoing applicability of food purity norms. Given the fact that the editor's statement goes unqualified in Mark 7:19—He does not say that all foods were declared clean "for Gentiles"—it seems best to take this blanket statement at face value. This conclusion is

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24 Thiessen, *Jesus*, 194–95. Matthew most likely removed this statement as part of his appeal to Jewish Christians who still honored the Law, but again that stance need not be the only, or even central one, that defined early Christianity. It is one among many.

25 *Jesus*, 195.

26 Rudolph, "Jesus and the Food Laws," 305–308.

27 Joshua Strahan, "Did Jesus Nullify the Torah and Declare all Nonkosher Foods Clean? Toward a Better Reading of Mark 7:19b," *BBR* 33 (2023): 259–80, 274–80.

supported by the fact that this is applicable to "*all* foods," which are a subset of "*all* things outside" (v. 18).[28] The editor of Mark concludes (even if mistakenly) that Jesus's statements mean that all foods are now clean for all people, imputing this stance to Jesus himself.[29] This radical change regarding food and purity is part of the diversity of early Christianity, one that is supported by other similar statements about the acceptability of all foods (e.g., Rom 14:20 and Heb 13:9). Matthew has probably edited the tradition to make Jesus more appealing to a particular Jewish audience that still had high regard for the Law (15:17).[30] The historical Jesus was at a very early point where these trajectories had not yet diverged; however, the remembrances of the Gospels are written from a perspective where streams of the emerging Christian movement downplayed or even sought to eschew ritual purity observance in contrast to a more expansionist and intensive focus with regard to ritual purity in developing Judaism.

Exegetical Issues

Time and space do not allow for extensive engagement with every passage Thiessen exegetes, so it will have to suffice to highlight some key issues. We address more fully the case of Jesus healing the man with the impure skin affliction in Mark 1:40–45.[31] The reading of Jesus being "angry [ὀργίσθεις]" (rather than "moved with compassion [σπλαγχνισθείς]" is contested.[32] Even if it is authentic, Thiessen's reading fails to attend to the predominant theme of Mark 1. Thiessen claims that Jesus is angry because the man questions Jesus's *willingness* to cleanse/heal him ("If you choose, you can cleanse me" in v. 40).[33] However, if this is the case, and Matthew (8:3) and Luke (5:13) have edited out Jesus's emotion (they mention

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28   While it is true that "all πᾶς" can have somewhat circumscribed meanings (e.g., Mark 4:1, 6:30), the generalizing movement of Jesus's discourse in 7:14–23 pushes the language toward a broader rather than more limited sense.

29   As both Rudolph ("Jesus and Food Laws," 292–93) and Strahan ("Did Jesus Nullify," 261–63) note, this (traditional) reading is the position of most interpreters.

30   Dunn, "Jesus and Purity," 463 and much more extensively John Kampen, *Matthew within Sectarian Judaism*, ABRL (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019).

31   As noted by Thiessen (*Jesus*, 43–49) and many others, this man does not have "leprosy," known today as Hansen's disease. See Annette Weissenrieder, *Images of Illness in the Gospel of Luke*, WUNT 2.64 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 177–78, 222–25 and T. Omiya, "Leprosy," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, eds. Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), 517–18. Rather, it is probably a mild medical condition with serious purity dynamics. I lean in the direction of Pilch, who associates it with what we know as psoriasis. See John Pilch, "Biblical Leprosy and Body Symbolism," *BTB* 11 (1981): 108–113.

32   There is only one Greek manuscript that supports this reading, the late 4th/early 5th century Bezae text. The Latin witnesses may reflect a particular family of readings and not an original, so Peter E. Lorenz, "Counting Witnesses for the Angry Jesus in Mark 1:41: Interdependence and Insularity in the Latin Tradition," *TynBul* 26 (2016): 183–216.

33   This position is largely supported by F. Scott Spencer, "Why did the 'Leper' Get Under Jesus' Skin? Emotion Theory and Angry Reaction in Mark 1:40–45," *HBT* 36 (2014): 107–128, 118–24.

neither anger nor compassion), why would they retain the insulting question "If you so desire…"? Furthermore, this question does not imply a lack of willingness in Greek usage. The third class condition (ἐάν with the subjunctive) presents a situation that is "uncertain of fulfillment, but still likely."[34] Thus, the grammar of the man's question presumes the likelihood of Jesus's willingness. Would Jesus be enraged by the slightest hint of doubt from a man who has probably only heard of such a cleansing miracle among the prophets of old (Elisha and Naaman in 2 Kgs 5)? One searches in vain for a parallel where such a formulation is taken as an affront against someone's willingness (contrast the neutral-positive senses of this phrase in Dan 1:13; Sir 6:32, 15:15, 15:16; Plutarch, *Demetr.* 27.4; Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 14.84; et al.). Rather, Jesus's anger appears to be aroused by the public display (begging and bowing in v. 40) and the corresponding premonition that this man's healing will serve to amplify unwanted notoriety and prevent him from preaching in the other towns as he had intended (cf. 1:38).[35] This is the drumbeat of the previous three stories in Mark 1: Jesus's fame spreads through Galilee (1:28), the whole city clamors around Simon's house (1:33), everyone is looking for Jesus so he leaves (1:37–38).[36] Climactically, after this man disobeyed Jesus and spread the news of his cleansing, Jesus could not even enter a town because of the mobs that thronged around him (1:45). It is this anticipated frustration of his mission that probably prompts Jesus's anger.

This explanation of Jesus's anger incorporates the rest of the details of this passage as well. Spencer reads Jesus "sternly ordering [ἐμβριμησάμενος]" (v. 43) as a continuation of his anger at the man's skepticism (cf. Dan 11:30 and John 14:4–5).[37] However, a better parallel is Matthew 9:30 where Jesus also "orders"

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34 Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 696. The precise labelling and semantics of different grammatical constructions of conditional sentences has been the matter of some debate (See Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 701–712). Boyer argues for a much broader range (8 categories) of potentiality in the third class construction from "fulfillment certain" through "fulfillment doubtful" to "no indication of probability." See James L. Boyer, "Third (and Fourth) Class Conditions," *Grace Theological Journal* 3 (1982): 163–75, 169–70. This case falls into the slightly less common category of a "particular" condition dealing with a specific person and action rather than a more general or gnomic category. The range of possible meaning of the third class condition makes context important, and there are no indicators in the immediate or larger context of Mark (or the other Gospels) that persons are doubting the *willingness* of Jesus to do good. Rather, they tend to question his "authority" to do so (cf. Mark 1:27, 2:7).

35 This option is not considered by Thiessen (*Jesus*, 57), but it is suggested by Stephen Voorwinde, *Jesus's Emotions in the Gospels* (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 72–74. Spencer dismisses this reading as reasonable (of course someone just healed of a serious impurity/illness will shout it to the world) but as making Jesus too petty to be upset at such a normal response. He fails to note how the crowds interfere with Jesus's mission to proclaim his message in other towns—no minor matter. See F. Scott Spencer, *Passions of the Christ: The Emotional Life of Jesus in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021), 50.

36 See similar comments on this chain of pericopes and the similar command to silence in 7:36–37 in Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26*, WBC 34a (Waco, TX: Word, 1989), 76.

37 Spencer, *Passions*, 58–59.

two recently healed men to say nothing of the event, though they too disobey and spread the news widely (v. 31). The anger/emotion associated with the verb centers on the importance of obedience in light of some anticipation that it will not be obeyed. The rest of the passage continues to display Jesus trying to avoid the spotlight. While ἐκβάλλω (v. 43) commonly refers to casting out demons (e.g., 1:34, 39; Thiessen, 57), Mark also uses it for other forced departures with no anger or demons involved (1:12; 5:40). Jesus's command to go to the priest for an official declaration of cleansing does abide by some of Leviticus's guidelines, but it only seems to suggest one visit/sacrifice and nothing else.[38] Leviticus portrays a certification process of two different sacrifices separated by seven days during which the cleansed person is to twice wash their clothes, shave their hair, and bathe (Lev 14:1–32).[39] Jesus makes no mention of these stipulations, which is quite odd, if Jesus is in fact concerned about abiding by the Jewish scriptural purity regulations. Sending the man away combined with the command to "say nothing to anyone" and concluding with the instruction to go to the priest (v. 44) all serve the same end—to take attention off Jesus.[40] The man should go (far away!) to the Temple in Jerusalem and follow through on a typical cultural practice of marking his cleansing. Nothing to see here with Jesus. However, Jesus's anticipatory anger turns out to be justified, for the man appears to disobey Jesus at every point.[41] As Jesus dreaded, the public acclamation prevents him from carrying out his mission to preach in the other towns (1:38, 45).[42] Thus, Jesus's anger is aroused by the growing notoriety that ends up hindering his mission, his instructions to the man to go to the priests and offer sacrifices seem unconversant with the detailed process in Leviticus, and this may have been a tactic to simply remove the man from the scenario and further prevent his troublesome declaration.

After this more detailed engagement with this first passage considered by Thiessen, a few briefer comments on other passages will suffice. The next passage Thiessen considers is Jesus's healing of the woman with the 12-year flow of

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38 In an account of the cleansing of ten "lepers" in Luke 17:11–19, Jesus only tells them to "go show yourselves to the priests" with no mention of sacrifice or any of the other required rituals. This is the only other independent tradition where Jesus orders such reporting to the cultic establishment. Perhaps this implies local priests rather than priests and accompanying sacrifices in Jerusalem.

39 Schnabel also notes the demanding nature of the entire cleansing ritual, including a three-day trip to Jerusalem and an eight-day process to confirm the cleansing. See Eckhard Schnabel, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC 2 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2017), 63.

40 The command to "say nothing to anyone" is a strong double negative (μηδενί μηδὲν εἴπῃς).

41 In order to follow Jesus's command, the man would have had to travel to Jerusalem from Galilee to offer sacrifices and visit the priests in the Temple—not a simple journey. Thiessen (*Jesus*, 61) brushes this aside as disobedience prompted by "(perhaps justifiable) exuberance." The fact of the matter is that the narrative reports the man doing what Jesus tells him *not* to do but does *not* mention him doing what Jesus tells him to do.

42 However, Marcus thinks that this outcome is a good one since it promotes the spread of the gospel (cf. Mark 13:10). See Joel Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, AB 27 (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 210.

blood (Mark 5:25–34). The woman's condition is described primarily in terms of her medical state: she had seen doctors (v. 26, not priests); she is restored (σώζω in vv. 28, 34); she senses healing in her body (v. 29); and she is made well from her illness (v. 34).[43] Thiessen rightly notes connections to language in Lev 12 and 15, mostly around the language of blood (ῥύσις αἵματος in v. 25 cf. Lev 15:19 and πηγὴ τοῦ αἵματος v. 29 cf. Lev 12:7; to also repeated references to "touching" in both texts);[44] the woman's medical condition would have been understood to make her impure (pp. 83–84). Thus, while Mark's audience might have construed the woman's impurity, it is the healing of her body from the illness that is featured in the explicit narrative.[45] Thiessen downplays the woman's touching of Jesus (vv. 27–28), saying "To contract ritual impurity is not sin within Jewish thinking. The woman herself is neither guilty for being ritually impure nor guilty for touching a ritually pure person" (pp. 86–87). This overlooks the fact that a woman with such a flow of blood would impurify anything she touched (Lev 15:19) and that the Levitical purity system aims to stem the spread of impurities among God's holy people. While *unintentionally* touching others would perhaps be practically unavoidable, *intentionally* touching Jesus and therefore knowingly spreading her impurity to him would put her in violation of Lev 15:31 (cf. Lev 13:45–46, 18:19; Num 19:13, 20).[46] Such a premeditated violation of God's commands and pre-scriptions around purity would be a sinful act, and yet she proceeds with no indi-cation that she has contemplated this.[47] Thiessen briefly notes that Jesus does not instruct this woman to visit the priests and offer the appropriate sacrifices (Lev 15:28–30) as he does for the man with the skin disease (p. 93). He brushes this aside with the suggestion that Mark's audience would remember the instructions from 1:44 and assume that the woman would follow the Levitical guidelines, but these are unlikely assumptions. Luke feels the need to repeat the instructions for other "lepers" to visit the priests rather than allowing the audience to carry it over

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43 Loader notes that there is no explicit mention of legal or purity issues in this text. See William Loader, *Jesus' Attitude towards the Law: A Study of the Gospels*, WUNT 2.97 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 60.

44 Recognized also by Kazen, *Jesus and Purity*, 133–34.

45 So also Brigitte Kahl, "Jairus und die verlorenen Töchter Israels. Sozioliterarische Überlegungen zum Problem der Grenzüberschreitung in Mk 5, 21–43," in *Von der Wurzel getragen: Christliche-feministische Exegese in Auseinandersetzung mit Antijudaismus*, ed. L. Schottroff and M.-T. Wacker, BibInt 17 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 61–78, here 66 and Amy-Jill Levine, "Discharging Responsibility: Matthean Jesus, Biblical Law, and Hemorrhaging Woman," in *Feminist Companion to Matthew*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine and Marianne Blickenstaff (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2004), 70–87, here 75.

46 See the similar comment in Loader, *Jesus' Attitude*, 61.

47 Conjecturing about her reasoning around potentially defiling Jesus is called "too speculative" by Kazen (*Jesus and Purity*, 135). Thiessen (*Jesus*, 91) briefly imagines that she might have contem-plated the risk of transferring impurity to Jesus, following a lead from Marcus (*Mark 1–8*, 366). However, no such line of thought is reported in her internal monologue in Mark 5 or its parallels. Recall the discussion above about the sinfulness of deliberate violation of ritual laws (cf. Ps 89:31–32, 1QS 8:15–17; m. Hor. 2:6).

(Luke 5:14 and 17:14), and Mark must explain Jewish language and customs to an audience that seems unfamiliar with them (Mark 5:41 and 7:3–4).[48] The medical emphasis in the description of this woman's plight, the brushing aside of the sinful nature of impurity transfer through touch, and the absence of any reference to the cleansing sacrifices of Leviticus portrays Mark's Jesus as indifferent to the purity dynamics in this encounter.[49]

Surrounding this story is the account of the raising of the daughter of Jairus (Mark 5:21–24 and 35–43) and the topic of corpse impurity. A key point in this story is how seriously to take Jesus's statement that the girl is not dead but sleeping (v. 39).[50] The mourners mock Jesus for this, but he does not back away from his statement. It is critical that the girl is actually dead to incur corpse impurity, but Thiessen never engages this question. As with the woman with the flow of blood, no mention of ritual impurity is made in the story.[51] Jesus does not instruct the family to undertake the ritual prescriptions for the corpse impurity that they would have contracted if the girl was truly dead.[52] If Jesus's raising of the girl would somehow eradicate any preceding ritual corpse impurity, then Jesus's cleansing of the man with the skin disease would have done the same, making a visit to the priests superfluous.

Finally, Thiessen treats the topic of healing and the Sabbath, noting that his argument regarding Jesus's stance on ritual impurity has larger implications for Jesus's view of the entire Jewish law. Thiessen is right to situate Jesus's claims within Jewish debates about what constitutes work on the Sabbath, showing that Jesus's aim to preserve life on the Sabbath was held by other Jewish teachers (pp. 153–55). However, in his analysis of Mark 2:23–28, Thiessen claims that Mark has botched the presentation of Jesus's legal argument. He has to end up asserting both that Mark (accidentally? ignorantly?) weakens Jesus's argument (p. 156) and that Mark's audience knows enough about Jewish practice to reconstruct the argument (p. 159). Thiessen also repeatedly refers to Jesus's response as "legal" in nature. However, he fails to note that Jesus's argument looks very different from debates about the Sabbath found either at Qumran or in rabbinic sources. Qumran

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48 There are longstanding debates about the makeup and location of a possible Markan community (and even if it is correct to speak of a Markan community). For a survey see Adela Yarboro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 96–102. Marcus's (*Mark 1–8*, 33–36) description of a mostly Gentile community in the region of Syria is adopted here. Such persons would have had some contact and awareness of Jewish faith and practice but still required the kind of explanations we see in Mark.

49 This is the conclusion also reached by Kazen, *Jesus and Purity*, 161–64.

50 Loader (*Jesus and the Law*, 61) entertains the notion that the girl is merely sleeping and not dead.

51 Beavis argues that ritual impurity is not an issue in either story (while citing others who do see ritual impurity here). See Mary Ann Beavis, *Mark*, Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 97–98.

52 This is despite the fact that the impurity issues associated with a corpse would have been natural in a first century Jewish context (Kazen, *Jesus and Purity*, 173–74).

documents contain a detailed delineation of activities to be avoided on the Sabbath (CD 10.14–11.20). Similarly, in rabbinic literature we see careful specification of what sacrifices atone for Sabbath violation (m. Šabb. 7.1), precise identifications of what work incurs guilt on a Sabbath (m. Šabb. 12.1, 17.5), and which other commands in the law override Sabbath commands (m. Pesaḥ. 6.2).[53] Jesus, in defense of his actions, recalls a (slightly incorrect) story, drawing on narrative rather than legal material (Mark 2:25–26). Then, he closes with two maxims (vv. 27–28).[54] Jesus's conclusion is not an official declaration of concrete rules of behavior derived from covenant law (that is, halakha) but a theological declaration about the nature and origins of the Sabbath and his own identity (more haggadic in nature).[55] This is not typical legal deliberation. Jesus is not citing the Law and extrapolating permitted behavior. Rather, he quotes stories and maxims to change the conception of the Sabbath—moves that fit better in a wisdom frame rather than a legal or purity frame.

Conclusion and Reframing

Thiessen's laser focus on a distinct domain of ritual purity set primarily in the context of emerging Judaism leads to some problematic exegetical conclusions. It has been argued above that ritual and moral purity overlap more than Thiessen allows, that death is an insufficient principle for fully understanding Jewish purity codes, that a significant number of Jews were on an expansionistic trend with regard to purity in contrast to other Mediterranean cultures, and that any analysis of purity in the Gospels should consider emerging Christian views of purity that probably took advantage of stereotypes about Jews and moved away from ritual purity toward moral purity. Finally, Thiessen argues a dichotomized thesis: against those who claim that Jesus rejected purity systems entirely, he presents an argument that Jesus embraced them fully but as one sent by God to destroy all impurity and its harmful effects (pp. 2–5, 177–84).

I suggest three ways to reframe the issue in order to formulate a better way to approach it: considering purity as a cultural framework, removing the dichotomization, and Jesus's principled relativization of purity concerns. First, given the fact that we see a diverse array of trajectories, ideologies, and practices around ritual and moral impurity in first century Jewish culture and religion in its

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53 On the development of these kinds of regulations about the Sabbath by the Pharisees, see Asher Finkel, *The Pharisees and the Teacher of Nazareth*, AGJU 4 (Leiden: Brill, 1964), 75–78.

54 Even Thiessen recognizes these as maxims (*Jesus*, 158).

55 On this distinction of halakha (broadly, rules of behavior) and haggadah (broadly, theological/ paranetic reflection), see John C. Reeves, "Scriptural Authority in Early Judaism," 63–84 in *Living Traditions of the Bible: Scripture in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Practice*, ed. James E. Bowley (St. Louis: Chalice, 1999), 80–82; and Jacob Neusner, *Rabbinic Literature: An Essential Guide* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 121–27.

Mediterranean context, ritual purity should be viewed as one domain within the larger cultural framework of purity in general. Cognitive linguists and others have drawn attention to how broad cultural frameworks (called image schemas, idealized cognitive models, or rhetorolects) serve as organizing frames for actions, thoughts, images, and rhetoric.[56] Embodied actions, rituals, and performances are part and parcel of such frameworks as well.[57] In particular, sociorhetorical interpretation considers ritual and moral purity (alongside other related concepts like sacred space, priest, and sacrifice) as part of the priestly rhetorolect.[58] While careful delineation and distinguishing can play a role in some investigations, the preceding analysis displays that the domains of ritual and moral impurity were more fluid and interactive than allowed for by Thiessen and that they tended to be linked into a range of concerns about sacred time, space, persons, and actions. Analyzing ritual purity concerns from a priestly cultural frame would provide broader context for the diverse handling of the subject we see within the Gospels, within first century Jewish faith, and within the broader Mediterranean.

Next, rather than a dichotomy, the Gospels portray Jesus at times affirming, at times modifying, and at times ignoring purity concerns.[59] Wholesale rejections of purity as defined by Jewish religious law are not found, though the parenthetical statement in Mark 7:19 leans in this direction.[60] Luke's portrayal of the parents of Jesus offering sacrifices for Mariam's maternal cleansing (Luke 2:22–24) and Jesus's command that the man with the skin disease (Mark 1:40–45) follow through on (some of) the Levitical purification rituals are affirmations of the

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56 On "frames," Seana Coulson, *Semantic Leaps: Frame-Shifting and Conceptual Blending in Meaning Construction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 17–20. On "idealized cognitive models," George Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 61–68. On "input spaces," see Giles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 40, 102; and Vyvyan Evans and Melanie Green, *Cognitive Linguistics: An Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 363–97. On "rhetorolects" and their role in interpreting Jewish and Christian Scripture, see Vernon K. Robbins, *The Invention of Christian Discourse: Volume 1*, Rhetoric of Religious Antiquity Series 1 (Blandford Forum: Deo Publishing, 2009), 9–11, 60–71.

57 Eve Sweetser, "Blended Spaces and Performativity," *Cognitive Linguistics* 11 (2000): 305–333; and Piotr Winkielman, Paula Niedenthal, Joseph Wielgosz, Jiska Eelen, and Liam C. Kavanagh, "Embodiment of Cognition and Emotion," in *APA Handbook of Personality and Social Psychology,* vol. 1 of *Attitudes and Social Cognition* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2015), 151–75.

58 See Vernon K. Robbins, "Conceptual Blending and Early Christian Imagination," in *Explaining Christian Origins and Early Judaism: Contributions from Cognitive and Social Science*, ed. Petri Luomanen, Ilkka Pyysiäinen, and Risto Uro, Biblical Interpretation Series 89 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 161–95; and Vernon K. Robbins, "Priestly Discourse in Luke and Acts," in *Jesus and Mary Reimagined in Early Christian Literature*, ed. Vernon K. Robbins and Jonathan M. Potter, WGRWSup 6 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 13–40.

59 Klawans (*Purity and Sin*, 144) says, "The nature of Jesus's relationship to Jewish law is a hotly debated issue, since the Gospels leave us with a varied picture."

60 Booth (*Jesus and the Laws*, 69, 99–102) also speaks of the "relative" (not "absolute") denial of external purity in Mark 7:14–15.

purity system of the Jewish faith. The discussion in Mark 7:1–13 is a substantive modification of prevailing purity norms. The Pharisees believed that their practices were better and fuller observances of God's commands regarding ritual purity, but Jesus disagrees. Jesus's healing on the Sabbath operates in a similar way. His approach may have fallen within a range of Jewish views, but the Gospels portray his stance as rejected by contemporaneous (stereotyped) Jewish leaders. In both cases, Jesus disagrees and offers a different set of practices and views around purity. Perhaps most frequently, we find no mention of purity concerns.[61] In a high context society like the ancient Mediterranean, an audience could fill in the purity issues around both the woman with the bleeding and the dead girl of Mark 5:21–39. However, the text barely alludes to these purity issues and focuses our attention elsewhere. The great epitomes of Jesus's teaching in Matt 5–7 and Luke 6 do not mention any of the classic issues of ritual purity/impurity in a Jewish context (e.g., death, eating food, ablutions, etc.). In these examples (and many others), such purity issues go unmentioned or are ignored. Multiple streams of tradition have Jesus associating with (and even touching) "lepers," who were regarded as carrying one of worst forms of impurity in Jewish society (Mark 1:40–45; Luke 17:11–19; Mark 14:3; Matt 26:6).[62] Finally, we find a range of stances across the Synoptic Gospels. The differing versions of the controversy over the washing of hands in Mark 7:1–13, Matt 15:1–14, and Luke 11:37–41 illustrate this. Mark emphasizes Jesus's break with the "traditional" (again stereotyped) Pharisaic purity practices (e.g., 7:9).[63] Matthew emphasizes that the Pharisees are *transgressing* God's Law by their practice (e.g., 15:3, 6).[64] Luke leaves out any mention of the law or tradition and adduces the moral principles of generosity and internal purity (11:41).[65] All of these factors urge us to take a nuanced approach to Jesus's and emerging Christianity's approach to and views about ritual purity.

Finally, if there is a consistent approach to be found in the range of the canonical Gospels' portrayal of Jesus's responses to ritual purity, it would be that Jesus typically relativizes ritual purity in light of other principles and commitments,

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61 Along this same line, Broadhead says, "In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus appears indifferent to the cultic piety of Israel." See Edwin Keith Broadhead, "Mk 1,44: The Witness of the Leper," *ZNW* 83 (1992): 257–65, here 263.

62 Kazen, *Jesus and Impurity*, 117–18.

63 Studies on Mark 7 have concluded that the crux of the issue is not food but the communication of impurity through eating with impure *hands*. See Kazen*, Jesus and Purity*, 22–23; Booth, *Jesus and the Laws*, 62–67; and Jesper Svartvik, *Mark and Mission: Mk 7:1–23 in its Narrative and Historical Contexts*, ConBNT 32 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2000), 370–75.

64 On Matthew's tendency to redact Mark in a "Judaizing" manner, see Anne M. O'Leary, *Matthew's Judaization of Mark: Examined in the Context of the Use of Sources in Graeco-Roman Antiquity*, LNTS (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 136–51, 169–70.

65 On Luke's notion of almsgiving as generating moral cleansing in the context of similar Jewish views, see Timothy W. Reardon, "Cleansing through Almsgiving in Luke-Acts: Purity, Cornelius, and the Translation of Acts 15:9," *CBQ* 78 (2016): 463–82.

especially in contrast to the emerging intensification of such practices among various Jewish groups in first century Judea. As noted above, in Mark 7:14–15 and Luke 11:42, Jesus relativizes the importance of external handwashing in light of the critical nature of moral purity.[66] Jesus eschews concerns about ritual (and moral) impurity in his quest to reach "sinners" who are "lost" (Matthew 9:11–13; Luke 15:1–2). Jesus relativizes the real and good response of fasting in light of the fact of his apocalyptic presence as the bridegroom (Mark 2:14–20; Luke 5:29–33). Jesus's position on the Sabbath is driven by a principle to promote any degree of life and wholeness (not just in life or death scenarios). We see him arguing this in Matt 12:9–14 where it seems that any good, no matter how small, that one can do on the Sabbath is permissible, because it is good. Internal purity has the ability to produce external purity (Luke 11:41), and internal impurity spills over to broader impurity (Mark 7:20–21). The principle of mercy trumps all other commands in the Law, including commands regarding ritual purity (Matt 12:7). Luke 11:42 summarizes this position well: It is not that one should stop tithing mint, rue, and other herbs as commanded in the Law; it is that justice and the love of God are much more important than these minor commands. Recall that Jesus is making these kinds of arguments that downplay and deprioritize ritual purity during the development of Jewish teaching that exhibits expansionist tendencies with regard to ritual purity that come to be encoded in the Mishnah. Thus, Jesus does not wholly reject ritual purity in particular or broader purity concerns, but we see a consistent deprioritizing of ritual purity and related commands beneath key characteristics of moral purity (e.g., love, mercy, and justice). Such a position fits well with the trajectories expressed across other documents of early Christianity discussed above but stands in contrast to the trajectories seen in the Mishnah where ritual and moral purity are both maintained as distinct and important domains.

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66 Booth, *Jesus and the Laws*, 219; and Klawans, *Sin and Impurity*, 149

Divine Joy—a Response to Classical Theism, with Help from Thomas Aquinas

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Abstract

Classical theism presents well-known difficulties with regard to understanding God's redemptive actions as genuinely responsive to created beings. This paper discusses Thomas Aquinas's treatment of divine joy as a way to reconsider classical theism's account of divine impassibility. The difficulty addressed is whether human beings can be truly said to "give" anything to God. The short answer typically is a firm "no." While there are good metaphysical and theological reasons for classical theism's notions of divine immutability, simplicity, and perfection, we can and should nuance this answer with his treatment of divine joy.

We generally speak of what *can* be given to God in terms of the devotional act of giving oneself—i.e., giving ourselves to God by becoming more like him. While clearly such does please God, we might wonder what such a narrative misses in terms of the proper notion of "gift." When a child presents their parent with a drawing, created from crayons and paper provided by the parent, is that not giving the parent something they would not have otherwise? This paper examines the classical theistic account of joy in God, i.e., paradigmatically as treated by Aquinas, as a context in which we can speak of what might seem impossible: a genuine sense of receptivity in God. First, we consider divine receptivity in the context of intra-trinitarian relations, which is controversial in itself. We go on, however, to consider how even created beings can be meaningfully said to give to God—by bringing God joy.

Part one: Welcome to the Porch

The edifice that is classical theism has been built upon magisterial foundation stones telling us who God is and what God is like: God is eternal, perfect, simple,

immutable, transcendent, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, and, perhaps above all, *good*—the creator, preserver, and governor of the world.[1] This is a good, strong building, and has reliably housed the Church historical, as "the view of the world common to all orthodox Christian thinkers until modern times."[2] The fundamental, distinctive quality of the household is that *everything* is from God—everything comes from him, belongs to him, and is an abundant, generous manifestation of his goodness. The Apostle Paul's doxology in Romans concludes: "For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen" (Romans 11:36, NIV).[3]

There are, however, rules in classical theism. One of the main ones is that such a God must be impassible: "unable to be affected by things other than himself."[4] There are *no* passions in God, nor passive potencies. Stated another way, God's perfection entails that nothing can be added to him—creatures *give* nothing to God. Finally, any notion of "relation" with God exists *only* on the side of the creature—such relations do not actually exist from God's side. On these points,

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1   See, for example, Brian Leftow, "Classical theism" in "God, concepts of" in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward Craig, 98–102 (London: Routledge, 1998). The classic, historical articulation in the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, Question 4 states: "What is God? God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." (Reference to "Shorter Catechism," The Orthodox Presbyterian Church, https://opc.org/sc.html.) *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, engaging the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, affirms: "God is the fullness of Being and of every perfection, without origin and without end. All creatures receive all that they are and have from him; but he alone *is* his very being, and he is of himself everything that he is.… In all his works God displays not only his kindness, goodness, grace and steadfast love, but also his trustworthiness, constancy, faithfulness and truth" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church,* Popular and definitive ed., English trans. of the Latin text *Libreria Editrice Vaticana* by Geoffrey Chapman [1999; Ottawa, ON: Concacan, 2000], Part One, Section Two, Chapter One, Article 1, sections 2 and 3, 213–214). United Methodist systematic theologian Thomas C. Oden, in his treatment of "what is most commonly stated in the central Christian tradition concerning God," starts his examination of the nature of God by observing: "Christian Scriptures and tradition view God as independent of all else that exists, that is, as: uncreated, underived, necessary, one, simple, infinite, immeasurable, eternal, self-sufficient, necessary being, the life of all that lives" (Thomas C. Oden, *Classic Christianity: A Systematic Theology* [New York: HarperCollins, 2009], 39).

2   "Theism," in *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church,* ed. F.L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1608.

3   All NIV references from the 2011 edition.

4   Leftow, "Classical theism," *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* 98. Dustin Burlet provides a detailed examination of the traditional treatment of divine impassibility—i.e, that God is not and cannot be affected by things other than himself—with regard to God's nature, will, knowledge, and feelings (Dustin G. Burlet, "Impassible Yet Impassioned: The Doctrine of Divine Impassibility in Conversation with the Noachian Deluge of Genesis," *Didaskalia*, vol. 28 [2017–2018]: 96–128, at 98–99). See the theological, philosophical, and historical examination of the doctrine in *Confessing the Impassible God: the Biblical, Classical, & Confessional Doctrine of Divine Impassibility*, ed. Ronald S. Baines, Richard C. Barcellos, James P. Butler, Stefan T. Lindblad, James P. Renihan (Palmdale, CA: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2015). For representations of four framings/versions of divine impassibility—i.e., strong impassibility (James E. Dolezal), qualified impassibility (Daniel Castelo), qualified passibility (John C. Peckham), and strong passibility (Thomas J. Oord), see *Divine impassibility: Four Views of God's Emotions and Suffering*, ed. Robert J. Matz and A. Chadwick Thornhill (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019).

the theistic household rules are strict, as Thomas Aquinas's unambiguous doctrines make clear.[5] In classical theism, God is perfect, immutable, impassible, and not to be spoken of as "in relation to" anything.

For some modern occupants of the theistic household, this narrative—even as it affirms the profound generosity of the divine—is nevertheless a source of some discomfort. It would appear to give but a thin account of the status of the human individual as meaningfully engaging with God. Some have difficulty recognizing in this account the interpersonal *relatedness* they see in the biblical account of God as Father and we as his adopted children.[6]

This perspective is, it should be said, not the same as turning away from or outright rejecting a Christian biblical account of the world. Those who distance themselves specifically from classical theism's portrayal of divine transcendence, and its entailments, may still nurture a love for God and seek to embrace a biblically faithful gospel theology. Dutch philosopher Rudi te Velde observes that in the modern religious mindset, there is commonly to be found an expectation of real relatedness: "The personal God of religion is a God with whom we can have a personal relationship, a God in whom we can trust, who is supposed to care for us and to listen to our prayers, etc."[7] As loving children of God, some may even feel they would like to be able to *give* something to God in a meaningful sense,

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5   E.g., Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* 1.16 (re: passive potencies); 1.28 (re: God's perfection/no defect/lack); 1.89 (re: passions); 2.12 (re: relations not real in God); 3.18 (re: that nothing can be added to God); *Summa theologiae* 1.3.4 ad 1 (re: that nothing can be added to God); 1–2.23.2 corp. (re: passions in general); *Compendium theologiae* 1.9 (re: passive potencies).

6   See, for example, Brian Leftow's engagement with this difficulty in "God's Impassibility, Immutability, and Eternality," in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas,* ed. Brian Davies and Eleanor Stump, 173–186 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), esp. at 173–174. See also the Gospel Coalition book review by Matthew Y. Emerson of James E. Dolezal, *All that is in God: Evangelical Theology and the Challenge of Classical Christian Theism,* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2017), in *Themelios* 43.1 (Gospel Coalition, April 2018), https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/themelios/review/all-that-is-in-god-evangelical-theology-challenge-of-classical-theism/

      However, not all those who hold to the doctrine of divine impassibility understand it as indeed entailing divine unrelatedness. See Amos Winarto, "The Impassible God Who Cried," Themelios 41.2 (Gospel Coalition, August 2016), https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/themelios/article/the-impassible-god-who-criedFor a detailed engagement with the doctrine of divine impassibility ranging from early church fathers through modern evangelical thought see Rob Lister, *God is impassible and impassioned: toward a theology of divine emotion* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), and also the Gospel Coalition's careful analysis and review by John B. Song in *Themelios* 38.33 (Gospel Coalition, November 2013), https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/themelios/review/god-is-impassible-and-impassioned-toward-a-theology-of-divine-emotion/.

7   Rudi A. te Velde, "The Divine Person(s): Trinity, Person, and Analogous Naming," in *The Oxford Handbook of The Trinity,* ed. Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 359–370, at 359. See also: Te Velde, *Aquinas on God: The 'Divine Science' of the Summa Theologiae, Ashgate Studies* in the *History of Philosophical Theology,* series ed. Martin Stone, et al. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 1–3.

out of gratitude and love, even while acknowledging that all that is originates from and belongs to him already.[8]

As understandable as such an intuition may be, however, there is a risk. For those who intend to distance themselves from the theistic account of God but not from God himself, the effect may be the same. The problem with such a view, te Velde warns, is that in it "God is in danger of becoming 'too human,' a person whose intentions and actions are in principle understandable by us.[9] The consequence would be a fundamental loss of mystery, of the otherness of God."[10] The rejection of transcendence for the sake of gaining God as personally related to us risks loss of God as God.[11]

What, then, is to be done? Is a modern sense of relatedness with God fundamentally flawed? Must Christians choose between a desire for personal, mutual, relatedness with God and the theological stability provided through classical theism's transcendent account of God?

Te Velde, in his examination of what it means to say that God is "personal," observes that Thomas Aquinas's use of *analogy* allows us to speak meaningfully about relatedness in God—including the intimate connection with individual creatures established by the act of creation—without the risks of overly anthropomorphizing God.[12] He reminds us that, for Thomas, *all* human language naming

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8   Giving to God *is* spoken of, even in classical theism, in terms of giving oneself to God through obedience. See, for example, Aquinas's treatment of devotion as the giving of oneself to the service of God (Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 2–2.82.1 corp.). As beautiful as the devotional giving of oneself to God is, and as important as it is to spiritual formation, for some it seems to fall short of what we actually mean by giving someone a *gift*.

9   Thomas is, of course, very clear that the Incarnation itself is supremely fitting of God, as the second Person of the Trinity. See, for example, Aquinas *Summa theologiae* III.1 s.c and corp. Note that in this text, Aquinas's ground for fittingness lies precisely in that the nature of divine goodness entails a desire to communicate oneself, to make oneself known. I take te Velde's caution here as reminding us that any human attempt to engage or know God (even with regard to Christ in the Incarnation) is an exercise of faith and an engagement with mystery. To approach God otherwise is to misunderstand the very nature of God.

10 Te Velde, "The Divine Person(s)," 359–360.

11 Augustine famously asserts: "We are speaking of God; what marvel, if you do not comprehend? For if you comprehend, He is not God." *Sermons on the New Testament* 67.5; trans. R.G. MacMullen, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series* vol. 6, ed. Philip Schaff (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1888); revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/160367.htm; accessed 9/14/24.

    It should be noted, however, that classical theism's commitment to divine transcendence is not a commitment to transcendence for its own sake, but rather as an entailment of an understanding of God as pure act (e.g., Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 1.3 corp.). That is, if change is the movement from potency to act (e.g., Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* 1.13.9), and there is no potency in God (God is pure act), then God does not change. Thus, predications that entail change, or passion, are not properly to be made of God—i.e., God is transcendent.

12 Te Velde, "The Divine Person(s)," 361–362; 368–369.

God is analogical.[13] But, we should add, this is not a hindrance, or a dead end, for human discourse and knowledge about God—rather, it is the entryway that makes such discourse and knowledge possible, and arises from the genuine analogy of being we share with God. Because God contains within himself the perfections of all his creations but is profoundly distinct from them as the radical cause of all that is, both univocity and equivocation alike are to be excluded from our understanding of how human language addresses God and indeed from our understanding of how the very being of humanity images God. The truth of the matter is to be found in the mean between them. God is not entirely like us, yet not entirely unlike either—God is "the same in a different way."[14] Thus, the Thomistic notion of analogy humbles us with regard to how much we can claim to say about God, but it also gives us warrant to explore areas of thought about God with a cautious amount of confidence and even freedom.[15]

The limited freedom that analogy provides us is perhaps a bit like a back porch on our household of classical theism.[16] The back porch is still part of the house, and house rules still apply, but one is allowed more informality there in how one does things. There is perhaps even some gray area of what is and is not allowed—sometimes we are specifically sent out onto the porch to do things that are unfitting inside the house. It may be that on the back porch of classical theism's house we might be able to consider an *analogous* sense of meaningful interrelatedness

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13   Te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 115–118. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 1.4.3 corp; 1.13.3 corp; 5 corp. Ref: Latin text based on the Leonine Edition, 1888–1906; English trans. Laurence Shapcote of the English Dominican Province, https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~ST. This claim is made in reference to *literal* human language naming God. We do speak metaphorically about God, as do Scriptures, and Thomas affirms the importance of doing so. See, for example, Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 1.1.10. See also the discussion in *Canadian-American Theological Review* 12, 2 (2023)—the issue presents an extended engagement with classical theism, including the theme of analogical language about God.

14   Te Velde, "The Divine Person(s)," 362.

15   See Ian Paul's entry "Metaphor" in the *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, et al. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 507–510. Paul examines the theological significance of metaphor in scripture, using Paul Ricoeur's philosophy of language and interpretation. Ricoeur identifies a "paradox" element at work in all metaphor—that something both is and is not like something else—and that such a device makes meaningful articulations about the thing possible that could not be expressed in literal propositional form (508). Ricoeur's treatment also, however, cautions us to remember that metaphor, insofar as it selects some aspects for comparison and leaves others out, is fundamentally an act of interpretation (509). It is in this way that metaphor both enables us to think and speak truths about the divine that we might otherwise not be able to articulate with the language of precision, and at the same time calls for the intellectual humility so appropriate to any hermeneutical endeavor.

16   It should be remembered that, in Thomas, the limited correlation between things predicated analogously of creature and of Creator points to realities that are more proper to God than they are to us, not less. Thus, while in this project we are seeking a meaningful way in which to speak of relational properties such as "delight" with regard to God, the reality of "divine delight" is not less than it is in humans, but immeasurably more so. See: Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 1.13 corp. In this way, we can understand Aquinas's mode of analogy as ultimately providing a positive sense of who God is and what God is like, serving as a helpful counterpoint to criticisms of classical theism as "overly apophatic."

between God and humanity. We will consider the ways in which we can think of something like receptivity in God, such that his children can be said to be able to give him gifts. Of course, that may turn out to be too far, and we may be sent off the porch to go wash off our feet with the hose before we come back in the house. We will see.

Our porch discourse on the possibility of relatedness and receptivity in God will take its shape from Thomas's own treatment of something that might not seem that it can be said of God: the experience of the passions of delight and joy.

Part two: Delight and Joy in God

Despite the uncompromising claim throughout orthodox Christianity that there are *no* passions in God, it is equally undeniable that God does experience both joy and delight. We see ample evidence of this both in scripture, and in the magisterium. What this *means*, however, is less obvious. Augustine, in *De civitatae Dei*, defines joy as "love possessing and enjoying what it loves."[17] In his well-known treatment of things that are to be enjoyed, distinguished from things that are to be used, Augustine defines enjoyment as clinging to something with love for its own sake.[18] Augustine goes on to identify God as the only thing we should hold as a true object of enjoyment (i.e., loved for itself alone), and all other things loved for the sake of something else—namely, God. Thomas applies these principles also to God's love of his own self and of his creation.[19] For some twelfth-century theologians, the knotty question with regard to Augustine's definitions was whether they suggest an unseemly positing of God as an object of human desire, i.e., as something which one hopes to possess and gain from.[20] Hugh of Saint-Victor can be seen as having little patience for such worries about casting love as desire for the beloved, even with regard to the divine, asserting: "Those who say these things do not understand the character of love."[21] This view could perhaps be taken as an antecedent of our modern Christian's intuition that God indeed enjoys his creation—i.e., loves it on its own terms, and not merely as a mirror by which he is actually loving himself. Such claims do appear to be at odds with the principles of classical theism. This is, however, the heart of our inquiry, so we will continue and see if there is room for

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17 Augustine, *De civitatae Dei*, 14.7.
18 Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, 1.3–1.4.
19 Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 1.19.2 corp.
20 Michael S. Sherwin, "Aquinas, Augustine, and the Medieval Scholastic Crisis concerning Charity," in *Aquinas the Augustinian*, ed. Michael Dauphinais, Barry David, and Matthew Levering (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 185–195.
21 Hugh of Saint-Victor, *De sacramentis PL* 176: 534. Location reference from Sherwin, "Aquinas, Augustine, and the Medieval Scholastic Crisis Concerning Charity," 188; note also Sherwin's bibliographic reference to Robert Wielockx, "La discussion scolastique sur l'amour d'Anselme de Laon à Pierre Lombard d'après les imprimés et les inédits" (PhD diss., Catholic University of Louvain, 1981), 194–195.

such a concern in classical theism, looking for help in Thomas's language about delight and joy, and how they are experienced in God.

Thomas in general identifies the difference between delight and joy as one of aspect. In his *Summa contra gentiles,* he identifies both as "as kind of repose of the will in the object of willing," though he goes on to assert that delight (in the proper sense) is caused by a good that is conjoined, whereas joy *can* be caused by goods that are not, i.e., by other things.[22] One delights in things that are completely intimate within and present to oneself—things that one is *naturally* connected to. One can find joy in things that are exterior to oneself—things that require one to extend themselves rationally to in order to connect with.[23]

Thomas affirms that delight and joy are indeed passions (with reference to Augustine).[24] How, then, are they present in God? In the *Summa contra gentiles* account Thomas differentiates between operations of the sensitive appetite and the intellective appetite (the will).[25] He asserts that, as present in the divine, joy and delight are operations of the *will*, and thus are not passions, an explanation he reaffirms later in the *Summa theologiae*:

> Therefore acts of the sensitive appetite, inasmuch as they have annexed to them some bodily change, are called passions; whereas acts of the will are not so called. Love, therefore, and joy and delight are passions; in so far as they denote acts of the intellective appetite, they are not passions. It is in this latter sense that they are in God.[26]

Thus, in both accounts, Thomas concludes that delight and joy are not incompatible with divine perfection. This doctrine of Thomas's is an important foundation

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22 Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* 1.90 at "Item": "*Gaudium et delectato est quaedam quietatio voluntatis in suo volito*;" and at "Est igitur." Ref.: *Summa contra gentiles*; Latin text based on the 1961 Marietti edition: *Liber de veritate catholicae Fidei contra errores infidelium seu Summa contra gentiles*, textus Leoninus diligenter recognitus, cura et studio P. Marc, coadiuv. C. Pera et P. Caramello (Marietti, Taurini-Romae, 1961); the 1961 Marietti edition is a reproduction of the text of the earlier Leonine editions of 1918, 1926, and 1930, with some small corrections; English trans. of *Book 1* by Anton C. Pegis; ed. Joseph Kenny (New York: Hanover House, 1955–1977), https://isidore.co/aquinas/ContraGentiles.htm.

23 Thomas's later treatment, in the *Summa theologiae*, depicts delight as the larger category, including both natural/bodily and rational/soul as objects of enjoyment; he depicts joy as the smaller category containing *only* the rational objects (*ST* 1–2.31.3). Thus, delight can be said of irrational animals, but not joy. Said another way, delights that belong to (or require) the apprehension of reason are said to cause joy (*ST* 1–2.31.4).

24 Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 1–2.31.1 s.c., with reference to Augustine, *De civitatae Dei* ix and xiv.

25 Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* 1.90 at "Ex hoc autem."

26 Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* 1.90 at "Sunt autem;" *Summa theologiae* 1.20.1 ad 1: "*Sic igitur actus appetitus sensitivi, inquantum habent transmutationem corporalem annexam, passiones dicuntur, non autem actus voluntatis. Amor igitur et gaudium et delectatio, secundum quod significant actus appetitus sensitivi, passiones sunt, non autem secundum quod significant actus appetitus intellectivi. Et sic ponuntur in Deo.*"

for the intuition we are examining, i.e., that we can meaningfully speak of giving gifts to God.

We must go on to ask, though, what it is that God delights and takes joy in. The *Summa contra gentiles* account states clearly that God delights preeminently in himself:

> Now God is supremely at rest in himself, who is the principle object of his will, as finding all sufficiency in himself. Therefore, by his will he rejoices and delights supremely in himself.[27]

Thomas, however, does not stop there. Using the distinction introduced earlier between delight (i.e., in a conjoined good) and joy (i.e., in a separated good/*de exteriori*), Thomas can affirm that "properly speaking, God delights in himself, but rejoices in himself in other things," and in fact "rejoices in every good."[28] Why does God rejoice in other things in this way? We recall (from the *Summa contra gentiles* account) that one delights in what is naturally conjoined; one rejoices in what one goes outside of oneself to be joined with. Thomas's account of divine delight and joy in the *Summa theologiae* (Prima Pars) considers the difficulty of how it can be said that God loves things other than, or outside of, himself. Thomas responds by connecting the action of God as the creator, cause, and sustainer of all goodness to the stance of a lover toward a beloved, showing that indeed God *goes outside* of himself, willingly, on behalf of his creation:

> A lover is placed outside himself, and made to pass into the object of his love, inasmuch as he wills good to the beloved; and works for that good by his providence even as he works for his own. Hence [quoting Dionysius]… "we must make bold to say even this, that He Himself, the cause of all things, by His abounding love and goodness, is placed outside Himself by His providence for all existing things."[29]

Later in the *Summa theologiae* account (in the Prima Secundae), Thomas frames the question a bit differently, showing that we can find delight in others by *bringing them in* to one's own self:

> Another's actions, if they be good, are reckoned as one's own good,

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27 Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* 1.90 at "Item": "*Deus autem in seipso, qui est suum principale volitum, maxime quietatur, utpote in se omnem sufficientiam habens. Ipse igitur per suam voluntatem in se maxime gaudet et delectatur.*"

28 Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* 1.90 at "Est igitur": "*Ex quo patet quod Deus proprie in seipso delectatur, gaudet autem et in se et in aliis,*" and at "Amplius,": "*Relinquitur igutur quod Deus de omni bono gaudet.*"

29 Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 1.20.2 ad 1: "*… amans sic fit extra se in amatum translatus, inquantum vult amato bonum, et operatur per suam providentiam, sicut et sibi. Unde et Dionysius dicit, IV cap. De Div. Nom.,* audendum est autem et hoc pro veritate dicere, quod et ipse omnium cuasa, per abundantiam amativae bonitatis, extra seipsum fit ad omnia existentia providentiis.*"

by reason of the power of love, which makes a man to regard his friend
as one with himself.[30]

Taken together, these accounts show God's generous love bridging the gap between
and created beings by both going outside of himself to reach us and drawing us
in to be one with himself.

Without pressing the precise operations of joy and delight beyond what Thomas
himself does, we can see the main shape of his account of divine pleasure emerg-
ing. We can see that God *does* take pleasure in things, and that some of those
things are exterior to himself. We can see that God's generous, munificent, gra-
tuitous love toward us is precisely that by which God also delights in us.[31]

That God delights supremely in himself is entirely unsurprising, and seems to
not require that we qualify that God is not *properly* delighting specifically in us,
but rather in his own goodness. This seems so clearly obvious—i.e., that all good-
ness, all that is loveable and desirable, originates radically in God—that it seems
unnecessary and perhaps even infelicitous to append it to every articulation of
divine joy in his creation, as if to say: "God takes joy in you, but only as actually
taking joy in his own goodness." We certainly do not see God speaking that way
in scripture—quite the opposite: we see God going out of his way to unstintingly
communicate his genuine parental, friendly love for us.[32]

Thus far in our inquiry, we have seen that the existence of created beings can
be meaningfully said to give joy, or delight, to God. We understand that we are
speaking analogically when we use these terms, but, as we stated earlier, this is an
affirming as well as a limiting condition. We might speak of this divine joy, in

30 Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 1–2.32.5 corp.: "*ipsae operationes aliorum, si sint bonae, aestimantur
ut bonum proprium, propter vim amoris, qui facit aestimare amicum quasi eundem sibi.*"

31 Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 2–2.23.1. See also, preeminently, Christ's naming of his followers as
his friends, in John 15. Thomas C. Oden, in his expansive treatment of classic Christianity, notes
Augustine's intuition that "God's joy is so joyful that it would be less joyful if it never had any-
one else with which to share its depth of joy" (Augustine, *Confessions* 11:1–10). See Thomas C.
Oden, *Systematic Theology Volume One: The Living God* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008), 254.
Oden's use of Augustine references *The Library of Christian Classics,* ed. J. Baillie, J.T. McNiell,
and H.P. Van Dusen, 26 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1953–1961), VII, 244–252.

32 See, for example, Michael P. Knowles on the notion of God revealing himself at Sinai paradigmati-
cally as *present* to his people, in *The Unfolding Mystery of the Divine Name: The God of Sinai in
Our Midst* (Lisle, IL: InterVarsity Academic, 2012). See also Carmen Joy Imes, *Bearing YHWH's
Name at Sinai: A Reexamination of the Name Command of the Decalogue,* Bulletin for Biblical
Research Supplement 19 (University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2018), and *Bearing God's Name: Why
Sinai Still Matters* (Lisle, IL: InterVarsity Academic, 2019).

    On the notion of the scriptural narrative of divine interest in and care for created beings, specifi-
cally in conversation/contrast with the difficult entailments of divine perfection and impassibility,
see Brian Leftow in "Perfect Being Theology and Friendship," in *The question of God's perfec-
tion: Jewish and Christian essays on the God of the Bible and Talmud*, ed. Yoram Hazony and Dru
Johnson (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 104–110.

    Note also Aquinas's depiction of human/divine relations as "friendship" (*amicitia*), a notion he
introduces in his treatments on charity (see: Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 1–2.65.5 corp.; 2–2.23.1
corp.)

terms of our household of classical theism, as God wanting photographs of his children hanging in the rooms, not just affirmations of his own divine goodness. Of course, we as his children are in reality a manifestation of God's goodness, as offspring indeed are, but we are also individuals, and not merely mirrors.[33] God, as it were, takes delight and joy in looking at our faces. We are not merely anonymous placeholders for the glory and goodness of God. Thomas affirms this in *Summa contra gentiles*, where he treats providential care of human beings (i.e., rational creatures) as uniquely directed "for their own sake" (*propter se*).[34]

We have, however, not yet arrived at a notion of human beings *giving* anything to God, or, stated otherwise, of God *receiving* anything from his creation. Here we will need to proceed with yet more caution.[35]

Part three: Receptivity in God: Intra-trinitarian relations

The one context in which we can speak of receptivity in God with relative ease is

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33 This tension between the notion of humans understood as manifestations of the divine and at the same time as meaningful individuals can be illumined by the scholastic question of the theological status of individual created beings. Bonaventure famously critiqued scholastic philosophy as accounting for beings in terms of their essences, missing entirely their creational significance as vestiges, or reflections, of God (see: Bonaventure, *Collationes in Hexaemeron* 12, 15 [*Opera Omnia* 5, 386]). While Thomas (one of the targets of Bonaventure's critique) does indeed affirm that, in philosophical terms, divine knowledge of created beings occurs primarily with regard to the perfection of creation as a whole (e.g., Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* 2.84.5; 3.17.1; *Super Sententia* 2.17.2.2 ad 6; *Sententia De anima* 18 resp.; *Summa theologiae* 1.73.1 corp) he does go on to provide a magisterial, robust narrative across his corpus of divine love and care that is directed toward human individuals (e.g., Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 1.65.2 corp.; *Summa contra gentiles* 3.112; 4.23.11—this last specifically regarding God's love as extended to individuals in time). Robert Pasnau notes Thomas's assertion that human individuals contribute the perfection of the universe only as to their species (or as the good of a part for the whole); however, he states, "this is not a conclusion that Aquinas wants," because "human beings are qualitatively different [from sheep and oxen] in this regard." By contrast, Pasnau concludes, in Thomas's narrative "it is indeed the central feature of God's relationship to us that he does care: he loves us and takes joy in us, he is provident and merciful toward us." Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature: A Philosophical Study of* Summa theologiae *Ia 75–89* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 401, 403–404. See also: Wayne J. Hankey, "God's Care for Individuals: What Neoplatonism gives to a Christian Doctrine of Providence," *Quaestiones Disputatae* 2, nos. 1 & 2 (Spring–Fall 2011): 4–36.

34 Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* 3.112.

35 See Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt's depiction of the complex distinctions between real and only-logical relations, in his narrative of "John" seeing "Mary" walking down the street, but not the reverse—resulting in a "relation" that is mixed and not genuinely mutual, insofar as the real relatedness exists only on the part of creation, not God. See: Frederick C. Bauerschmidt, *Thomas Aquinas: Faith, Reason, and Following Christ*, Christian Theology in Context, ed. Timothy Gorringe, Serene Jones, and Graham Ward (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 114–119.

By contrast, Terence E. Fretheim has argued that the biblical narrative of God's relation to Israel entails a "logically prior question," i.e., the way in which such a relation "presupposes a certain way in which God is related to the world"—a relation which Fretheim claims is real and has integrity ("which is presumably the only kind of relation God could have"). Such a genuine relation is made possible, Fretheim asserts, be the divine willingness to forego certain powers and assume certain limitations. See: Terence E. Fretheim, *The Summering of God: An Old Testament Perspective*, Overtures to Biblical Theology, ed. Walter Brueggemann and John R. Donahue (Philadelphia: Dortress, 1984), 35–36.

with regard to the intra-trinitarian relations—but even then, only on the part of the Son and of the Spirit. Thomas shows us that it pertains to the perfection of God that the Son receive his nature from the Father, and the Spirit from the Father and the Son—though he also clarifies that the term "receive" (*recipere*) is said of God analogously, not univocally, with regard to how it is said of creatures.[36] He further clarifies that such a receiving does not entail a lack—rather, this act of reception is precisely what *constitutes* the Persons of the Son and the Spirit.[37] The divine perfection can be said to "need" the multiplicity of the trinitarian Persons, insofar as God would not be perfect otherwise, while affirming that there is absolutely no lack in God.[38] Finally, Thomas asserts that the Person of the Father, in contrast to the Son and Spirit, receives nothing at all, from anyone.[39]

It is not, however, only the divine nature that is shared and received among the trinitarian Persons. Thomas's treatment of the Persons in *De potentia* question 10 suggests, on Michael Higgins's reading, that trinitarian multiplicity paradigmatic-ally illumines the receptive, mutual, relational nature of joy:

> Thus, we have already seen that God would be dead, devoid of intel-lect and will, and less than absolutely perfect were God not a God in multiple Persons. We see now that such a lonely God would be a *joyless* God. The Father can only take joy *in Himself* if He does so "*in the Son*"; were the divine joy not the joy of one Person *in another*, there would be no such divine joy at all.… Thus, according to Thomas, a God *without* a Word would be a God without joy, and a God *with* a Word must be a God in multiple Persons: the divine joy must be shared joy, or it cannot be at all.[40]

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36 Aquinas, I *Sententia* 44.1.1 ad 2, III *Sententia* 4.1.2.2 ad 2, and *Summa theologiae* 1.33.3.ad 2 (regarding analogy); *Summa theologiae* 1.27.3 and 4, 1.36, 1.41.3, and *Summa contra gentiles* 4.8 at "Ex eo autem" (regarding receptivity). See also Michael Joseph Higgins on varying inter-pretations of Thomas on the relationship between receiving and perfection in God in "'A Mark of Perfection:' Receiving and Perfection in Aquinas's Trinitarian Theology," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 25.3 (July 2023), 435–455.

37 Aquinas, *Q.D. De potentia* 10.1 ad 13; *Summa contra gentiles* 4.8 at "Ex eo autem;" *Summa theologiae* 1.29.4.

38 Aquinas, *Contra errores Graecorum* 1.7.

39 Aquinas, *Q.D. De potentia* 10.4 ad 10.

40 Michael Joseph Higgins, *Giving Perfections, Receiving Perfections: The Essential Divine Attributes in Aquinas's Trinitarian Theology* (diss., Catholic University of America, 2017) 125–126, italics by author. ProQuest 10746510. Reference to Aquinas, *Q.D. De potentia* 10.5, and ad 3. See also Aquinas, I *Sententia* 2.1.4, regarding the plurality of persons in God: "Therefore there must be many distinct things within the unity of the divine essence. This same thing is argued from the perfection of the divine beatitude, which asserts the highest joy, which cannot be possessed without compan-ionship" (*Hoc idem arguitur ex perfectione divinae beatitudinis, quae ponit summum gaudium quod sine consortio haberi non potest*). Reference to Aquinas, *Scriptum super Sententiis. Books 1 and 2.* Latin text originally based on the 1858 Parma Edition, transcribed by Roberto Busa. Subsequently revised by the Aquinas Institute according to the Mandonnet edition. English translation in progress, the Aquinas Institute, Lander, WY, https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Sent.I; https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Sent.II.

Higgins's account goes so far as to suggest that in Thomas's treatment of divine joy we see hints of what might be thought of as the Son *giving* to the Father. Nicholas Healy's account of intra-trinitarian giving goes yet further, reading in Thomas (with the help of Hans Urs von Balthasar) an account of the created world itself as a gift that Christ gives to God through his mission of redemption.[41] Healy starts with interpreting the Chalcedonian notion of Christ as "truly God" as "a trinitarian exchange among Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit," one in which "Christ assumes responsibility for representing and including within his person not only a single human nature, but the whole of humanity, and ultimately the whole of creation."[42] Healy goes on to show how Christ turns this assumption of the created world into a gift to the Godhead:

> Christ gives himself as Eucharist by receiving the world, despite its sinful condition, as a gift that expresses and mediates the divine love of the Father and the Holy Spirit. It is the Eucharist that enables Christ to fulfill his mission of ensheltering the world within his body and thus within the divine life.[43]

We see, on Healy's account, how the world becomes a gift to God *as given by Christ*—the location, and occasion, of the actualizing of the redemptive love of God. We can go on to ask whether there is a more specific, *active* role of created beings in this gift. Healy thinks so:

> Not only does Christ receive the world as a gift, but he communicates a share in his own receiving and giving. In the Eucharist we are taken into Christ's missionary gift to the world… the gift that we bring [to others] is the reception of the divine self-communication in history by receiving the reality of the world as an expression of trinitarian love— that is, by receiving the world as a gift from God and *for God*.[44]

 We can therefore see how human, concrete, particular actions contribute to, and

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41 Healy, in conversation with Balthasar, examines the creational implications of the distinction and the relation between *esse* and essence in Thomas—i.e., the "gift" of concrete manifestness that essence insofar as it is contraction to particularized existence gives to non-subsistent *esse*, a state of fruitful difference that is "generously allowed by *esse* itself—essence truly 'affects' *esse* without for all that depriving it of its simple fulness and perfection," Nicholas J. Healy III, "The World as Gift," *Communio* 32 (Fall 2005), 395–406, at 400–401; Aquinas, *Q.D. De potentia* 7.2 ad 9; Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, vol. 5: *The Last Act,* trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998), 521. See also Layton Boyd Friesen, *Secular nonviolence and the theo-drama of peace : anabaptist ethics and the Catholic Christology of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (London: T&T Clark, 2022).

42 Healy, "The World as Gift," 403.

43 Healy, "The World as Gift," 405.

44 Healy, "The World as Gift," 405–406, italics by author.

indeed fulfill, Christ's mission—and thereby meaningfully *give* to God.[45] The gift we give to God is to individualize and particularize the divine act of redemption, both in our own lives and as passed along into the lives of others.[46]

A reader may observe that such giving is directed precisely not "at" God, but toward other beings, and thus has actually *not* accomplished giving something to God. I'm not sure that is true. We recall Thomas's notion of a need in God that does not indicate a lack. How would God's redemptive mission toward a concrete, material creation be carried out *except* with the collaboration of concrete, material beings? Christ's gift to the Godhead is the graced *actions* of redeemed human beings, not just the human beings themselves. Of course, the reader may further object that even in such a case, it is *Christ* giving the gift, not humans themselves. However, just as with the unsurprising reality we noted that God delights supremely in himself, it is equally unsurprising that human beings' contribution (gift) to divine joy would be enacted through Christ. This would seem to be a marvelous entailment of Christ's status as fully divine and fully human. Christ, in his divinized humanity, enables humanity to do what must otherwise be thought of as radically impossible: giving to God.[47]

Christ, through the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit, draws each of us into the inner life of the Godhead. Through the sonship that is extended to us by adoption,

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45 In Thomas's treatments of gift and giving, it is illumining to note the etymology at work in the constellation of terms Thomas employs, and the resultant mutual relationship between the stance of the giver and of the receiver of a gift. Insofar as Thomas uses *gratia* for both grace and gratitude, the grace of the giver and the gratitude of the receiver are placed in conversation with each other—they are the participating poles in the event of giving. E.g. (drawn from *ST* 2–2.106—comparisons here are made using the translations of the Dominican Fathers): in article one, Thomas uses *gratia* for 'thankfulness,' and *gratitudo* for 'gratitude'; in article 2, Thomas renders 'thanksgiving' as *gratiarum actio,* and 'grace' as *gratia*; in article 3, we see Thomas use *grate* for the sense of 'gratefully'; and in article 4, quoting Seneca, Thomas uses the plural *grates* ('thanks') for 'gratitude.'

46 In Thomas, we can see this account of creation as a gift contributing to divine joy—a gift which is ongoingly given and received through the Eucharist—in the *ST*: Christ, through his incarnation and earthly ministry, a ministry extended to later generations through the sacraments, bestows divine things on people, and allows them to become partakers of the divine nature (Q22.1); we are invited to become members of Christ himself, and to be thus united to God (Q62.1 and 5); through this adoption as real sons, we are drawn into the shared life of the Trinity (Q23.2), including the very "enjoyment of God, by which also God Himself is happy and rich in Himself (*ST* 3.1 corp.: "*Quae quidem consistit in fruitione Dei, per quam etiam ipse Deus beatus est et per seipsum dives*").

47 Admittedly, the verse just before Paul's "For from him," declaration in Romans 11 (referenced at the opening of the paper), does say "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them?" However, the implication in Job's text (which Paul is quoting) is the notion of a person *not* recognizing that all that is good comes gratuitously from God. By contrast, Christ's words in his prayer of John 17 employ exactly this kind of generous language including human beings into the life and work of the Godhead: "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (John 17:20–23 NIV).

which Thomas identifies as a work of grace, we participate in the intra-trinitarian activities of the Son.[48] Te Velde, with whom we began our inquiry, marvels at this miracle: "At the centre of Christian faith stands the conviction that the inaccessible mystery of God has opened itself for us, that we somehow, through his incarnate Son, are called to share the divine life."[49] This includes, as we have seen, presenting as gift the concrete contexts of the created world, redeemed, reformed, and returned to relationship with God. A meaningful gift indeed.[50]

We return, in conclusion, to our image of the household of classical theism, a home in which everything is from God and is a manifestation of his goodness. We recall that God's delight in us, in our created individuality, was imagined as a desire to hang up photographs of us, so that he could enjoy looking at our faces. We might now add a new element to this image, one that affirms the appropriateness—even *inside* the house of classical theism, i.e., in accordance with its rules and cherished principles—of the suggestion that human beings can give gifts to God. We might imagine graced human acts as drawings from a child that a parent

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48 Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 3.23 corp. and ad 3.

49 Te Velde, "The Divine Person," 360. Te Velde does caution, however, that such a divine invitation to intersubjectivity must be envisioned "without the typical modern romantic *experience* of the inner life of the other.… God is God, with a nature altogether different from that of human beings." "The Divine Person," 362.

50 Thomas Speed Blair Mount, of the South African Theological Seminary, provides an alternative narrative of divine relatedness. Mount presents a careful history and analysis of the development of passibilist views of the divine nature, with a special eye for implications within practical theology. He observes that passibilist theology prioritizes existentialist concerns over metaphysical ones, as contrasted with impassibilist emphasis upon ontological commitments (Mount, 2). He critiques "the hegemony of passibilist theological construals since the last quarter of the twentieth century… within the conservative evangelical sub-tradition," and argues that "qualified impassibilist existential arguments" best fit the biblical record and evangelical theological commitments, with significant import for pastoral concerns. Mount specifically considers and critiques the perspective of Fretheim noted earlier (n31), among others in a selected sample, and charges Fretheim with caricaturing impassibilist theologians as "espousing a metaphysically inert and relationally impassive God incapable of affect or genuine personal interactions with His creation" (Mount, 212). Mount understands the passibilist view as grounded in three flawed assumptions: 1. impassibility as an entailment of Greek philosophy's influence upon Christianity, 2. a conflation of "impassibility" with "impassivity," and 3. "the late modern notion that—in order to be genuine—love must be bilateral, reciprocal and vulnerable to feeling the other's pain" (227–232). Mount summarizes the weakness of the passibilist view by asserting that its commitments require God to be dependent upon his creation in order to be fulfilled (233). Mount identifies contemporary adherents to the impassibilist view: Norm Geisler, Wayne House, Doug Wilson, Oliver Crisp, D. Stephen Long, and Brian Davies, among others. Thomas Speed Blair Mount, "Existential Dimensions of the Contemporary Impassibility Debate: A Pastoral Approach to the Question of Divine Suffering Within the Context of Conservative Evangelicalism," (PhD diss., South African Theological Seminary, 2015).
    Other examples of proponents of divine impassibility are Kevin Vanhoozer, Matthew Levering, James E. Dolezal, Michael Allen, and David Bentley Hart.
    Note that in the view of this essay, not all of those who would defend divine impassibility (including, perhaps, Mount) would object to its claims about divine relationality, including its reading of Thomas Aquinas. Nevertheless, the conversation engages deep waters, touching the very heart of the nature of God, and therefore is to be approached with care and humility.

puts on the refrigerator door. There is an important difference between a photograph and a drawing.[51] The photograph celebrates the life of the child and affirms their unique place within the family given to them by their parents' love and care. A drawing, however, does something different. Every single thing about the child's life comes to them from the parents—everything in the house is only there because of the parents' care and provision, including the very paper and crayons used to make the drawing. However, when the child presents their drawing to the parent, they are in a meaningful way giving the parent something they would not have had otherwise. It cannot really be said they *lacked* it, and they possessed the literal paper and crayons already, but the parents would have been less perfected, less complete, without the ideas and thoughts and the individual activity expressed in the drawing.[52] I think in a certain limited, *analogous*, sense it is right to say that our concrete human lives and activities adorn God's refrigerator door, as gifts to him in a meaningful way. I think they give him joy.

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51 John Franklin considers the way in which human art, while naturally subordinate to the divine act of creation, without competition builds upon and visions it afresh, and in doing so parallels the theological hope that is found in scripture's eschatological orientation: "… the presence of art in the world, whatever expression it may take, is in some way, a sign of hope—the idea that there is more than meets the eye and that the story is not yet complete. To be clear, I am not referring to the content of the art but simply the fact of it—the reality that we as human beings are entrusted with the capacity to create—albeit in a way distinct from the way God has done the work of creation. So I am suggesting that art is characterized by an eschatological quality that points us to look beyond the immediate—beyond appearances. Similarly, the biblical narrative invites us to engage the imagination and look beyond our current situation—underwritten by an eschatological vision of hope." John Franklin, "Beyond Appearances: Imagination and the Biblical Narrative," in *The Arts and the Bible*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Wendy Porter (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2024), 123.

52 W. David O. Taylor explores the interplay between the work of an artist and the life of the Christ-follower in *Glimpses of the New Creation: Worship and the Formative Power of the Arts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019). In an appendix offering advice to artists, he states: "Think of your work as a way to participate in the priestly vocation of Christ. This means, among other things, that your calling through the work that you do for the church's worship is to offer the things of God to the world and, likewise, to offer the things of the world back to God, Your calling is to offer the life of God—the good, true merciful, comforting, forgiving, hopeful encouraging, redemptive, holy life of God—to the people of God. Your calling is also to offer the lives of the people—the confident and the humble, whole and broken, heartfelt and half-hearted, faithful and faithless lives—back to God in love" (Taylor, *Glimpses,* 174–175).

BOOK REVIEWS

Joshua D. Chatraw. *Telling a Better Story: How to Talk About God in a Skeptical Age*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020. Pp. 240. ISBN 978-0-3101-0863-4. $23.99 (CAD) $15.19 (USD) paper.

Postmodernism has become an integral part of the philosophical climate of Western civilization, impacting those both inside and outside the Christian faith. In his book, *Telling a Better Story,* Joshua Chatraw suggests an effective way forward for the regenerate to positively present the gospel to a world that is rapidly growing dissonant with traditional apologetic arguments. His aim is to equip Christians to identify the deepest longings of those outside the faith, and then present the gospel as an alternative script that better fits those longings than what the secular worldview can offer (7).

Chatraw believes that the future of apologetics and evangelism lie in the church's ability to present the Christian worldview as a story; reasoning: "even when a culture seems to have abandoned the gospel, they haven't abandoned story. They can't. Stories, both big worldview stories that remain unarticulated by many and the small micro-stories we interact with in our daily lives, provide a way into their world—and a bridge into sharing God's story" (7). One of the great shared experiences of humanity is its fascination with stories. They are foundational to shaping our imaginations and have the unique ability to challenge our philosophical biases and presuppositions in a disarming manner.

Of course, 'Gospel as story' is not unique to Chatraw as the biblical writers themselves communicated primarily through narrative—a point which Chatraw freely acknowledges: "Persuasion through narrative is a profoundly biblical pattern that finds precedent in Jesus himself. Jesus entered a first-century Jewish context with its own cultural stories" (45). Chatraw's 'storied' apologetic has also been shaped by St. Augustine's *City of God*, as well as the works of Christian thinkers like J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis, for example. Lewis, in particular, seemed to recognize the compelling rhetoric of story as an apologetic tool. Foundational to Lewis' theology was the fact that Christianity is the One True Story that contains within it all the resources needed to "out-narrate the ideologies of the world" (49).

Stories are rhetorically powerful because they speak not just to the intellect but also to the imagination. As John Goldingay eloquently puts it, Scripture itself may

rightly be perceived as being world-view formative rhetorical literature—not in a "bad way, in order to manipulate, but in order to move… rhetoric is not a way of getting people to avoid thinking but a way of getting them to think."

For this reason, one of the strongest points of Chatraw's book is his insistence on Christians *embodying* the gospel message, and not merely preaching it, i.e., the key to his apologetic approach is being a *winsome, trustworthy* person of *integrity* and personal *character*:

> First and foremost, our lives are to be a kind of friendly, otherworldly 'haunting,' as our priorities are set by a King who is not of this world. *Cultivate friendships with your neighbors and coworkers, identify as a Christian, live out your faith, invite them to your home to spend time with you and your friends, live sacrificially, and be ready to speak into their lives…* If you have been a friend and have consistently modeled hope in the midst of sorrow and bold humility during difficult times, doors are more likely to open for you to give "the reason for the hope that you have" (77, emphasis mine).

While Chatraw's vision for apologetics is quite commendable, there are, nonetheless, still some weaknesses in his 'storied' method. To begin, how does one effectively assess whether unbelievers are looking for 'something more' to give their life meaning? For example, even when describing the apathy of some secular people in response to questions of God's existence, Chatraw suggests that believers should not be discouraged because "there tends to be more going on beneath the surface than people admit" (76–77). While this might often be the case, it remains important to acknowledge that *not everyone* is conscious of some 'secret burden' they are longing to be relieved of. While Chatraw's storied approach shows much promise, the reconstruction of a person's worldview is a process that can take months, even years to complete.

The second major weakness of *Telling a Better Story* is that it offers little in the way of practicable application. Throughout his work*,* Chatraw often uses the image of "trying on" the biblical story to invite the secular person to consider the Christian faith (21, 68, 143), but he does not offer any concrete ways to facilitate this invitation. Given the tremendous emphasis the author places on 'entering into' the biblical story this is a surprising (and unfortunate) omission. Speaking pointedly, postmodernism contains within itself a high value of authentic experience; this seems, therefore, like a missed opportunity to merely *tell* the secular person about the story we live in without also offering to *show* them what it is like to know the Author.

Undoubtedly, however, the most significant contribution Chatraw brings to the apologetic discussion is the importance of "liveability" as the litmus test for a

worldview. Logic and reason alone are incapable of evaluating things like morality and beauty, as these are not empirically testable criteria (150). This is why Chatraw's narrative apologetic is so compelling—it provides an intuitive way to evaluate the truth or falsity of a worldview by interpreting whether it is a "livable" story (67). On this front, the Christian story is unmatched in its explanatory power. Chatraw points to the biblical narrative as the truest expression of what a livable story looks like: "The story of Christ is the true story of the God who is behind all that is true, good, and beautiful – 'inside out' is about helping others see that what they have always been longing for can only be found in him" (74). Many other stories possess shards of goodness, truth, and beauty, but these are only present because they copy from and/or are shadows of the Great Story. Some other minor critiques include the unfortunate lack of indices and the somewhat 'work-man-like' presentation of the material at hand, i.e., there are no charts/diagrams/graphics.

To close, this book is a valuable resource for those seeking to engage the secular world in conversations about Christianity and the Gospel. It is especially geared towards pastors and church leaders (alongside Seminary/Bible College/Christian University students), but Chatraw is also well-researched, and his integration of several disciplines provides useful insight for the academic world as well. Highly recommended!

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John Frederick and Eric Lewellen, eds. *The HTML of Cruciform Love: Toward a Theology of the Internet*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2019. Pp. xx + 187. ISBN 978-1-5326-0936-7. $39.76 (CAD) $30.00 (USD) paper.

The digital realm has proven to be a critical frontier in the 21st century. In light of its astonishing development and proclivity for rapid change, *The HTML of Cruciform Love: Toward a Theology of the Internet*, edited by John Frederick and Eric Lewellen, seeks to bring together a range of distinguished voices to begin "a larger conversation in the church and in the academy that works towards a Christian theology and praxis of the internet" (xii). In many ways, the book achieves the desired result.

Comprised of twelve essays, the collective work examines the profound, multifaceted impact of the internet on Christian theology and practice, exploring themes such as the moral implications of visual consumption, the theological significance of digital interactions, the enduring influence of online personas, and the changing nature of community and identity in the virtual world (xiii–xx). The editors propose that two prominent themes emerge, namely *community* and

character (xiii). I propose, however, that the latter might be more accurately replaced with *technological formativity* for reasons that shall become apparent.

Given the diversity of topics covered, the following review will be selective. Regarding personal identity, T. C. Moore suggests the internet exacerbates the individualistic tendencies toward Scripture that began with the printing press (53). For Chad Bogosian, this relatively new landscape encourages the pursuit of "disordered or vainglorious praise" (66). Jen Gilbertson argues that gospel-motivated self-denial (rather than self-representation) is a healthier approach to internet praxis. She helpfully reminds believers, "… it is *Jesus himself*—not one's personal autobiography—that takes center stage" (95; italics original). Of course, as inclinations toward individualism increase in light of internet realities, effects on community are unavoidable.

More than two-thirds of the essays address the communal impact of network socialities. Particular attention here is paid to the geographical realities of internet-based community, highlighting what may be called a fragmented and "disembodied intersubjectivity" (42), which Mark D. Baker opines, "teaches us that [physical] presence does not matter" (158). Like the community around Jesus, Gilberston asserts that the network sociality of the internet is "no longer based on geographic proximity" (97). But, oppositionally, she also (rightly) emphasizes that the community of the Scriptures ensures "Jesus is the center and not the self or one's own interests" (99). Scott B. Rae explores the impact of this "excarnation" on meaningful work (84), while Clark J. Elliston concludes by asking whether online communities (such as Massive Multiplayer Online games, or MMOs) are sufficient, using Bonhoeffer as a foundation (163, 166).

As noted above, perhaps more prominent than "community" is the theme of *technological formativity*. Winston Churchill famously said that humanity shapes buildings, and those buildings shape humanity. The central thesis of *The HTML of Cruciform Love* applies this to technology, specifically the internet. Walter Kim suggests this is not unprecedented, arguing for a technological-theological formativity in the Solomonic Temple, where humans shaped technology and were subsequently shaped by it (103). Moore extends this idea, showing that in the printing press, "the way people accessed and interacted with the Bible was fundamentally altered," inadvertently encouraging a distinct individualist hermeneutic (54).

In sum, *The HTML of Cruciform Love* is exceptionally well-researched. The authors interpose pressing moral issues with matters such as realities of work, physical interface with the digital world, personal identity, and network sociality in relation to community formation without losing focus on the matter at hand. Although such breadth is welcome, it presents a notable challenge to adequately do justice to the ideas presented in this short review. However, in the absence of space, Baker's work warrants specific mention.

Since the book's publication, growing studies have shown the detrimental impact—or formativity (principal theme two)—of social media on both mental health and one's sense of community (principal theme one). Indeed, the common notion that the internet is an indifferent tool is put to the sword, perhaps most vociferously by Baker, who prefers the terms "active" and "passive" rather than neutral. He adeptly dismantles any idea of a passive medium and does so "*because it leads to ignoring the medium itself and only evaluating whether the intended purpose for using it is good or bad*," a shortsighted endeavour at best (154 – italics original). Baker's reasoning—aided by Stoddart (128) and Wallenfang (142)—lays the foundational groundwork for an important reflection on the internet's formative nature that could easily escape notice in the blistering pace of contemporary life. Baker furthers this end with a poignant reminder that despite contrary opinions, "Efficiency is not synonymous with best" and that one "can be effective without being efficient, and at times efficiency might hinder effectiveness" (151–52). It is a much-needed clarion call echoed elsewhere in the book for believers to give the Potter formative prominence over the clay rather than allowing it to be fashioned instead by humanity's binary digital output. As such, Baker's work well summarises broad sentiments from the book.

While these collected essays have much to commend, the work is not without room for growth. There is a commendable draw from many philosophers and theologians; however, given the stated objective work towards a Christian theology and praxis of the internet, *The HTML of Cruciform Love* is curiously thin on scriptural engagement. In the same vein, some essayists are perhaps guilty of shoehorning their specific area of expertise into the topic rather than allowing the topic to direct their approach—this is perhaps most notable in Gilbertson's Markan focus, Kim's centring on the Solomonic Temple, and Elliston's zeroing in on Bonhoeffer's work. At times, the essays appear so "deep in the trees" that they occasionally "miss the forest" and inadvertently pursue convolution over clarity.

These challenges are somewhat compounded by the reality that the digital landscape has profoundly changed in the years since the book's publication. The proliferation of artificial intelligence (AI) is already transforming how people interact with the internet; as mainstream AI technology matures, its impact will undoubtedly be vast. While *The HTML of Cruciform Love* lays some reasonable foundations with its core themes, it is unfortunate that it pre-empts these sweeping changes and thus loses a degree of impact by missing them. For example, is visual asceticism a realistic objective in an increasingly AI-driven world? What does Callaway's discussion regarding excarnation versus extension mean in light of growing transhumanist ideologies? Do large language models (LLMs) alleviate or exacerbate Moore's concerns about growing tendencies to view the Bible as a database? As humans shape AI, how much will it shape humans in return as it

progresses towards artificial general intelligence and possibly beyond? What do advanced AI chatbots mean for network socialities? These questions were cresting the horizon at publication but warrant answers today—such is the nature of the digital world's rapid changes. For this reason, perhaps an updated edition would be welcomed.

While *The HTML of Cruciform Love* is not without flaws, it provides muchneeded food for thought regarding internet realities and opens the door for broader future discussions that will serve laypersons, seminary students and pastors well in these ever-changing times.

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John Goldingay. *The Book of Lamentations*. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2022. Pp. xix + 228. ISBN: 978–0–8028–2542–1. $53.52 (CAD) $25.28 (USD) hardcover.

Duanne Garrett and Calvin F. Pearson. *Jeremiah and Lamentations: A Commentary for Biblical Preaching and Teaching*. Kerux Commentaries. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2022. Pp. 499. ISBN: 978-0-8254-2567-7. $49.97 (CAD) $26.98 (USD) hardcover.

Michael B. Shepherd. *A Commentary on Jeremiah*. Kregel Exegetical Library. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2023. Pp. 928. ISBN 978-0-8254-4608-5. $75.50 (CAD) $39.07 (USD) hardcover.

The Book of Lamentations, alongside its historically and literarily related counterpart, The Book of Jeremiah, is among the most vivid representations of grief, suffering, and trauma within the whole of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament (HB/OT). In the wake of the Fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonian Empire, Lamentations is a *tour de force* of literature composed of five (mostly acrostic) poems of twenty-two stanzas each, written in a manner of tight formal unity simply unparalleled by any other canonical book. Jeremiah's (similarly poignant) lament over Israel's sin reflects Yahweh's own pathos-laden yearning for them to "return to Him" as evident in the unique hope of eschatological salvation and the New Covenant cocooned in the book's centre.

No matter what type of commentary one envisions, it is impossible to cover everything comprehensively. The three (separate) volumes covered in this review reflect a variety of goals. That said, they each seek to make the HB/OT relevant to the spiritual Christian community of today. This review will start with Goldingay, note Garret and Pearson, and end with Shepherd.

To begin, Goldingay's *Lamentations* volume is a relatively succinct counterpart to his robust (1000-page plus!) Jeremiah NICOT (Eerdmans, 2021). A surprisingly thorough (33 pages) introduction opens things. Concerning Lamentations and canonicity, Goldingay opines:

> So one or more poets (who might have been people such as Levites with authoritative status in the community or their wives) wrote the individual poems that we now call Lamentations 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. These commended themselves to influencers and ordinary people by facilitating their response to the Fall of Jerusalem, as different psalms commended themselves to people's praise and prayer and gained a place in their worship and spirituality (20).

A five-page bibliography and three indices (Author, Subject, Ancient Text[s]) round things out. Unlike Goldingay's other NICOT, there is no Hebrew word index. There is also no sigla guide.

Those used to Goldingay's other (numerous!) works are likely aware of his impressive erudition. The author's engagement with the text is *par excellence* including copious (but in no way unnecessary) references to high-quality lexicons (*DCH*, *HALOT*, BDB, *TDOT*, etc.) and grammars, such as GKC, JM, DG, and *IBHS*. Goldingay's text-critical work is also bar none. Aside from the Targums, Vulgate, and various Greek sources (Sym, Aq., and LXX for example), Goldingay also surveys the *ketiv/qere* variants of the MT and is deftly aware of how the pointing (accentuation) of the Masoretes clarifies and sharpens exegesis (see 49, 95, 107, 133, 174, 185).

Goldingay also has no misunderstanding(s) of how word-meaning is determined, i.e., his work is free from the exegetical fallacies that plague far too many commentaries and other original language-resource works (see 171 for a particularly notable example of his astuteness).

Each chapter of text ends with a "Reader's Response" wherein Goldingay encourages his audience to imagine themselves as someone who has taken part in a reading of a portion of the Book of Lamentations at a worship gathering in Mizpah or Bethel. This unique (but most welcome!) thought experiment is especially valuable for communal lament services and the like.

Incontrovertibly, there is no better text on the market for this book for both pastors and scholars.

Similar (though not quite as high) accolades can also be given to Garrett and Pearson's work. Kerux Commentaries were uniquely and specifically designed (see 7–8) to enable pastors and teachers to better understand (and to effectively present) the main message in every biblical text through their dual authorship (one exegesis expert/one experienced homiletician).

The book begins with an overview of all preaching passages (in total, there are thirty-one units for the Book of Jeremiah and five sections overall for the Book of Lamentations). 'Notes' for translation appear throughout the work and there is a helpful 'glossary' for common Hebrew syntactical terms that utilizes precise nomenclature (*qatal*, *weqatal*, *yiqtol*, *wayyiqtol*, etc.) which also functions as something of a 'mini grammar' (41–42). The commentary itself is quite well done. There are references here and there to certain grammars (GKC, JM) and astute attention given not only to the *ketiv*/*qere* variants of the MT (see 94 for a fine example) but also to the not insignificant textual differences between the LXX and other manuscript witnesses. A five-page bibliography rounds out the volume. There are no indices (author/subject/Scripture).

The pedagogical (and pastoral sensitivities) of both authors are quite prominent. The writing style, for instance, is clear and lucid and things are pitched 'just right' for the books' target audience. Incontrovertibly, the editorial team was careful with presentation, layout, etc.

Where the book truly shines, however, is in those (latter) section(s) that especially focus on teaching and preaching. To be clear, the "Exegetical and Theological Synthesis" portion(s) are exceptionally cogent (particularly given their conciseness) and the 'big picture' perspective of each "Preaching Idea" provides more than enough direction and clarity for the task at hand. The "Contemporary Connections" are deftly framed vis à vis three questions: (1) "What Does It Mean?," (2) "Is it True?," and (3) "Now What?" (NB: the order of questions varies somewhat).

With respect to the "Creativity in Presentation" guides there is quite a bit of food for thought. By way of example, this portion of the book relating to Lamentations 1:1–22 reads:

> Our culture seems to quickly run away from the pain of lament. But this first lament calls us to the hurt… The temptation is to suggest specific actions or steps to take after reading the first lament. What does God want us to do? He wants us to hurt. God invites us to share the hurt, the pain of the tragic consequences of sin that result in the loss of so much in lives all around us. It is not so much that he wants us to do something rather, he wants us to feel something (452).

The end of every major section also includes five well-crafted "discussion questions." From personal experience, I have found the conversations that follow to be stimulating and engaging.

In sum, one would be hard pressed to find a more thorough exposé of these books for these purposes, particularly given the now defunct "Teach the Text" series (Baker Academic).

The last book here is *A Commentary on Jeremiah* (Kregel Exegetical Library) by Michael B. Shepherd (his second contribution to the set). The publisher describes the series this way:

> Written by evangelical scholars, the Kregel Exegetical Library (KEL) benefits pastors and students while also contributing to the scholarly dialogue on each book of the Bible. The commentaries in this ongoing series provide careful, in-depth exegesis and homiletical guidance for each passage.

This focus is notable throughout the commentary proper. For instance, Shepherd states:

> It is recommended here that readers should take a faith stance toward the book of Jeremiah not in order to read dogma into the text but because the book itself requires it. In other words, the reader who reads the book without faith does not read it according to the author's intention (60).

Perhaps the most unique thing to be aware of concerning this fine work is that the base text of the commentary is the Hebrew source text behind the "Old Greek of Jeremiah" (11). To be clear, while a significant number of commentaries on Jeremiah primarily follow the MT, Shepherd maintains: "the growing consensus among textual critics is that the Hebrew source of Greek Jeremiah is the earlier edition" (11). Though some may quibble, it is worth quoting Emmanuel Tov's *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* Revised and Expanded 4th. ed. (Fortress 2022):

> The LXX of Jeremiah differs much from the MT-Jeremiah in length and sequence. LXX-Jeremiah is shorter than MT by one-sixth. It lacks words, phrases, sentences, and entire sections that are found in MT… The question that has preoccupied scholars for centuries is whether the translator changed his source or whether he had a different Hebrew text before him. This question has been resolved with the discovery of the Qumran scrolls 4QJer[b] and 4QJer[d] dating to 200–150 BCE, which, though fragmentary, reflect the two main literary characteristics of the LXX (shortness and different sequence). It seems likely that the LXX was translated from a Hebrew text that was close to these two Qumran texts (232–33).

While Shepherd's references are consistently keyed to Tov's third edition (Fortress, 2012), his predilections are (in my estimation) well-vindicated through Tov's superb, more recent work.

Scholars will note that the standard Hebrew lexicons employed are BDB,

TLOT, and *HALOT* with some (exceptionally sparse!) references to Muraoka's exquisite lexicon for the LXX specifically. I could not, though, find reference(s) to Lust' fine work. Grammar wise, there are copious references to GKC but precious little else. NB: while *BHRG*[1] and *IBHS* are both bibliographically listed, I failed to locate them in the text. Given the author's fondness for the LXX, it is also a shame Muraoka's *A Syntax of Septuagint Greek* (Peeters 2016) fails to appear.

Linguistically, full attention is paid to differentiating between Hebrew stems (some good examples include 72, 108, 110, 162, 509, 664) and to the MT *ketiv/qere* variants (85, 123, 130, 342, 677). Typographically, all Greek text is in the original characters and the Hebrew (original character) text is only pointed when necessary. I did find an odd mixing of transliteration and original language font once in the commentary portion, but I deem(ed) it an anomaly (43–44).

Concerning rhythm, cadence, and/or stress, one should note that the author has a good sense for poetry versus prose and that he (rightly) questions the type-set of the *BHS* (and its apparatus) at times when it seems that the poetry format is "driven by a foreign conception of meter" (81). Such judiciousness on the part of Shepherd is highly commendable (and quite rare!).

Format wise, the translation is rather 'messy.' By way of example, Jeremiah 3:1 reads:

> *3:1 "[MT] (> Ms) and Tg. Jon. add: Saying; Vulg.: It is commonly said; Luther: And he said] If a man sends his wife away [GKC §159w], and she goes from him and becomes another man's [Luther: and takes another man], will she indeed return to him again [MT: will he return to her again; Tg. Jon.: is it possible that he could return to her again]? Will not that woman [MT: land] surely be polluted [Tg. Jon.: become guilty; Vulg.: Will not that woman be polluted and defiled; GKC §112p]? And you, you have fornicated with many shepherds [cf. Syr.; MT: companions; Tg. Jon.: you have gone astray and been joined to many peoples], and you return to me [Tg. Jon.: and return from now on to the worship of me;[1] GKC §113ee]?' the prophetic utterance of the LORD.*

Clearly, there are a lot of text-critical details (and other information) that are of great import being presented by Shepherd in these sections—all of which (of course!) are most welcome. That said, it should be abundantly evident how extremely cumbersome and tedious it is in practice to actually work through this material given the specific layout/arrangement. Would that the editor(s) had found

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1   The Targum makes this clause imperative rather than interrogative (cf. Syr., Vulg., KJV, ASV) (80; the footnote reference to the Targum and all the italics here are original)

a more user-friendly and intuitive approach to leverage Shepherd's astute exeget-ical acumen. The problem is only exacerbated (!) by the unfortunate lack of indices.

Aside from the bibliography (911–28), the book closes with "The Hebrew Source Behind the Old Greek" (873–909). Shepherd consistency notes both over-laps and differences. For instance, concerning Jeremiah 25:13b2; 49:34–39; 46:1 (= LXX 25:14–19; 26:1) he writes:

> The Göttingen Septuagint and the NETS make the last verse of this unit the first verse of chapter 26 (= MT chapter 46), even though this verse clearly belongs with what precedes it rather than with what fol-lows it. It is not equivalent to MT Jeremiah 46:1. Rahlfs more appro-priately makes this verse the last verse of LXX chapter 25 (i.e., verse 20) and leaves LXX chapter 26 without a verse 1. The verse has no exact equivalent in the MT (but see MT 49:34). It is counted here as 46:1 only because of the arrangement in the Göttingen Septuagint and the NETS and because there is no way to indicate equivalent versifi-cation in the MT (889).

In sum, those doing serious text-critical work of Jeremiah cannot afford to be without Shepherd.

To close, given the relatively high costs of reference materials, alongside the limited time, energy, and funds faced by many people, it is essential for individ-uals to extract maximum value from each book they choose to invest in. One thanks God for the embarrassment of riches now available to those working with the Book of Lamentations and the prophetic corpus *in toto* of the Book of Jere-miah with the publication of each of these new resources. Bible College/Christian University College and Seminary students, alongside ministry leaders (pastors/teachers), and scholars will all be well served by many different aspects of these works. Highly recommended!

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Scott J. Hafemann. *Paul: Servant of the New Covenant, Pauline Polarities in Eschatological Perspective.* Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament (WUNT I) 435. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019. Pp. xvii + 420. ISBN 978-3-16-157702-4. €179.00 (EUR) paper.

It is a tall order to effectively articulate the theology of Paul, the apostle to the nations, in a coherent and unified manner that can stand the scrutiny of the polar-ities in his writings; yet this is precisely what Scott J. Hafemann has undertaken in his decades-long work *Paul: Servant of the New Covenant.* This collection of

essays incorporates elements of the conclusions reached in his earlier monograph *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel: The Letter/Spirit Contrast and the Argument from Scripture in 2 Corinthians* 3, WUNT 81.

Throughout this volume, Hafemann seeks to communicate "a consistently eschatological, covenantal reading of Paul's theology" (3). The primary thesis is as follows: "Paul's life and theology, like that of the church as a whole, encapsulate an 'inaugurated eschatology' that longs for its consummation" (4). As such, Hafemann (rightly) rejects the notion of a material or theological contrast between the Old and New Covenants, rather seeing Paul as serving to bring into existence the eschatological people of God in the overlapping of the ages of the old and new eras of Israel and the church (3)**.**

Within the introduction, Hafemann takes pains to show that the past indicatives of unconditional grace secure the hope of future indicatives which motivate the present imperatives of the obedience of faith across the old and the new (13). In this manner, the newness of the New Covenant is not to be seen as a replacement of the Old Covenant (qualitatively) but rather in a renewed expression within the people in the covenant. Simply put, the new covenant is fulfilling the old in the eschatological people with transformed hearts (14)**.**

Hafemann cleverly titles his opening chapter *"Yaein" to Luther*, as he engages with the famous reformer in his reading of Galatians 3:6–14, agreeing in points with a "yes" (*ja*), but also pushing back with a "no" (*nein*) in his conclusions. As Hafemann interacts with some of the leading new perspective voices in relation to "works of the law," he comes to agree with Martin Luther that *erga nomou* refers not to a perversion of the law into legalism or to an overemphasis of Jewish identity per se as represented by some subset of the law, but rather to what the Torah *itself* commanded, taken as a whole" (38). That said, Hafemann also disagrees with Luther in that the contrasts are anthropologically focused as two different ways of relating to God; active by righteous deeds versus passive in gospel grace reception (39).

In agreement with the New Perspective on Paul (hereafter NPP) Hafemann takes a non-legalistic understanding of the Torah, but goes beyond in that he comes back to grounding his reasoning in the unity of the covenant structure of God's relationship with his people throughout redemptive history. In doing so he transposes Luther's need for faith in Christ into an eschatological key, where the Torah and its history-of-redemption fact of exile are the evidence of it (as a whole) not being of the era of faith (45).

Chapter Two titled *Israel's Judgment and the Ante-Climax of Eschatology* looks at Israel in relation to the present habitus of the church in her role as slave-child awaiting the inheritance in the second exodus. The future salvation of Israel and subsequent inheritance requires her embracing the era-changing Messiah by faith,

which Hafemann believes is proleptically secured in the "already" of the eschatological people, the Jewish/Gentile church. As such, "eschatology has only reached its ante-climax (86). Chapter Three titled *Paul's New Covenant Ministry in Eschatological Life* explores the present reality of the new covenant in Paul's ministry as "servant(s) of the new covenant" (2 Cor 3:6), as he is compared and contrasted with Moses' face-veiled ministry to hard-hearted people (103–109). Paul's apostolic legitimacy by means of his "missionary work" argued from 2 Corinthians 10:12–18 and the role suffering plays within it (Gal 4:12–20; 2 Cor 4:7–12) is tackled in chapters four and five titled *The Legitimacy of Paul's Apostleship,* and *Paul's Apostolic Suffering in Eschatological Perspective,* respectively (136).

The controversial sixth chapter that is sure to invite engagement is found in Hafemann's treatment of Philippians 3 titled *The One Righteousness of the Two Covenant Epochs*. Hafemann sees Paul's understanding of righteousness as not having been changed materially, but rather by means of source and where he finds himself in history (196). Careful exegesis is displayed as he seeks to prove that "Paul's having become blameless was in accordance with the righteousness revealed in the Torah *in the same way* that his persecuting the church was in accordance with the zeal it manifested" (177; emphasis original). As such, it is not two kinds of righteousness that are being contrasted by Paul; one "a sham, illusory… severe over-confidence," and the other based on grace (174). Rather, Hafemann sees the instrumental function of Paul's righteousness (real under both covenants) as moving from the source of the Law to the infinitely greater source of Christ's work, which alone is now "in any theologically significant sense [the instrument] to the righteousness of God" (196).

Sure also to cause a stir is Hafemann's take on Romans 2:12–16 within chapter seven *The New Covenant Obedience and Paul's Gospel of Judgment by Works*, where he contends that 2:14 should be understood as Gentile Christians having the New Covenant work displayed on their hearts and that their "Torah-obedien[ce]… will be the criterion of final, eschatological judgment… God will use to judge those who sin," whether unbelieving Jews or Gentiles (236). His solid work on Romans 11 in chapter eight, *Paul's Hope for Israel as the Consummation of the Covenant*, sets the stage for the chapter that follows, *The Future of Israel and Paul's Hope for the Nations*, where the OT quotations in Romans 15 are looked at in their original context as Hafemann persuasively argues that the "link between the covenant promises to the patriarchs and their intended (but not realized!) fulfillment in the Sinai covenant" is found in the inauguration of God's eschatological people which has its culmination to follow (278). In logical progression, chapter ten ties together the connection of the New Covenant with the new creation with texts from Galatians 5–6, 1 Corinthians 7, and 2 Corinthians 5:17, in which "Paul understands his apostolic mission to be the beginning fulfillment of

Isaiah's hope for the eschatological restoration of Israel" (328). Hafemann closes with comparing the thoughts of the Qumran community to those of Paul in the final chapter, titled, concluding the monograph in a convincing fashion that, the "unexpected element of the mystery of the Gospel is the proleptic inclusion of the Gentiles into the remnant of the faithful seed of Abraham *prior* to the final restoration of Israel and the nations" (359, emphasis original).

Hafemann's work deserves much commendation and is surely a 'must-read' for any serious student in the school of Pauline thought. The emphasis on highlighting the inextricable link between trusting the promises of God and obeying his commands under both the Old and the New is refreshing, as his goal of consistency in reading through the eschatological perspective is reached. A few points of contention would be the lack of engagement with current scholarship in some of the essays, a point that Hafemann himself acknowledges as the "major weakness" (xiv).

One is also left with wondering where the doctrine of imputation fits into Hafemann's understanding of righteousness and if it is still compatible with the eschatological judgment according to faith-works presented in the monograph. Lastly, one point of inconsistency appears to be the conclusion he reaches concerning a future temple in Jerusalem, as he presents Paul as "harbor[ing] no expectation for the rebuilding or restoration of a future temple" (371). This is something that is contra the Qumran community. With pains having been taken to show the irrevocable patriarchal promises still remaining to be fulfilled in consummatory fashion, one is left wondering why the expectation of a temple rebuild appears not to be part of this agenda in God's *Heilsgeschichte*. These (relatively minor) infelicities notwithstanding, this *magnum opus* of a seasoned scholar shows remarkable exegetical skill, even though not all readers will be left convinced of every conclusion reached within. Hafemann's future-oriented redemption leaves one anticipating the return of the Saviour-judge with strengthened resolve for perseverant faith.

Highly recommended!

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Brian P. Irwin with Tim Perry. *After Dispensationalism: Reading the Bible for the End of the World.* Lexham Press, 2023. Pp. 328. ISBN 978-1-6835-9681-3. $29.99 (USD) hardcover.

Dispensational eschatology has been the subject of intense criticism over the past few decades. Concerns about the overemphasis on prophetic end-times speculation in the Evangelical church and critiques of dispensational interpretations of the

Bible have resulted in several critical volumes. The book *After Dispensationalism* is the latest among these volumes that seeks to provide a look at dispensationalism's rise to prominence and offer an alternative way to look at prophetic texts in the Bible.

While written by a theologian and a Bible scholar, this volume is intended for a generalized audience. Its tone is reasoned and accessible. Though it provides critiques of dispensational ideas, these critiques are primarily dispassionate and fair to the positions under scrutiny. The authors hope to persuade the reader to a more reasonable position, not to tear down dispensationalism as an enemy.

Chapter One sets out a history of end times prediction by tracing various shifts in day-age theories that led interpreters to anticipate when the end might occur. From the Rabbinical teachings to early church fathers to medieval and Reformation theologies, Christians have speculated on when the church age would end, and the new eschatological age would begin. The chapter concludes with a practical tone that allows for avoiding end-time speculation.

Chapter Two narrows down to the development of Evangelical end-times teachings by identifying the primary teachers who articulated and popularized dispensational views of premillennialism. This involves a helpful summary of the dispensational framework as expressed by J. N. Darby and C. I. Scofield. From these beginnings, it shifts to those who created the "end-times entertainment industry," such as Hal Lindsey, Jack Van Impe, and Tim Lahaye (59–62).

Chapters Three and Four provide helpful summaries of each of the key tenets of dispensationalism, such as the restoration of Israel, the Rapture, the Tribulation, Armageddon, and the Millennium. These chapters accurately and fairly summarize commonly held beliefs about these themes without rebuttal. They conclude this historical section with a warning to pastors not to "write off" these beliefs "as a mild nuisance" (107). Instead, they must fully understand the frameworks many members may adhere to.

The second half of the book takes a biblical approach to understanding prophetic and apocalyptic literature, particularly the books of Ezekiel, Daniel, and Revelation. Chapter Five discusses the literary genre of prophecy and discusses misconceptions about the nature of prophetic in biblical literature. It also discusses the nature of apocalyptic literature and its function in the intertestamental and biblical worldview. Each of the insights into this literature provides an alternative but is not necessarily done so in a way that engages the fundamental assumptions of dispensational interpretations.

In this effort, the tone of the book changes when looking at the prophetic and apocalyptic books of Ezekiel, Daniel, and Revelation in Chapters 6-8. Each of these chapters aims to instruct the reader in critical insights into historical context, characteristics of prophetic and apocalyptic texts, and alternative readings to

dispensationalism. For example, the authors compare a dispensationalist under-standing of Gog and Magog as Russia with exilic interpretations rooted in the Assyrians and captivity of Israel (179–80). Engaging the book of Daniel, they note the common interpretation of Daniel's seventy weeks (included with classic dispensational charts by Clarence Larkin) as compared with historical commen-tary on these main passages from the perspective of the original readers. They conclude, "The book of Daniel was not written to us," but its message of hope for a coming kingdom and how Christians should live today is timeless (213–14).

The final chapter outlines the classic interpretive approaches of the Book of Revelation, including historicist, futurist, preterist, and idealist. However, which of the four methods is the basis for the author's interpretation is unclear. Some-what like the approach in the chapter on Ezekiel, the authors avoid contrasting dispensational views (which are mentioned in only one section) with their histor-ical context-based commentary on Revelation. This chapter reads more like a commentary than the other chapters. Significant attention is given to the letters to the seven churches, a chiastic structure to the body of the work, and jumps over chapters 13–20 to the New Heavens and New Earth. This chapter is engaged in much deeper biblical scholarship than the other chapters, which changes the book's overall flow.

Looking at the overall contributions of the book, the reader can expect high levels of appreciation mixed in with moments of methodological confusion. First, the book is clearly designed to explain dispensationalism and offer interpretive alternatives for these biblical texts. In this goal, it succeeds. It has solid research with well-articulated concepts and summaries of the issues covered, yet at an approachable level. Academically, it makes no particular academic contribution to dispensational studies or interpretive approaches to prophetic and apocalyptic biblical texts. But it does help the reader understand dispensationalism overall.

However, the confusion comes with the interpretive moves in the second half of the book. The authors do not disprove dispensational readings as much as they give alternative historically-based commentary on three prophetic books of the Bible. But, in doing so, the dispensational readings of those texts are left unad-dressed. Without that consistent dialogue between interpretations, the book feels more like two separate books. That said, the lack of a clear interpretive rebuttal to dispensationalism feels intentional.

The second observation is that the authors seem to want to rescue eschatology from the well-presented theology of dispensationalism. Yet, the interpretations of prophetic texts end up lacking an eschatological orientation. Ezekiel's message is "ongoing life and purpose is possible because of God's Holiness" (183). Daniel's message is about how Christians shall live in persecution and "how we should act out our identity as members of the Kingdom of God" (213–14). Revelation

reminds us that "we belong to God and not to the world" (283). While helpful and needed, these conclusions and interpretations struggle to accomplish the book's mission of "reading the Bible for the end of the world." While succeeding in offering alternative interpretations of prophetic and apocalyptic texts, it struggles to leave the reader with an eschatology to replace dispensationalism.

Despite these easily tolerable shortcomings, Irwin and Perry should be commended for avoiding the diatribes against dispensationalism by accurately conveying the tenets of dispensational eschatology in a way that is both fair and helpful. This accomplishment is rare in this era of open critiques of this eschatological paradigm. It also provides insightful interpretations of key prophetic and apocalyptic texts that are a refreshing alternative to end-times proof texting. It would be a provocative text for any pastor or seminary student looking to understand these issues better and perhaps gain a new appreciation for prophetic books of the Bible.

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Gregory David Soderberg. *As Often As You Eat This Bread: Communion Frequency in English, Scottish, and Early American Churches,* Reformed Historical Theology, Volume 74 (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2023). Pp. 280. ISBN 978-3-525-56070-9. €120 (Euro) hardcover.

As Often As You Eat This Bread: Communion Frequency in English, Scottish, and Early American Churches, by Gregory David Soderberg, is an insightful and well-researched examination of communion frequency for Reformation and Post-Reformation churches.

Sixteenth century reforms for communion took place in a context where "people were accustomed to a process of preparation before communion" (25). These practices included confession to a priest, penance, and fasting. An interesting observation about late medieval communion was the lack of congregational participation and questions as to what happened that led to infrequent participation. Soderberg notes factors like priestly participation as standing in for the congregation, rigorous standards of being "worthy," and the development of "spiritual communion" or a visual participation in the Eucharist that became a common practice throughout late medieval congregations. Soderberg points out that no matter the differences the Reformers held about the nature of communion, they generally agreed that both clergy and laity should receive both elements of communion more frequently than what had been practiced.

The political dynamic to the Lord's Supper for early Magisterial Reformers cannot be overlooked. These churches were closely tied to the state. Soderberg

points out Martin Bucer, Huldrych Zwingli, and John Calvin as a few noted Reformers balancing between implementing changes to the church and receiving permission from civil authorities. "Thus, even if various Reformers believed that more frequent communion was expedient and desirable, this belief was held in check by the desire to work within the boundaries of the God-ordained civil authorities" (36).

The Lord's Supper stood at the heart of Christian worship and community, so who was able to access and how frequent became important questions. Soderberg noted that early Reformers "were not simply trying to purify the worship in the church. They were—in varying degrees—trying to reform society and construct cities and nations in accordance with God's Word" (55). Church discipline would coincide with communion, and for many communities, civic discipline would coincide with church discipline for state-church relations. To partake in communion was an important aspect of being a part of the larger society. To keep communion pure was important for community holiness. Soderberg notes the infamous Geneva Consistory, "devoted much time before quarterly communion services to facilitating the reconciliation of offended parties, and to drawing up a list of those who were unrepentant, and thus barred from communion" (67).

As the Reformation continued after Luther, many Reformers discovered that the frequency of communion and who received it were not clearly defined. Those who desired frequent communion as the ideal (such as Calvin) settled for more infrequent participation, due to the issue of preparation for taking the Lord's Supper. There was a concern that frequent communion would lead to an abuse of participation without right repentance, reflection, and in an "unworthy manner" as is stated in 1 Corinthians 11:27. This led to communion being celebrated more often than had been in the Pre-Reformation church but less than weekly or monthly. Biblical debates became common, with those in favor of infrequent communion citing the Old Testament practices of feast days and seasonal celebrations, and those in favor of frequent communion emphasizing New Testament passages.

For Protestant thinkers in the colonies of North America, the debates concerning frequency and preparation continued. Puritan thinkers held to a strong belief in preparation and an inquiry as to who was "worthy" of communion. Throughout Soderberg's work, there is a connection between preparation and communion frequency. How do Christians know if they are prepared to take communion? For centuries, many Christians went through a catechism before taking the Lord's Supper. Surprisingly, Puritans and other English Reformers had a similar practice that specified certain criteria. Catechism, quoting the Apostles Creed, confession, weeks of repentance, fasting, and purifying were conducted to lead up to the moment a community participated in communion.

Reinforcing social bonds was an important reason for those in favor of infrequent communion. For example, during the Pre-Reformation period, annual communion during the high point of the church calendar at Easter was not considered a spiritual problem but an annual celebration that brought people together. Some of this thought continued. While being steeped in the Reformed tradition, the Scottish church stands out as having very intense "communion seasons" (178). These times involved congregations gathering for multiple days of preaching, prayer, and fasting in preparation for the *annual* celebration of the Lord's Supper. These times became intense days of spiritual renewal for Scottish congregations.

These meetings of Scottish Christians would influence the revivalism that spurred the first and second Great Awakenings. Although later revivals would not be centered around preparation for communion, they would still involve a time of people gathering for repentance and spiritual renewal. This precursor to American revivalism is easy to see as it was common in Reformed churches for the responsibility to be placed on parishioners to prepare themselves. Figures like Matthew Henry, Cotton Mathers, and Jonathan Edwards instructed people to "soul search," and "examine themselves," to see if they were ready to partake. These same concepts of personal introspection can be seen in modern revival language.

New England Puritan standards for communion were important to creating and maintaining a "holy" community, but many times these high standards for participation in communion deterred people. Not all ministers in American Reformed churches had the same strict views regarding communion frequency and who could participate. One example can be seen in the theology of Solomon Stoddard, the grandfather of Jonathan Edwards. Stoddard "questioned the tight restrictions that had been placed on participation in communion" (158). Pastoring in what was at the time the frontier in 1670s' North America, Stoddard taught that the Lord's Supper was a "converting ordinance" inviting those who were not truly regenerate to participate and fully repent. Stoddard's stance created a theological controversy with other Reformed ministers in the colonies.

It is common to think of debates about communion to be solely concerned with what is happening to the elements. Soderberg's work helps us to ask questions of how often, who should, and how should we partake? To partake in communion is to prepare oneself to receive and participate in an act of Christian worship that Jesus established. While Soderberg's work specifically reflects those in the Reformed Protestant tradition, other Christian traditions can take away that participation in communion should not be taken lightly. There is a spiritual depth taking place during communion.

This depth is something that the New Testament and Reformers grasped and emphasized. A participation in communion connects Christians with Christ and the larger universal church. But churches also do not want to become "puritanical"

with the Lord's Supper. Only for those who think of themselves as "worthy." The practical focus should not be on checking a list to see if one is ready for communion but asking the question in the first place. Soderberg eloquently paraphrases Jonathan Edward's thoughts on feeling qualified to come to communion. "If we feel a deep sense of our unworthiness to come, then we should definitely come" (174).

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Carmen Joy Imes. *Being God's Image: Why Creation Still Matters*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2023. Pp. 231 pp. ISBN 978-1-5140-0020-5. $22.00 (USD) paper.

Being God's Image: Why Creation Still Matters is a captivating work that seeks to make the complicated task of understanding the *Imago Dei* (image of God) simpler to grasp in its relation to human identity. Quickly differentiating being God's image and bearing God's name, author Carmen Joy Imes articulates the deliberation to refrain from utilizing the bearing God's image language to avoid the construct that humanity simply bears the image of God rather than is the image of God. Separating the book into three parts, part 1 begins in Genesis 1–11 taking a detour through the Bible to explore one vital question: "What does it mean to be human?" Part 2 introduces the focus for living a meaningful life through the Wisdom books of the Old Testament—Proverbs, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, and Job—and the ever-present existence of human suffering. Part 3 moves towards the New Testament, focusing on how Jesus' incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension relate to what it means to be human in an idolization of Jesus as the ultimate portrait. Contrasted with the human identity remains the profound discovery that creation still matters and serves as an essential part of humanity's vocation.

Imes from the beginning reminds readers that creation still matters. Creation matters now and for eternity, as followers of Christ wrestle with what it truly means to be the image of God. To explore the question of what it means to be human, Imes provides a dissected articulation of Genesis 1 and the beginning of creation, providing readers with a simple yet profound analysis of ancient Israelite cosmology and the importance of Sabbath as the culmination of creation. Recognized through the explanations provided stands the indication that one's human identity is being God's image, carrying an opposition to the profits of consumerism in the present world. As those created in the image of God, we are stewards over the land provided, recognizing humans as companions sharing equivalent status before God. Fulfilling a care of creation features more than simply an ecological view of sustainability (though this must be a priority), but Imes places an

overwhelming emphasis that living the *Imago Dei* recognizes that all humans are created as God's image, deserving of dignity, rather than humanity's pattern of violence and human exploitation. Building empires of security manifests an idolatry reflective of an inversion of humans' creation purpose, instead of submitting to creation and relying on the Creator.

Shifting to the wisdom books, Imes teaches that wisdom should be wanted, not as an achievement but a muscle that must be exercised demonstrating a choice to trust God. Including words from scholars such as James K. A. Smith and N. T. Wright, Imes determines loving God and neighbor are sure ways to help discern what is best. Mirroring the life of Solomon and David, serves the reminder that we are not enough without God, matching the expressions in the Psalms and Proverbs inviting a longing to deeper relationship, raising humans to wrestle with emotions as a path of human suffering and vulnerability. Recognizing human suffering in our inabilities is humbling according to Imes, curbing the expectation to consider oneself superhuman or indispensable. The purposes of God's creation are larger than one person. This is a community project.

In the last section, Imes engages a path forward, focusing attention on Jesus incarnate opening a new future for humanity. Jesus' ability to defeat temptation and being full humanity according to Imes, serves a profound implication, pointing a way to our embodiment. From each human's embodiment and the life of Jesus, Imes identifies the right to feel passion towards abuses of power, though anger must be checked under the cover of justice, human flourishing, and environmental health. The key is the resurrection of Jesus, indicating God's continuing purpose for embodied humans on this earth, as human mortality provides a vision towards future restoration. Imes recognizes the sociological and political structures that have blocked a path toward embodied humans living in community, reckoning with the histories of racism and disability that have not promoted full inclusion, seeing fellow image bearers as disembodied. Reminding readers "on earth as it is in heaven," Imes concludes with a focus centered on the future restoration of the kingdom, while encouraging followers of Christ to turn from sin and exercise the human task as stewards of all creation.

The importance of the subject of the *Imago Dei* prompts the question: how should we live? Throughout the book, Imes provides readers with a simple storyline, using questions, key ideas, and Bible Project resource videos as opportunities to answer this very question. The selective researched accounts are expertly reflected and decisively articulated. Additionally, despite the complexity and scope of research, Imes provides a balanced work that builds continuously for readers that may not be as familiar with the research or the theological background of the conversation. Imes brings a theological topic into the minds and hearts of the readers, exegeting how embodied humans should live towards all

humanity. As such, I can freely recommend this work to scholars, pastors, and all seeking to live as embodied humans recognizing the *Imago Dei* in each individual. Ultimately, Imes has provided a valuable resource, one that I can say will enrich and transform the way humans live and care for one another, recognizing the *Imago Dei* in all and why creation still matters.

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Jennifer M. Matheny. *Judges 19–21 and Ruth: Canon as a Voice of Answerability*. Leiden: Brill, 2022. Pp. 296. ISBN 978-90-04-521740-4. $155.00 (USD) hardcover.

Judges 19–21 and Ruth: Canon as a Voice of Answerability by Jennifer M. Matheny is an intriguing volume that sets out to examine the possibility of there being a canonical voice(s) of answerability for the voiceless and marginalized women of the Judges 19–21 narrative. Matheny Holds a PhD from the University of Kent and is currently Associate Professor of Christian Scriptures at George W. Truett Theological Seminary. Matheny begins her search for this canonical voice of answerability by turning to the book of Ruth, due to its presumed historical setting as well as place in the canon after Judges in the Septuagint, while using a Bakhtinian literary framework. Bakhtin's dialogism becomes the main hermeneutical lens in which Matheny approaches these two works. Matheny, in the vein of Brevard Childs, takes a canonical approach to the Old Testament by seeing these texts in polyphonic dialogue. For Matheny her goal is to research and provide an examination of the intertextual possibilities between Judges 19–21 and Ruth which have long been hinted at or presumed by scholars, but never fully examined. The crux of Matheny's work is her identification of genre for these two narratives as dialogic משל. For Matheny these two narratives are meant to be read as parables that leave narrative gaps for the audience to reflect on their own ethical responses to the narratives. Matheny utilizes her Bakhtinian framework to examine each of these stories in isolation from one another. She chooses to focus on the intertextual canonical possibilities of each of these narratives as she examines many of the confusing vocabulary choices and narrative oddities in canonical context (ex. the use of הַמַּאֲכֶלֶת in Judges 19 and Genesis 22). It is at the end of her work that she finally brings the two narratives into discussion with one another. Her main interests are in the dichotomy between the two books. There are the voiceless women in Judges 19–21, but female agency and speech in Ruth. There are extreme and grotesque examples of חרם in the Judges narrative in which the Israelites practice "ban" against their own people, but examples of חסד expressed in familial terms as well as opened to the foreigner and other. There is the role of the woman in

Judges as פילגש (concubine), which are often treated poorly, and the role of Ruth as אשה המת (wife of the dead), which Matheny argues seems to act as a reversal of the פילגש as Ruth is instead honored and treated as "better than seven sons…". Through this close reading of intertextual utterances, Matheny places Ruth as a text that acts as a voice of answerability to the silenced and abused women of Judges 19–21. The book then ends with a brief biography of Mikhail Bakhtin that traces the broad movements of his work and life.

The first thing that needs to be praised for this work is Matheny's willingness to sit in tension. She never seems to rush her own work or feel like it is required of her to smooth out the polyphonic nature of her work. This allows her to thoroughly examine each of the narratives within an intertextual canonical framework that seeks to not only view each of these narratives as a part of the canon, but also as supporting or contrasting voices to other portions of the canon. As the horrifying tale of Judges provides a view of degradation and violence, the voice of Ruth may provide an answer or ethical response of female agency and shared *hesed*.

Matheny also does an excellent job of interacting with Mikail Bakhtin's often complicated and extensive literary framework. She not only utilizes it holistically in her work to draw attention to the polyphonic nature of the canon and each of the narratives themselves, but she does so in a way that invites her reader to share in her joy of Bakhtin's work. Even readers who are not particularly familiar with a Bakhtin literary framework should be able to follow along with Matheny's examination and argument well, due to her careful explanation and examination of Bakhtin's work as it is used to undergird her own work.

My main concern with Matheny's work is her identification of Judges 19–21 and Ruth as being dialogic משל in form and function for Judges and function for Ruth. For Matheny identifying these two texts as dialogic משל enables her to view them as "parables" that are meant to have ethical responses derived by the reader due to the "gaps" in the Hebrew narrative that provide and allow for places of ethical consideration. This is an interesting framework, but the concern is her lack of boundaries as to what is defined as a משל and what is not. Broad literary genres can be helpful, and necessary. But when there are no strict boundaries placed as to what does and does not qualify as a משל and the boundaries become so elastic it can become difficult to explain the significance of Judges 19–21 and Ruth as a dialogic משל. I do think that within her Bakhtinian literary framework, Matheny has correctly identified these two narratives. However, her lack of qualifiers may leave the reader wondering about the significance of this. If everything is a משל then nothing is a משל.

In conclusion Matheny presents an incredibly engaging work on the relationship between Judges 19–21 and Ruth. Her insistence on the polyphonic nature of the canon helps to open-up the canon as a place of both conflicting and

harmonizing voices that provides answers to passages in which there seems to be none. However, her lack of definition of what a dialogic משל is and is not remains problematic. Without this clear definition it becomes difficult to truly ascertain how helpful her framework may be for examining other passages in canonical context with each other. Matheny does provide an interesting conclusion and adequately brings these two texts that have long teased scholars with their seeming connections. This book will certainly be of interest for scholars intrigued in the overlap between biblical studies and Bakhtinian literary frameworks as well scholars doing work on the books of Judges and Ruth, specifically from a canonical perspective.

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Leah Payne. *God Gave Rock and Roll to You*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2024. Pp. 248. ISBN 978-0-1975-5524-8. $29.95 (USD) paper.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, I lived through plenty of Pentecostal youth gatherings. Since most services included a heavy dose of Pentecostal holiness, postures toward music proved critical to formation. I obsessed over my love for "secular" music, yet in a moment led by the Spirit – or a moment of weakness, I threw my secular music into a "sin bin" (a hockey metaphor for the penalty box), turned from my evil ways, and became an avid first-generation consumer of "Contemporary Christian Music" (CCM). While I have long since repurchased my "evil" music and defiantly raised my children on secular music, I reflect often on my teenage and young adult experience. Leah Payne traces the story and impact of a radical music movement, and along the way, she invites me – and other readers – to discern yet again if "God gave rock and roll to [us]."

Payne merges her craft as an American religious historian with insider credentials. She is not only the daughter of a Foursquare pastor, but she married an aspiring CCM artist and moved to Nashville in 2002. She surely enjoys her careful research on the top twenty-five albums on *CCM Magazine* and *Billboard* Christian music charts from the late 1970s through 2023. She interviews an array of CCM artists, producers, and journalists as well as businesspeople, church leaders, politicians, and activists throughout the industry. In 2020, Payne initiated a survey on CCM that garnered more than 1200 responses, a veritable collection of CCM testimonies. She then locates this data within the larger story of late-twentieth-century and early-twenty-first-century Evangelicalism.

Payne offers a page-turning history of CCM, one of the largest mass media markets in the twentieth century, and captures its impact on the shaping of suburban, middle-class American adolescents and young adults. According to Payne,

CCM reveals the face of white evangelical beliefs and practices and trumpets evangelical values about gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, social issues, and the rise of nationalism. This message begins with the private and public life of every artist: "Record labels included morality clauses that would ensure their roster would live up to evangelical moral standards, which usually included faithfulness in marriage, modest clothing, and abstaining from drugs and drunkenness" (64). Successful artists must make muster with white evangelical mothers and youth pastors before their music could be consumed by daughters, sons, and students. If not, artists would fail to launch. CCM becomes an "invaluable tool for molding" Evangelical children "socially, spiritually, and politically" (2).

Historians will resonate with Payne's ability to provide an interdisciplinary web on the impact of CCM on Christian America. She locates CCM emergence within the surge of Pentecostals and Charismatics of the 1960s and 1970s. Larry Norman's song "Why Should the Devil Have All the Good Music?" captures the pragmatic impulses of aspiring artists. Payne walks through a nostalgic "who's who" of first-generation solo artists such as Larry Norman, Marsha Stevens, Andraé Crouch, Mylon LeFevre, Daniel Amos, Randy Stonehill, and Keith and Melody Green and bands such as Children of the Day, Agape, Love Song, 2nd Chapter of Acts, and Resurrection Band. These artists emerge out of the long-haired, psychedelic aesthetics of the Jesus movement, and some of them, like Norman, literally testify to "No More LSD for me, I met the man from Galilee" (41). The unassuming rise of CCM begins with ambitious artists and bands who play at youth meetings, church basements, campuses, coffee shops, and church camps across the country. Artists soon teamed up with churches for denominational gatherings and joined forces with ministries such as Youth for Christ (YFC), Campus Crusade for Christ, and Youth With a Mission (YWAM). Successful artists would secure labels and move into full-time business.

The prototypes for the second wave of artists are Amy Grant and Michael W. Smith. They offer a more polished look than Jesus rockers: "if Grant was the evangelical Barbie of CCM, the unattainable ideal of beauty and virtue of her generation, her friend and collaborator Michael W. Smith was the complementary Ken doll" (62). CCM delivers wholesome models for beauty, health, and prosperity. Male artists like Smith, Steven Curtis Chapman, Leon Patillo, David Meece, Bryan Duncan, and Benny Hester provide a Christian alternative to George Michael, Lionel Richie, or Bryan Adams. Similarly, Grant, Debby Boone, Twila Paris, Michelle Pillar, Lisa Whelchel, and Leslie Phillips, with their hair scrunchies and shoulder pads, rescue teenage girls from the likes of Madonna and Cyndi Lauper. Of course, artists like Petra and Stryper and theatrical performers like Carman will not allow for the demise of rock. The CCM lineup affirms parental and pastoral values, encourages evangelism, strengthens family, promotes

holiness and sexual purity, elevates spiritual warfare, enlivens social concerns, and bolsters patriotism. In recent decades, more artists push toward progressive boundaries of social justice (e.g., racism, violence, LGBTQ+), while others join their voices with "apostolic, prophetic, wonder-working, dominion-seeking, Zionistic" messengers.

Payne parallels the rise and decline of CCM to the plight of Christian bookstores. By the 1980s, Christian bookstores thrived across North America, and they sell more than books! These stores capitalize on the sale of CCM albums and merchandise. Performance tracks soon pave the way for a new era of special music. These "tracks" run their course until they give way to praise and worship bands with rock instruments in church! The sudden rise of global charismatic worship events ushered in by the likes of Hillsong and Bethel becomes the paradigm for weekly worship performers/ministers in mega- and smaller local churches. While choirs, organs, and hymnbooks prove no match for rock-band liturgies, the rise of worship bands leads to the collapse of bookstores like Family Christian Bookstores and Lifeway, the Southern Baptist Convention chain, and it results in the subsequent demise of CCM. When vinyl, cassettes, and CDs give way to audio and video streaming, CCM and Christian bookstores suffer a near fatal blow.

Throughout this work, Payne tells wonderful tales familiar to many insiders but startling to outsiders. Payne narrates countless stories that stir nostalgic laughter and tears, joy and anger, and pleasure and groans – often at the same time. For example, what's not to love about band names based on Scripture: 2nd Chapter of Acts, Skull Crushers (Rom 16:20), and Stryper (Isa 53). How is it that significant leaders such as Billy Graham endorse Christian rock and Foursquare icon Jack Hayford mentors 2nd Chapter of Acts, while the likes of Jimmy Swaggart (cousin to Jerry Lee Lewis!) and Bill Gothard find the "devil" in every rock band? Who can forget Amy Grant's three-button controversy, the ironic conversion of Stryper band members by way of Jimmy Swaggart's TV program, or Michael W. Smith's song "There She Stands", a tribute to the American flag raised by firefighters following September 11 and the oft-used soundtrack for George W. Bush's "War on Terror"? Payne provides readers a timely and entertaining (!) volume that engages carefully and simultaneously several academic domains including worship, liturgies, Evangelicalism, politics, and entertainment. And one more thing: Readers should renew Spotify before opening the book. You have been warned.

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