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Contents

“Unchangeably Alive”: Karl Barth’s Trinitarian Doctrine of the Divine Constancy
Scott P. Rice

The Mission that Transforms: A Development of Joseph’s Character in Genesis 37–50
Josef Sykora

Heaven Has No Sorrow that Earth Cannot Feel: The Ethics of Empathy and Ecological Suffering in the Old Testament
Alexander Coe Stewart

A Social-Scientific Reading of Hebrews 13:11–14 from a Postcolonial Milieu
Batanayi I. Manyika

The Mother of All Sanctuary: Deep Feminism and *bassēter,* “in Secret,” in Psalm 139:15
J. Gerald Janzen

Being “In Christ” Today: Paul’s Letter to the Contemporary Church in North America
Michael J. Gorman

Book Reviews

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Contents

Foreword v
Christopher Zoccali

"Unchangeably Alive": Karl Barth's Trinitarian Doctrine of the Divine Constancy 1
Scott P. Rice

The Mission that Transforms: A Development of Joseph's Character in Genesis 37–50 11
Josef Sykora

Heaven Has No Sorrow that Earth Cannot Feel: The Ethics of Empathy and Ecological Suffering in the Old Testament 19
Alexander Coe Stewart

A Social-Scientific Reading of Hebrews 13:11–14 from a Postcolonial Milieu 35
Batanayi I. Manyika

The Mother of All Sanctuary: Deep Feminism and *bassēter,* "in Secret," in Psalm 139:15 51
J. Gerald Janzen

Being "In Christ" Today: Paul's Letter to the Contemporary Church in North America 69
Michael J. Gorman

BOOK REVIEWS 86

Foreword

This issue of *Canadian Theological Review* will be the last one under that name. As of the first issue of 2016 (volume 5), *CTR* will become *Canadian-American Theological Review (CATR)*. Our new title reflects the recent expansion of our parent organization, the Canadian Evangelical Theological Association, which has now become the Canadian-American Theological Association. *CATR* will continue to publish scholarly articles and book reviews from across the spectrum of theological disciplines, including biblical studies, and historical, systematic, moral, and pastoral theology. We are also pleased to announce that the full text of all *CTR/CATR* content (of every volume published) will be available as of Fall 2017 on the American Theological Library Association (ATLA) database.

Christopher Zoccali, editor-in-chief.

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"Unchangeably Alive": Karl Barth's Trinitarian Doctrine of the Divine Constancy[1]

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Abstract

Karl Barth shapes his treatment of the divine constancy (immutability) around the notion of God as "the One who loves in freedom." In this essay I argue that Barth's trinitarian theology furnishes him with another essential, albeit easily unrecognized, resource in conceiving of divine immutability. One task of this essay is to illuminate the subtle trinitarian framework for Barth's treatment of the divine constancy. Along the way I expound upon the significance of Barth's trinitarian theology in working to reconcile a notion of divine immutability with the revealed vitality of God in the divine work of creation and reconciliation. Furthermore, in response to a critique by Wolfhart Pannenberg, I make the case that Barth's doctrine of the divine constancy opens up a new depth of perspective in the way that he conceives of the relation between the divine love and freedom along trinitarian lines.

Karl Barth situates his treatment of the divine constancy, Barth's preferred term for divine immutability,[2] within the context of his doctrine of God as "the One who Loves in Freedom" (*Church Dogmatics* [*CD*] II/1, §28). The key features of Barth's doctrine of God are evident in this slogan: God loves in the plenitude of the divine freedom, and expresses this freedom in the eternality of the divine love.

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[1] This article represents a slightly revised version of a paper presented at the Canadian Evangelical Theological Association/Northeastern Seminary joint theological conference, "Participating in God's Mission," held at Northeastern Seminary, Rochester, NY, on March 19, 2016.

[2] Barth's preference for constancy over immutability is largely semantic. It specifies the positive dimension of God's unchangeability. *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of God*, II/1, eds. G. W. Bromiley, T. F. Torrance, trans. T. H. L. Parker, W. B. Johnston, Harold Knight and J. L. M. Haire (Edinburgh: T&T Clark LTD, 1957), 495. I am thus less inclined than Henrikus Berkhof to identify this move with Barth's polemical comments on the "pure *immobile*" (*CD* II/1, 494). "The (Un) Changeability of God," in *Grace Upon Grace: Essays in Honor of Lester J. Kuyper*, ed. James I. Cook (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 23.

Even a cursory reading of Barth's formal doctrine of the divine constancy in §31.2 of *CD* II/1 makes clear just how much Barth relies on the attributes, or what Barth calls perfections, of the divine love and freedom. What God does, writes Barth, "in virtue of His freedom for the sake of His love" is never "surrender," but always a "self-affirmation of His freedom and His Love." Barth hastens to add: the "living God in His self-affirmation is the immutable (God)" (*CD* II/1, 495).

In this essay I propose to explore the view of Trinity in Barth's formal treatment of the divine constancy.[3] In the introduction to this treatment Barth claims that God not only lives in self-affirmation of the divine life, but also in "eternal self-repetition (*ewiger Wiederholung*)" of it (*CD* II/1, 492; *Kirchliche Dogmatik* [*KD*] II/1, 554).[4] The reader familiar with the doctrine of revelation from the first volume of the *CD* will at once recognize an allusion here to Barth's trinitarian theology: God exists in a "three-fold repetition" of the divine being; the "one God in each repetition" as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In turn, the repetition of God's being in eternity mirrors the repetition of God in revelation and the thrice-repeated disclosure of God's lordship that accompanies it (*CD* I/1, 299, 351).[5] God's activity in created reality (*ad extra*), as such, has its basis within the triune being of God itself (*ad intra*). A likened pattern can be detected in Barth's construal of the divine constancy.

While the influence of Barth's doctrine of God's being—that is, the divine love and freedom—in his formal treatment of divine immutability is relatively clear, the impact of Barth's trinitarian theology for his understanding of the divine constancy is far less evident. Barth makes only a limited number of references to the doctrine of the Trinity in the entirety of this paragraph. Nevertheless, Barth's trinitarian theology, as I will argue, furnishes him with an important, albeit easily unrecognized resource for conceiving of divine immutability and the question of God's relation to the world. The primary task of this essay is to draw out the way in which Barth's trinitarian thought supplies a basis for his construal of God's activity in creation and the work of reconciliation in light of the immutable being of God. Following this I will look back to the connection between Trinity and the animating features of Barth's doctrine of God in the divine love and freedom. Wolfhart Pannenberg once critiqued Barth for not adequately linking the divine love and freedom in view of the trinitarian notion of God.[6] Barth's notion of constancy can by no means be used to provide an exhaustive response to Pannenberg's critique. However, as I will show, Barth's doctrine of the divine constancy opens up a new depth of perspective in the way that he conceives of the relation between the divine love and freedom along trinitarian lines.

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[3] Engagement with Barth's doctrine of the divine constancy has tended in one of four directions. (1) Most prominent is the investigation into the relation between Isaak A. Dorner's three-part essay on immutability from the 1850s and Barth's construal (see *CD* II/1, 493 for Barth's note of indebtedness to Dorner). Robert Sherman, "Isaak August Dorner on Divine Immutability: A Missing Link between Schleiermacher and Barth," in *The Journal of Religion* 77/3 (1997): 380–401; and most extensively, Sang Eun Lee, *Karl Barth und Isaak August Dorner: Eine Untersuchung zu Barths Rezeption der Theologie Dorners* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang GmbH., 2011), 153–198. (2) Bruce L. McCormack assesses the relation between the divine constancy and Barth's more christologically attuned doctrine of God as reflected in his treatment of election in *CD* II/2. "The Actuality of God: Karl Barth in Conversation with Open Theism," in *Engaging the Doctrine of God: Contemporary Protestant Perspectives*, ed. Bruce L. McCormack (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 231–42. (3) Colin E. Gunton puts it in conversation with the process thinker, Charles Hartshorne. *Becoming and Being*, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 205–207. (4) Finally, the following offer some of the few sustained engagements with Barth on the topic: Todd B. Pokrifka focuses on Barth's use of Scripture and also the connection to Dorner. *Redescribing God: The Roles of Scripture, Tradition and Reason in Karl Barth's Doctrine of Divine Unity, Constancy and Eternity* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010), 197–247. Likewise, Robert B. Price takes up Barth's notion of constancy while also attending to McCormack's proposal. Price gives rare attention to the place of the Trinity. *Letters of the Divine Word: The Perfections of God in Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics* (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 128–43, esp. 130–32. This essay can be seen as a further extension of Price's analysis.

[4] Karl Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik* II/1 (Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1980).

[5] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/1: *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975). Price states: "When Barth says that the divine constancy is grounded in the 'self-repetition' of the divine life, he means that constancy is a perfection of the divine essence in, and not abstracted from, the eternal triune relations between Father, Son and Spirit." *Letters of the Divine Word*, 130.

Trinity and Divine Constancy

Barth's treatment of the divine constancy in §31.2 begins with an affirmation of the classical conception of God as immutable being and proceeds to address the theme through scriptural exegesis and assessment of its place in the theological tradition. Here Barth lays out his criticism of the static conception of immutability with the Protestant scholastic Polanus and Barth's own qualified notion of a "holy mutability" in God (*CD* II/1, 496).[7] The remainder of the paragraph, following Robert B. Price's ordering, breaks down into two subsequent sections: God's involvement in the stages of salvation history and the immutability of God as it comes to expression in Jesus Christ.[8]

Barth's theological method shapes his construal of the divine constancy. It is characteristic of Barth's theology to proceed on the basis of God's self-revelation. This entails theological formulations, at least in intention, built from the ground up in view of the scriptural testimony to God's salvific actions. The divine constancy is no different. The meaning of the concept of immutability is not given *a priori*, but rather is determined by the self-disclosure of God; or as Barth puts it, the subject—God—defines the predicate—immutability—and not vice versa (*CD* II/1, 493). As Katherine Sonderegger writes of Barth, apart from the act of God it is "no more meaningful or proper to say that God is unchanging than that God is essentially episodic, leaping in and out of Being like an impulse or broken signal."[9] And what is revealed in God's dealings with Israel and the early Christian community is the unchangeability of God in bringing the covenantal relation to fulfillment and all the liveliness that entails. In this way Barth's treatment of the divine constancy formulates the problem at hand just as Isaak Dorner did before him; that is, how to reconcile the *unchanging nature* of the being of God depicted in Holy Scripture with the divine *vitality* that marks God's revelatory history.[10]

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[6] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Problemgeschichte der neueren evangelischen Theologie in Deutschland: von Schleiermacher bis zu Barth and Tillich* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 259; also, Pannenberg, "Problems of a Trinitarian Doctrine of God," in *Dialog* 26, trans. Philip Clayton (1987): 251.

[7] Bruce A. Ware provides a summary statement of this idea: the capacity of God "to change in his attributes, conduct and relationships with humans in ways that both accord with his changeless intrinsic moral nature and properly confront the human moral situation." "An Evangelical Reformulation of the Doctrine of the Immutability of God," in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 29/4 (Dec 1986), 440.

[8] Price, *Letters of the Divine Word*, 129.

In order to reconcile the livingness of God with a notion of divine immutability, Barth—again, like Dorner—envisages the conceptual grounds for the activity of God in the world within the divine being itself. Barth describes such activity as an "overflowing [*Überströmen*]" of the divine plenitude (*CD* II/1, 505; *KD* II/1, 568).[11] The metaphor has a two-fold meaning: It highlights that, in relating to another, the essential being and identity of God remains intact. Moreover, it points to the dynamism of God's self-grounded actions in the world. In his introductory remarks Barth makes reference to God as the "fullness of difference, movement, will," the very "origin of all created change" (*CD* II/1, 491). Barth's trinitarian theology, as we will see, allows him to conceive of the revelatory work and history of God as rooted, in particular way, within the divine life. It is a conception in which the pairing of God's *immutable being* and *vitality* has its primal expression in the trinitarian reality of God. God, writes Barth, is "unchangeably alive [*unveränderlichen Lebendigkeit*]" (*CD* II/1, 511; *KD* II/1, 574).

Creation and Reconciliation

I turn now to the trinitarian theology of Barth as it underlies his treatment of salvation history and the immutable being of God. Noted above, explicit mention of the Trinity in §31.2 is sparse, occurring only once in any substantial way within this sub-section. That Barth's trinitarian understanding of God, nevertheless, has a material effect upon his construal of the divine constancy is what I will show in what follows. I begin with Barth's account of the work of creation.

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[9] Katherine Sonderegger, *Systematic Theology: Volume 1, The Doctrine of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 103. See also Sonderegger's insightful comparison of Barth's doctrine of predication to the Euthyphro problem, 104.

[10] Isaak A. Dorner, *Divine Immutability: A Critical Reconsideration*, trans. Robert R. Williams and Claude Welch (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 135.

[11] The metaphor has its basic meaning in Barth's treatment of the being-in-act of God (*CD* II/1, §28): God "turns to us in the overflow of the perfection of His essence and therefore of His loving, and shares with us, in and with His love, its blessedness. This blessedness of the love of God is founded on the fact that He is Father, Son and Holy Spirit and as such loves us: as our Creator, Mediator and Redeemer, as love itself, the One who loves eternally" (*CD* II/1, 283).

Nothing in the reality that God brings forth compels God to create. On Barth's view, creation is, in keeping with the theological tradition, a free act of God. Moreover, it is an act that coheres with the very nature of God's being (*CD* II/1, 500). God acts in the freedom of the divine love. This applies both to God's being in itself, and, likewise, to all of God's externally directed acts. The work of creation as coherent with the being of God, however, is not to be understood as a kind of extension of the divine self with the world that comes to be. "What God has in Himself," writes Barth, "is the ground of [creation's] existence and essence and not that existence and essence itself" (*CD* II/1, 500). In fact, it is with the difference between God and created reality that the trinitarian basis of Barth's account comes into view.

Creation, writes Barth, is "the new thing of a reality distinct from [God]." It is the place, brought into existence by God, inclusive of "diversity," "vitality," "life and movement," a place of complexity and change (*CD* II/1, 500–501). The markers of worldly existence—diversity, novelty, and movement—are each brought into being through the creative work of God. Moreover, they have a prior basis in the being of God itself. What is created is not-God, distinct from God's self; and yet, insofar as it is "by God" in whom it has its "ground," it comes forth in a gracious act of freedom. Similarly, "it is by [God] that there is the new thing of a reality distinct from Himself . . . by Him that all new things in this reality exist . . . in the fact that He is the One who is eternally new" (*CD* II/1, 500). God, free and unchangeably alive, grounds creation in God's own being. Barth's trinitarian theology, however, further specifies how creation relates to the being of God in two ways.

First, in the doctrine of the Trinity from *CD* I/1 Barth details the begetting of the Son by the Father, and, likewise, of the Spirit from the Father and Son, to designate a primal and unique form of "origination" in the Godhead (395).[12] He goes on to describe this as an "event" in the divine life, a form of relationality in God inclusive of "movement" and in keeping with the eternal repetition of the three "modes [or ways] of being" in God (CD I/1, 355). In the eternal relations of God, in short, there is a movement, albeit an eternal one, of the second and third modes of being in God *from* the first.[13]

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[12] Similarly, Barth writes: "In contrast to everything that we know of origination and causation, creation denotes the divine action which has a real analogy, a genuine point of comparison, only in the eternal begetting of the Son by the Father, and therefore only in the inner life of God Himself, and not at all in the life of the creature." *Church Dogmatics* III/1, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, trans. J. W. Edwards, O. Bussey and H. Knight (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1958), 13–14.

[13] Barth's use of the term "modes of being [*Seinesweisen*]" intends to push back against a nineteenth century understanding of person as a distinct center of self-consciousness. *CD* I/1, 355–57, 359; *Die kirchliche Dogmatik* I/1 (Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1980), 374. On Barth's argument against the historic notion of modalism, see *CD* I/1, 382.

Second, Barth portrays the communion between the Father and Son as a "fellowship in separateness and separateness in fellowship." The Spirit subtends this fellowship in God in such a way as to maintain the unity and plurality of the divine being at once (*CD* I/1, 480). In this way, the being of God in the life of the Father, Son, and Spirit takes shape in the form of a perennial communion. Their fellowship is the "negation of isolation" in God, patterned upon the unity and distinctions of God's trinitarian being (*CD* I/1, 483). To be at once distinct *and* united gives expression to the internal movement that constitutes the eternal reality of God's three modes of being. It is a kind of dialectical interplay of God's unity-in-distinction and distinction-in-unity that manifests the vitality of God's unique life.

As noted above, God is constant as the one who is "eternally new" (*CD* II/1, 500). No other reality in God captures the novelty, movement, and vitality of the divine being than does the inner-relationality, the unity and distinctions, of God's three modes of being. Before there is a new reality, distinct from Godself, there is a *newness* that belongs to the dynamic life that characterizes the intradivine nature of God's being; but, notably, a sense of novelty in which God remains who God is, or simply is God's self. For this reason God can bring something new into being distinct from Godself, something in which ongoing change persists, and can relate to that new thing while maintaining the eternal self-identity of God. God *can* because the new is not alien to God but has its very source in God's being as triune. The same pertains to the diversity that has its primal basis in the unity-in-distinction of the divine persons. The significance of this comes to fore in that God creates not only freely, that is, out of the divine self, but also with a purpose that conforms to the trinitarian life of God. A claim from Robert W. Jenson is apt here: "It is God's Trinity that allows him to create freely but not arbitrarily."[14]

What Barth has done here is to situate the conditions for the possibility of God's relation to the world in the being of God itself. Creation, as we have seen, is an act of divine freedom and an expression of God's love. Barth forefronts these perfections—the divine love and freedom—in his description of the divine constancy. Against the background of the doctrine of the Trinity, however, it becomes clearer that the internal grounds of creation belong at the most basic level to the being of God as Father, Son, and Spirit. For the freedom of the divine loving, in view of God as triune, is open to the new insofar as all novelty is rooted in the unchanging, yet lively, unity-in-distinctions that mark the divine life of God.

In dealing with the first stage of salvation history Barth offers an idea of the grounds for creation in the self-same being of God (or, as I stressed, in God's triune being). In his subsequent treatment of salvation history's second stage, reconciliation, Barth turns his attention to the question of God's relation to the world in the sense of the divine presence to the fallen creature. How, in view of the divine constancy, do the actions of God before the fallen creature cohere with the truth of God's eternal identity? Moreover, it is here, in the reconciling work of God, that Barth narrows in on the notion of a history of God "in and with the world created by him" (*CD* II/1, 502). In the work of reconciliation God is present to the world as "the real subject of this real history [*das reale Subjekt dieser realen Geschichte*]" and by it God "leads the world to a future redemption" (*CD* II/1, 502; *KD* II/1, 565). This is the particular history of God with Israel and the Church, both of which have as their ultimate presupposition the person and history of Jesus Christ (*CD* II/1, 513, 515). Barth's trinitarian theology serves to inform his construal of God as the subject of a real and reconciling history with the world.

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[14] Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2: *The Works of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 28.

In order to account for the reconciling history of God with the world, Barth sets forth a contrasting depiction of God and creaturely reality at the level of *being*. Barth does not provide a condensed account of atonement in this section. Rather, like his treatment of God's creative work, he specifies an ontological condition in God, which underlies and makes effective the work of reconciliation and with it, points to the living reality of God in the world.

The transition from creation to reconciliation is fluid. The work of divine salvation contains within it the creative activity of God insofar as reconciliation itself is a new act that confirms God's prior identity as creator. It is also fluid, however, because reconciliation pertains to the relation between God and the creature, which, as will become clear, God sustains through the power of the divine being. In this sense the doctrine of reconciliation approximates that of the divine preservation. From this perspective Barth describes the sin of the creature as an act of resistance against the grace of God by which it is always and everywhere upheld. But the creature, specifically as creature, lacks the necessary grounds of its own autonomy. Its defection against the creator means that it faces "the possibility of self-annulment" (*CD* II/1, 503). The result is an internal conflict, a being at odds with itself, that characterizes creaturely existence. This clash of the creator and the dependent, yet defiant, creature sets the stage for the significance of Barth's appeal to the doctrine of the Trinity.

The potential of the creature for annulment is, in contrast, an impossibility for the being of God. In one of the few explicit mentions of the doctrine of the Trinity in Barth's dealings with the divine constancy, he writes that "God would not be God" if God did not exist in "perfect, original and ultimate peace between the Father and the Son by the Spirit" (*CD* II/1, 503). Within this sub-section of §31.2 no other reference to the trinitarian nature of God's being is made. But this passing reference is significant in at least two ways. First, and most basically, the invocation to the doctrine of the Trinity here serves as the most explicit foundation that Barth supplies in designating the peaceful nature of God's internal being. Second, the peace of God derived from the Father-Son relation stands in contrast to the hypocrisy of the creature in that God exists in irrevocable harmony with Godself. In other words: God *cannot* not be; the creature *can* not be. Still, more can be said: God, in the harmony of the inner-relations of the divine modes of being, is at peace, at one with Godself in eternal fellowship of love; the creature faces the possibility of its destitution.

Along these lines Barth describes reconciliation in terms of an encounter between God and the creature. Inasmuch as the creature "rejects the preserving grace of God," God "opposes the opposition of the creature to Himself"; God "confronts," "has mercy," and "befriends" the fallen creature (*CD* II/1, 504–06, 515). The significance of the divine peace, manifest in the Father-Son relation, lies in that God's very inability to be untrue to Godself—more appropriately, the divine faithfulness—is also the possibility of a reversal in the fortunes of the creature. "God cannot cease to be God," to cease to act as the "Lord of the world, and therefore of the sinful world" (*CD* II/1, 504).[15] God is not captive to the internal conflict of the creature. "As the One who is peace in Himself," God is "not diverted from His purpose" to love the fallen creature in accordance with the divine loving, in a "overflowing of the divine fullness" (*CD* II/1, 504). For this reason God can be the creature's helper.

Furthermore, Barth's doctrine of the Trinity underlies a notion of divine immutability in the reconciling activity of God. God interacts with the fallen world and encounters the rebellious creature without undergoing a change in the self-identity of God. The possibility for genuine relation and an underlying continuity on the part of God has its basis in the trinitarian dimension of the divine peace. If God were sheer singularity, void of internal differentiation, then relation with another (i.e., created reality) would entail a fundamental alteration for the being of God. The biblical God, however, is "not a God of confusion but of peace" (1 Cor 14:33). God is not at the whim of another. Rather, God relates to another out of the internally differentiated whole of the divine life.[16] Everything hinges here on the fact that the substance of that life is peace. For in relating to another,

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[15] Barth writes: "His Godhead embraces both height and depth, both sovereignty and humility, both lordship and service. He is the Lord over life and death. He does not become a stranger to Himself when in His Son He also goes into a far country. He does not become another when in Jesus Christ He also becomes and is man. Even—and why should we not say precisely?—in this He is God in supreme *constancy*, in supreme affirmation of His faithfulness, not only to us, but primarily and supremely to Himself." *Church Dogmatics* IV/2, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1958), 84; emphasis mine.

[16] Similarly, Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 405–406.

God does not only remain true to God's self-identity, but works in others the peace that God knows in the fellowship of God's trinitarian being.[17]

It only remains to clarify that God, the "real subject" of reconciliation, also has a "real *history*" with the world (*CD* II/1, 502; emphasis mine). It is worth noting here that Barth's affirmation of a real, living history of God with the world runs up against a traditional notion of God's relation to creation as conceptual, and only creation's relation to God as real.[18] That being said, Barth's account does not entail the introduction of relational potency into the life of God by means of interacting with the creature. God, in relating to another, remains the being-in-act that God is; but all importantly, the "essence of God . . . is . . . His *act* as Father, Son and Holy Spirit" (*CD* II/1, 273; emphasis mine). Barth's trinitarian starting point provides him the means to conceive of a prior relationality in the harmony of the divine life—the Spirit-filled peace between the Father and Son—by which God actively relates to creaturely reality out of the sheer abundance of God's being. In the plurality of times and contexts that make up the salvific history of God, the unchanging peace of God overflows anew to the creature that God loves and wills to restore. For this reason the self-identity of God goes unchanged in the history of God in the work of reconciliation.[19]

Conclusion

In this essay I have attempted to illuminate the notably understated place of the doctrine of the Trinity in Barth's idea of the divine constancy. It is clear that I take Barth's trinitarian theology to have a significant degree of functionality despite the limited references to it in this paragraph of *CD* II/1. I have argued that Barth's claims around the creative and reconciling activity of God are most naturally situated within his trinitarian theology, and thus best explicated accordingly.

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[17] Incidentally, it is in this sense that Barth understands the scriptural accounts of the divine repenting (e.g., Gen 6:6; Jer 18:1–10; 26:2–3, 36:3; Joel 2:13). For in the divine repentance God does not "repent of being the One He is." And, moreover, the repentance of God almost always intends to invoke a corresponding repentance on the part of the creature. God chides the creature, but "as real chiding it is a function of His love active in freedom" (*CD* II/1, 495–98).

[18] Thus Thomas Aquinas: "Since . . . God is outside the whole order of creation, and all creatures are ordered to Him, and not conversely, it is manifest that creatures are really related to God Himself; whereas in God there is no real relation to creatures, but a relation only in idea, inasmuch as creatures are referred to Him." *Summa Theologica*, I.Q13.A7.co., trans. English Dominican Fathers (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1920). For an overview and assessment of Thomas's position on the relation of God and the world, see Thomas G. Weinandy, *Does God Change? The Word's Becoming in the Incarnation* (Still River, MA: St. Bede's Publications, 1984), 89–96; and, from a different angle, William Lane Craig, "Timelessness, Creation and God's Real Relation to the World," in *Laval théologique et philosophique* 56/1 (2000), 95–102.

[19] One will note the exclusion of a treatment of redemption here. This largely has to do with the minimal attention Barth gives to the final stage of salvation history. Barth links reconciliation and redemption quite closely here: "reconciliation is real reconciliation because it makes us those who wait and look and move towards the redemption which has already taken place for us and is ready for us" (*CD* II/1, 510). It would be telling, although beyond the scope of this essay, to relate the scarce treatment of redemption with an eschatologically orientated construal such as that of Jürgen Moltmann, Wolfhart Pannenberg, or Robert W. Jenson.

The trinitarian background in Barth's treatment of creation locates the basis for what is other than God within the dynamism of God's life, and specifically, in the three modes of the divine being. Creation, in this way, is a free and orderly act. For creation has its ultimate basis in the antecedent alterity and origination of God's trinitarian being, just as the novelty of creation proceeds from the eternal newness the divine life. Similarly, Barth continues the account of salvation history by grounding the reconciling activity of God in the peace of the Spirit-mediated relation of the Father and Son. The essential nature of God in the fellowship of God's three modes of being allows Barth to speak of a real history of God with the fallen creature in which the self-identity of God goes unchanged. In fact, this point holds throughout. Relating to another out the riches of God's trinitarian being, God acts in conformity with Godself—as such, God is constant.

Finally, it was pointed out in the introduction that Barth's doctrine of God has been critiqued for not making explicit the connection between the divine love and freedom along trinitarian lines (Pannenberg). In his treatment of the divine freedom Barth describes the secondary absoluteness of God as the divine freedom to be immanent in another, first within God's triune self and, secondly, in the world.[20] The "principle and basis of all divine immanence" lay in the second person of the Trinity, the divine Son (*CD* II/1, 317). Barth's treatment of the divine constancy makes this point clear: the immanence of God in the divine Son, specifically in his reconciling history with the fallen creature, reveals the divine freedom to be an expression of the love of the Father and Son in the Spirit. This idea accords with Barth's claims around the unity of God's freedom and love. In the divine constancy, however, that unity is demonstrated at the particular level of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ—in the peace of God manifest in him by which God saves the internally conflicted creature. In this way, the unity of God's freedom and love comes to expression in the harmony that constitutes God's life as Father, Son, and Spirit.

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[20] The primary absoluteness of the divine freedom is the plenitude of God or God's unconditionality (*CD* II/1, 300–309).

CANADIAN THEOLOGICAL REVIEW | 2015 ❦ Volume 4 • Issue 2

The Mission that Transforms: A Development of Joseph's Character in Genesis 37–50[1]

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Abstract

In Genesis chapters 37–50 it is Joseph, the beloved son of Jacob, who furthers the purposes of God for his people. In chapter 37, not foreseeing the consequences, he tells his brothers of certain dreams of his that appear to speak of his future dominance in the clan. But later, in chapter 50, we see a mature Joseph who is reluctant to accept the gesture of obeisance from his siblings. Are there any indications in the story suggesting that Joseph has acquired certain traits that now permit him to react to his brothers in a more life-giving way? I will argue that the story can be read in this way, and propose that both Joseph's submission to those who had authority over him, and his ability to come to terms with his own feelings, enabled him to fulfill his God-given mission in a life-enhancing way.

Reasons for Joseph's Development in Genesis 37–50

In Genesis 37–50 the purposes of God for Israel center on Joseph, the beloved son of Jacob. Several chapters earlier, in Genesis 12, YHWH had chosen Abraham, assured him of his presence and blessing, and promised him that his offspring will possess the land of Canaan (Gen 12:7). The son who eventually will carry this Abrahamic promise into the future is not Abraham's firstborn Ishmael, but his younger sibling Isaac, to be born of Sarah (Gen 17:19–21). This replacing of the firstborn son with a younger brother becomes a characteristic feature of Israel's identity, and carries over even into the last section of the book,[2] where it is Joseph who is the object both of Jacob's (Gen 37:3–4) and God's favor (Gen 37:5–11). Joseph is given dreams, apparently speaking of his future authority within the family and dominance over his brothers, which he appears to enjoy telling to his older siblings (Gen 37:5, 9). Yet, when the long narrative reaches its end, Joseph is reluctant to accept the gesture of obeisance from his brothers. When the brothers came and threw themselves down before him, suggesting they will become his slaves (Gen 50:18), he exclaimed: "Am I in the place of God? . . . Do not be afraid, I will provide for you and your children" (Gen 50:19–21). What has changed in Joseph's character that he is eventually able to embody God-given dreams in a life-enhancing way? Are there any indications in the text that Joseph has developed in the story beyond his youthful and seemingly vainglorious years?[3]

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[1] This article represents a slightly revised version of a paper presented at the Canadian Evangelical Theological Association/Northeastern Seminary joint theological conference, "Participating in God's Mission," held at Northeastern Seminary, Rochester, NY, on March 19, 2016.

[2] Among recent works, note especially Jon D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Joel S. Kaminsky, *Yet I Loved Jacob: Reclaiming the Biblical Concept of Election* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007); and Benedikt Hensel, *Die Vertauschung des Erstgeburtssegens in der Genesis: Eine Analyse der narrativ-theologischen Grundstruktur des ersten Buches der Tora*, BZAW 423 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011).

Although the narrative nowhere makes explicit such a growth in Joseph's character, I will argue that the Joseph story can be read in this way. Specifically, I will discuss two episodes in Joseph's story which may be interpreted as equipping him with those necessary traits that will enable him to fulfill God's purposes in a way that increases, rather than diminishes, human life and wellbeing.

Learning to Submit

The first such episode is that which takes place when Joseph dwells in Potiphar's house in chapter 39, after having been brought to Egypt by a group of merchants and bought by Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's guard (Gen 39:1). He becomes one of his slaves, but Potiphar quickly discerns Joseph's extraordinary abilities and gives him the oversight of his entire household (Gen 39:2–6a). Close attention to the text reveals even starker contrast between Joseph's tragic enslavement upon his transition to Egypt and his elevated position in Potiphar's house. While at the beginning of chapter 39 he is bought "from the hand of the Ishmaelites" (מִיַּד הַיִּשְׁמְעֵאלִים) (Gen 39:1), as the story progresses Potiphar puts everything he owns "in his hand" (בְּיָדוֹ) and places him over Potiphar's house (Gen 39:4).[4] Such a reversal, which in fact occurs twice more in the story—when Joseph is imprisoned (Gen 39:22) and later when he is brought to Pharaoh (Gen 41:40)—is a direct result of YHWH's being with Joseph and God's continued blessing (Gen 39:2–6a). The divine name "YHWH" is rare in the Joseph cycle, appearing mostly here in this episode, where it is found eight times (Gen 39:2, 3[2x], 5[2x], 21, 23[2x]). This cluster of occurrences, coupled with the emphasis that it is YHWH who blesses Potiphar because of Joseph, alerts the reader that the future successes of Joseph will also be due to YHWH's presence and blessing.[5] Joseph thus displays the characteristics of a chosen person that began to be seen at least with Abraham.

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[3] In focusing on the development of Joseph's character in the story, I do not wish to diminish the way in which the narrative highlights God's providence in Joseph's life—a facet perhaps most famously brought out by Gerhard von Rad in "The Story of Joseph," in *God at Work in Israel*, trans. John H. Marks (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1980), 19–35.

[4] The word "hand" (יָד) functions as one of the keywords of chapter 39, occurring here six times.

However, in the middle of chapter 39 this success seems to be endangered when Joseph is tempted by Potiphar's wife (Gen 39:6b–20a). Joseph succeeds in this test. Although he is later imprisoned, the reader knows that he withstood the advances of Potiphar's wife, despite her accusations that it was the Hebrew slave who urged her to sleep with him. The cloak found in her hand (Gen 39:13—Joseph's life is again in the hand of somebody else!) is not evidence of Joseph's sexual promiscuity but of her callousness and power.[6]

It might be helpful at this point to focus our attention at the reasons offered by Joseph for not yielding to the woman's temptation, while he still had a chance to verbally respond to her advances.[7] Here one gets a rare window into Joseph's attitudes and motives. Joseph refuses the offer of sexual pleasure, and says to his master's wife:

> "Look, my master has no concern for anything in the house, and he has given everything that he has into my hand. There is none greater in this house than I am, nor has he withheld anything from me except yourself, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" (Gen 39:8–9)

Commentators usually find embedded in this speech two reasons for Joseph's ability to maintain his moral uprightness.[8] First, Joseph recognizes that although everything in Potiphar's house is given into his hand, this "everything" does not include his master's wife. This exclusion from Joseph's realm of authority and responsibility is not made explicit in the preceding text, although verse 6 does mention that Potiphar kept in his own hands "the bread that he ate," which might be an idiom for Potiphar's private affairs.[9] In any case, the exclusion of Potiphar's wife can easily be deduced from the broader context. A servant's responsibilities do not typically extend as far as pleasing his master's wife.

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[5] Westermann helpfully reorients the repeated occurrence of the divine title "YHWH" toward the text's function. The reference to YHWH may create a theological introduction to the Joseph story, through which the narrator highlights that YHWH was the source of Joseph's achievements. See Claus Westermann, *Genesis 37–50: A Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion, CC (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986), 62.

[6] Nevertheless, the rabbinic exegesis has been traditionally more willing to attribute some fault to Joseph for allowing himself to fall into this temptation. Did he curl his hair to be beautiful and hence attractive for Potiphar's wife? Did he know that none of the servants were inside of the house and he decided to enter it nevertheless? See Rashi's comments in M. Rosenbaum and A. M. Silbermann, eds., *The Pentateuch with the Commentary of Rashi: Genesis* (Jerusalem: Silbermann, 1972), 191–92.

[7] When Potiphar's wife approaches Joseph the second time (Gen 39:11–12), there is no chance to put forward argument; it's time to run.

[8] See, for example, Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis*, trans. Mark E. Biddle, MLBS (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997), 407–408; and Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, trans. John H. Marks, Rev. ed., OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1972), 364–65. In fact, both seem to consider the moral problem with adultery the more significant reason for Joseph's refusal.

The second reason given by commentators for Joseph's ability to maintain his integrity is his unwillingness to sin against God. This then prompts them to find some scriptural evidence to substantiate this reasoning. For example, although in his detailed commentary on the Joseph story Jürgen Ebach states that the first reason—that is, Joseph's acknowledgment of the limitation of his oversight—is the more important of the two, he nevertheless spends several paragraphs trying to establish a pentateuchal basis for seeing adultery as a sin.[10]

Contrary to this approach, I would like to suggest that Joseph's speech reveals only one reason for his restraint. Joseph does not want to breach the trust of his master, and *this is* what he considers to be the sin against God. At least, this is the *prima facie* reason indicated in chapter 39. The beginning of the chapter stresses that Potiphar left all that he had in Joseph's hands (vv. 4, 5, and 6), because "YHWH caused all that [Joseph] did to prosper in his hand" (v. 3). God's blessing was the primary cause why Potiphar entrusted everything that he owned into Joseph's hands. Breaching Potiphar's trust meant breaching YHWH's trust. These two are intrinsically connected. This being said, it does not mean that one cannot look for moral reasons or scriptural support for basing Joseph's restraint on his fear of adultery. Nevertheless, it seems to me that founding it on Joseph's submission to Potiphar—which, in turn, acknowledges some limitation to his otherwise vast area of responsibility—is more explicitly grounded in the narrative.[11]

This reason for Joseph's restraint, in my opinion, shows something fundamental concerning the growth of his character. In is interesting that in all three successive realms of Joseph's authority—Potiphar's house, the prison, and the Egyptian court—he is always second-in-command (Gen 39:6, 23; 41:43). He is never the sole head of any of these places, but always needs to submit to somebody higher than him. And he honors this limitation and need for submission meticulously. Sometimes, as in Potiphar's house, this helps him to maintain his moral integrity, even though as a result he ends up descending to yet another pit,[12] namely into prison (see Gen 40:15). Sometimes, as in the house of Pharaoh, this is exemplified perhaps more negatively, as he buys up all of the land for Pharaoh, his master (Gen 47:20)—showing that even this positive trait may have its dark side.[13] Nevertheless, it demonstrates, in my opinion, something indispensable for anyone who is given grandiose visions. He who is chosen to rule must learn to submit.

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[9] On this see Lothar Ruppert, *Die Josephserzählung der Genesis: Ein Beitrag zur Theologie der Pentateuchquellen*, SANT 11 (München: Kösel, 1965), 46.

[10] Ebach finally settles on Deut 22:22 as the most suitable pretext: "If a man is caught lying with the wife of another man, both of them shall die, the man who lay with the woman as well as the woman" (NRSV). See Jürgen Ebach, *Genesis 37–50*, HThKAT 3 (Freiburg: Herder, 2007), 180.

[11] Similarly also Claus Westermann, *Joseph: Eleven Bible Studies on Genesis*, trans. Omar Kaste (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 26–27.

[12] Levenson considers Joseph to be an exemplar of symbolic death and resurrection. Joseph's threefold descent—into the pit, to slavery in Egypt, and to his imprisonment after the incident with Potiphar's wife—represents a series of downward steps that eventually have a transforming effect on his life (Levenson, *Death*, 150–52).

Learning to Be Vulnerable

The second episode that may be interpreted as contributing to Joseph's development is that of the reconciliation of Jacob's family (Gen 42–45), the other major subplot of the Joseph cycle. When the impoverished brothers unknowingly appear before Joseph, now the Egyptian vizier, to beg for food, Joseph has his chance for revenge. He employs a number of harsh measures (Gen 42:7 says that "he spoke harshly to them"), which can be variously interpreted. They can indeed be seen as an act of retaliation by which Joseph repays his brothers with suffering similar to his own.[14] Or, they can be viewed as a series of tests (Joseph himself characterizes his actions as a "test"—see Gen 42:15), implemented so that Joseph both learns of his father's and Benjamin's fate, and discovers whether his estranged siblings have undergone any inner change.[15] More pertinent to our present discussion, however, is the self-control Joseph exhibits, which accompanies his severe treatment of his brothers.

When Joseph decides to keep Simeon in his custody until the rest of the brothers return with Benjamin, the brothers begin to reminisce about their former mistreatment of Joseph, which they consider to be the cause of their present difficulties (Gen 42:21). This is especially true of Reuben, who accuses his siblings of not heeding his objections, and voices his opinion that the present enslavement of one of them is directly connected with their previous enslavement of Joseph (Gen 42:22). When Joseph hears this comment (unbeknownst to them, he did not need a translator to understand their Hebrew—Gen 42:23), he turns away and weeps (Gen 42:24). He then returns to the brothers and resumes his conversation with them.

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[13] A number of authors evaluate Joseph's enslavement of the Egyptians negatively. See, for example, Berel Dov Lerner, "Joseph the Unrighteous," *Judaism* 38 (1989): 278–81; Yiu-Wing Fung, *Victim and Victimizer: Joseph's Interpretation of His Destiny*, JSOTSup 308 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), esp. 38; and Aaron Wildavsky, "Survival Must not be Gained through Sin: The Moral of the Joseph Stories Prefigured through Judah and Tamar," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 62 (1994): 37–48. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that the story itself never makes such a negative evaluation explicit. Joseph enslaved the Egyptians in response to their own proposal (Gen 47:19), and they viewed this action of his as saving their lives (Gen 47:25).

[14] Consult especially Stuart Weeks, *Early Israelite Wisdom* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 94; Gunkel, *Genesis*, 424; and Peter D. Miscall, "The Jacob and Joseph Stories as Analogies,"*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 6 (1978): 28–40, esp. 34. Similarly, replete with psychological insights, Pete Wilcox, *Living the Dream - Joseph for Today: A Dramatic exposition of Genesis 37–50* (London: Paternoster, 2007), 57.

[15] See, for example, von Rad, *Genesis*, 30; Westermann, *Joseph*, 66; and Bill T. Arnold, *Genesis*, NCBC (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 353.

Something similar happens again later when the brothers return with Benjamin and Joseph finally sees (after a long time, or for the first time ever) his mother Rachel's youngest son. Joseph is overwhelmed with emotion,[16] and hastily leaves the room to weep again (Gen 43:30). He returns to eat a meal with his brothers only after he regains control of himself again (the Hebrew verb אפק is used here in Gen 43:31).

The series of Joseph's emotional breakdowns finally culminates during the long speech Judah makes (Gen 44:18–34) after Benjamin is accused of stealing Joseph's silver cup (Gen 44:11–17). Both the theft itself and the false accusation were, of course, instigated by Joseph himself (Gen 44:1–5). When Joseph hears, during the course of Judah's speech, that Judah is willing to substitute himself for Benjamin—a brother loved by their father more than he (Judah) is—and to take upon himself the punishment of slavery in place of Benjamin, Joseph can no longer control himself (Gen 45:1—the phrase uses the same Hebrew word אפק as 43:31). He sends everybody else away so that he is left alone with his siblings. However, the outburst of emotion is so overwhelming, and Joseph cries so loud, that the whole of Pharaoh's household hears it (Gen 45:2). That which was meant to remain private—the depth of Joseph's hurt, and his bond and re-connection with his brothers—thus becomes public.

This highly emotional situation in which Joseph weeps and Pharaoh's whole house hears it may be interpreted in at least two complementary ways. On the one hand, as Joseph's self-disclosure to his stunned siblings reveals, this is a pivotal moment in which the breach within the family begins to heal.[17] Although the estrangement is not entirely removed after Joseph's revelation of his identity (Gen 45:5)—which is only natural in close relationships that have been deeply fractured—the brothers are once again part of Joseph's intimate circle. He does not need to hide the tears that betray his personal connection to, and emotional bond with, the impoverished Hebrew travelers; rather he can be vulnerable together with them.[18]

On the other hand, from now on Joseph freely weeps on several occasions: when he further talks to his brothers (Gen 45:14–15), when he finally meets his father (Gen 46:29), when Jacob dies (Gen 50:1), and when his brothers ask his forgiveness after their father's death (Gen 50:17). The emotional upheaval brought about by Judah's speech seems to have changed something in Joseph's behavior.

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[16] The phrase כִּי־נִכְמְרוּ רַחֲמָיו אֶל־אָחִיו (“for he was overcome with compassion for his brother”) points to a strong emotion on the part of Joseph towards his younger sibling. The verb כמר, appearing only in *Niphal* in the Old Testament (1 Kgs 3:26; Hos 11:8), depicts an intense parental affection.

[17] Benno Jacob focuses on this aspect of Joseph's emotional reaction when he underscores that Joseph weeps for his brothers (and especially Benjamin) and his father, but never because of his own misfortunes. See Benno Jacob, *Der erste Buch der Torah Genesis* (Berlin: Schocken, 1934), 210–11.

[18] Bosworth suggests that weeping in several recognition scenes in the Joseph cycle illuminates the attachment that Joseph felt towards his brothers. See David A. Bosworth, “Weeping in Recognition Scenes in Genesis and *Odyssey*,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 77 (2015): 619–39.

It is an intriguing observation that as long as Joseph is in control of himself, he is also in control of others.[19] However, when he loses his self-control, he also relinquishes his dominance over his brothers. Joseph's softer approach to his brothers goes hand in hand with the loss of his ability to completely control himself. This openness to his own vulnerability and emotions is not something that he has sought, but was forced upon him.[20] Joseph is caught in the web of his own stratagem, which eventually reveals not only the inner attitude of his brothers, but also the condition of his own heart. Seen in this light, it may be possible that one's mission can be carried out in a life-enhancing way when one comes to terms with past pain and becomes more open to one's own vulnerability.[21]

The Mission of God and Godly Character

By way of conclusion, I will now attempt to bring closer to the realms of practical life and theology the two foregoing observations. Joseph's dreams, which he relates to his older brothers in chapter 37, might have been brought to life in various ways. They could have been appropriated in a crude and dominant way—in a manner similar to the brothers' exclamation: "Will you indeed *rule* over us?" (Gen 37:8). Or, they could have been lived out in a more nurturing manner, one more akin to service than to domination. The end of the story depicts Joseph taking the latter approach, because the mature Joseph has acquired characteristic traits that are needed for accomplishing God's mission in a godly way.

The plans and visions that God has for us may be brought to fulfillment in various ways. Therefore, equally as important as God's mission itself is the kind of godly character that can bring God-given dreams to fruition in a way that increases, rather than decreases, life and wellbeing. Especially for a person who is destined to lead, it is crucial to learn and maintain an appropriate posture of submission. Although Joseph's dreams clearly speak of his leadership, he always submits to somebody higher than himself. To be subordinated to somebody else seems to function so as to provide vital checks and balances to those in authority, and Joseph's story is a good example of it.

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[19] For the connection between Joseph's self-control and his control over his brothers, see Ebach, *Genesis*, 385.

[20] Ebach attempts to complement Jacob's observation by stressing that Joseph's tears also betray his own hurt and grief. See Ebach, *Genesis*, 384–85. On the issue of Joseph's emotional development consider Fred Guyette, "Joseph's Emotional Development," *Jewish Biblical Quarterly* 32 (2004): 181–88. Joseph's vulnerability is explored in David Zucker, "Seize the Moment," *Jewish Biblical Quarterly* 37 (2009): 197–99.

[21] This is, in fact, in contrast to Josephus's evaluation of Joseph, which makes him, curiously, a man of reason (*Ant*. 2.198), devoid of emotions. Josephus mentions Joseph's tears in Gen 42:24 (*Ant*. 2.109) and Gen 43:30 (*Ant*. 2.123), but avoids them later on (see *Ant*. 2.160, 2.166, 2.184).

Similarly, Joseph's willingness to be more vulnerable in the presence of others—although initially this is forced upon him—seems to be an important element in Joseph's ability to be more compassionate in his dealings with those who have hurt him in the past. Perhaps when we recognize that we cannot sufficiently control ourselves, we become more open to the recognition that we cannot control others either.

Fulfilling God's mission thus seems to be interwoven with the need for, and the actual forming of, godly character. It takes time—and often involves a painful process of maturing—to become the sort of people who build God's kingdom in a life-enhancing way.

CANADIAN THEOLOGICAL REVIEW | 2015 ❦ Volume 4 • Issue 2

Heaven Has No Sorrow that Earth Cannot Feel: The Ethics of Empathy and Ecological Suffering in the Old Testament[1]

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Abstract

All of creation groans with us while waiting for ultimate redemption, writes Paul (Rom 8); but several Old Testament prophets also give voice to the natural world's suffering due to our social injustice and selfishness. Do we feel the pain of non-human creatures empathetically, leading to repentance and compassion, or are we dismissive of such sentimentalism? This study introduces the emerging field of ecological virtue ethics with attention to emotional dispositions such as empathy, sympathy, and compassion. This has the advantage of approaching environmental issues from a different angle than the usual appeals to duty-based stewardship or pragmatic consequences alone. Mature empathy refuses to settle for a narrow imagination about the pain of other creatures yet also reaches beyond the cute and cuddly with the help of other virtues. The second half of the study outlines a biblical theology of personified ecological suffering in the Old Testament in order to see the kinds of suffering involved, the reasons for suffering, and the biblical responses to such pain. By combining ecological virtue ethics with biblical theology, we can attend to the suffering of creation in the Scriptures and in our present contexts, in order to cultivate empathetic sensitivity that benefits our Christian character and our communities. With ears to hear the pain, we can overcome denial and despair.

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[1] This essay won the Jack and Phyllis Middleton Memorial Award for Excellence in Bible and Theology, given at the Canadian Evangelical Theological Association Fall Regional Conference held at Tyndale University College and Seminary, on October 3, 2015.

1. Introduction

The title of this study is an allusion to Thomas Moore's hymn from 1816 entitled "Come, Ye Disconsolate." The initial refrain assures us that "Earth has no sorrow that heav'n cannot heal." David Crowder echoes this line in his 2014 song "Come As You Are."[2] Each refrain suggests that all *human* troubles on earth can be healed by God. But ecologically this is also our Christian hope for the rest of creation, since the whole creation "groans," as Paul puts it in Romans 8 (Rom 8:22)—groaning in pain and awaiting God's renewal at the resurrection (Rom 8:18–27; Col 1:15–20). But as we wait with our non-human neighbors, there is a complex and painful mess of unintended damage and self-interested exploitation that is not helping the ecological systems of our world to heal.

On its own, merely learning more details about the losses and crises does not equate to positive change in society, economic policy, or our personal courage and hope. As the contemplative wisdom tradition of Ecclesiastes puts it, "those who increase knowledge increase sorrow" (Eccl 1:18 NRSV). Or, as American environmentalist Aldo Leopold wrote, "One of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds."[3] While this is not the whole story, the Bible also portrays the natural world at times as a "world of wounds" and invites us to enter into that suffering, to feel it viscerally, and to be transformed through it. The Old Testament is a particularly profound resource for cultivating such empathetic sorrow and compassion.

In other words, part of the motivation for this study is to see if we could take a different approach to caring for the natural world, an approach not based on fear tactics or alarmist statistics and not based on well-worn appeals to "stewardship" duties, trendy animal "rights," or to consequences alone. It is my claim that we need an alternative, though complementary, approach to addressing our ethical (and unethical) engagement with the ecosystems in which we live. We need an approach that is not primarily a cognitive assault of information overload. Since all of creation is groaning in its suffering, and since we suffer as members of the created order too (cf. Rom 8:18–27), perhaps we could appeal to *emotional* virtues like empathy and compassion as motivations for us to change our harmful habits.

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[2] Thomas Moore, "Come, Ye Disconsolate, Where'er Ye Languish," in *Service Book and Hymnal* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1958), hymn 569. Hear the recent (2014) adaptation by David Crowder, "Come As You Are," in *Neon Steeple* (sixsteps Records, 2014). An earlier adaptation of Moore's refrain in Old Testament scholarship is that by Karen Pidcock-Lester, "'Earth Has No Sorrow That Earth Cannot Heal': Job 38–41," in *God Who Creates: Essays in Honor of W. Sibley Towner*, ed. William P. Brown and S. Dean McBride Jr. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 125–32.

[3] Aldo Leopold and Luna B. Leopold, *Round River* (Minocqua, WI: NorthWord, 1991), 165. Note Kathryn D. Blanchard and Kevin J. O'Brien's elaboration on Leopold: "To understand how serious environmental problems are, to know one's own complicity in the degradation of creation, and to feel responsible for helping to heal the world in the face of its deep sickness is indeed to live in a world of wounds." Blanchard and O'Brien, *An Introduction to Christian Environmentalism: Ecology, Virtue, and Ethics* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014), 168.

One way to attend to these character traits is to draw on the emerging field of ecological virtue ethics. Besides taking the path less traveled compared to most environmental stewardship discussions, this approach is also refreshing because it does not reiterate the Bible's overly-treated creation passages.

In the first half of this essay I give some definitions of the relevant emotions and virtues and address some common objections to "sentimentalism." Mature empathy refuses to settle for a narrow imagination about the pain of other creatures yet also goes beyond the cute and the cuddly, via the help of other virtues. The second half of the essay outlines a biblical theology that is focused on personified ecological suffering in the Old Testament, including the *kinds* of suffering involved, the *reasons* for suffering, and the biblical *responses* to such suffering.

My thesis is that by combining ecological virtue ethics and biblical theology we can attend to the suffering of the world in the Scriptures and in our lived contexts, in such a way as to stimulate a compassionate sensitivity that benefits our Christian character and our world. Since "earth has no sorrow that heaven cannot heal," it is equally true that *heaven* has no sorrow that earth cannot *feel*.

2. Emotions, Empathy, and Ecological Virtue Ethics

Some preliminary definitions of terms are in order. A selective use of fields such as philosophy and psychology will contribute to this interdisciplinary conversation with a Christian biblical theology of ecological suffering.

2.1 Defining emotions, feelings, and virtues

Emotions can be defined as our "impressions" of the world; these impressions can be sensed bodily as feelings and cultivated into passions that make up our moral character, whether virtues or vices.[4] Like a passion for gardening or watching films, moral passions can be trained and shaped by our behavior, concepts, and narratives (by which I mean, ways of looking at the world), and thus Christian emotions can be shaped by biblical texts, among many other factors.[5]

2.2 Defining empathy, sympathy, and compassion

Empathy and sympathy are similar capacities, and both ideally contribute to compassion. Philosopher Julinna Oxley defines empathy as the capacity to feel a similar emotion *because* another person is feeling that emotion (such emotion can be negative or positive).[6] For this study we are concerned with empathetic *distress* in feeling the pain of another entity or organism.[7] Sympathy goes one step further. It entails concern *for* someone, feeling sorrow for another person who is feeling a negative emotion.[8] The difference is between feeling distress *because of* another's distress (empathy) versus feeling sorry *for* the distressed person (sympathy), though there is much overlap.[9] Compassion is a combination of empathy/sympathy combined with loving concern and conduct toward another.[10] The opposing vices of compassion, sympathy, and empathy are apathy and aloofness, the refusal to see and identify with the other.[11]

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[4] Robert C. Roberts, *Spiritual Emotions: A Psychology of Christian Virtues* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 11. Emotions are closer to impressions than to judgments (ibid., 17, 19). While emotions are popularly equated with feelings, the reason for distinguishing them is because emotions are holistic, physical-spiritual responses that cannot simply be identified with the related sensations that manifest emotions or prompt them.

[5] Roberts, *Spiritual Emotions*, 27–31.

There are various ways that empathy can be stimulated and cultivated, from the rudimentary mimicry of babies crying within earshot of each other to more advanced modes of stimulation such as role-taking or "mediated association" through spoken or written texts.[12] Texts can provide us with the context and reasons for another's emotions,[13] and therefore the biblical texts portraying ecological suffering are one means of stimulating empathetic distress and compassionate dispositions and actions. An array of texts and events shape our ability to experience empathetic and sympathetic distress—to emotionally suffer *with* and *for* others.

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[6] Julinna C. Oxley, *The Moral Dimensions of Empathy: Limits and Applications in Ethical Theory and Practice* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 32. This flexible definition requires only that the empathizer's emotions are adequately similar to those experienced by the other person (the emotion need not be identical or equally strong in effect, and the emotion can match a positive or negative one). The definition is also broad enough to include any means of gaining empathetic understanding or resonance. For a summary of other definitions for empathy across various disciplines, see C. Daniel Batson, "These Things Called Empathy: Eight Related but Distinct Phenomena," in *The Social Neuroscience of Empathy*, ed. Jean Decety and William Ickes (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), 4–8.

[7] Oxley, *Moral Dimensions of Empathy*, 171, n. 8.

[8] Ibid., 17. See also Michael Slote, "Virtue Ethics and Moral Sentimentalism," in *The Handbook of Virtue Ethics*, ed. Stan van Hooft (Bristol, CT: Acumen, 2014), 58.

[9] Thus, while sympathy is a moral virtue, empathy is technically a cognitive virtue of "open-mindedness to others" that can be used along with other virtues and values to develop positive moral characteristics and habits. Oxley, *Moral Dimensions of Empathy*, 131–32.

[10] Roberts, *Spiritual Emotions*, 179. Roberts says that compassion includes the "construal of a suffering or deficient person as a cherished fellow." When viewing the weakness, suffering, or dysfunction in the other, a compassionate person will be motivated to act accordingly in the best interests of the one suffering (ibid., 180, 187–90). Roberts notes that in comparison to Greek literature and the virtue ethics of Aristotle, biblical texts are distinctive in that compassion is not reserved for those innocent of their suffering. Instead, Jewish and Christian compassion is modeled on God's own compassion and can extend to those guilty of wrongdoing and its punishment. Having experienced divine compassion in our own natural and moral suffering, we have motivation to be compassionate to others who, like us, are not innocent but are both perpetrators and victims.

[11] Roberts, *Spiritual Emotions*, 181.

[12] See the influential overview of Martin L. Hoffman, *Empathy and Moral Development: Implications for Caring and Justice* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), esp. 5, 7, 21, 49–52. According to Oxley, role-taking involves imagining another's perspective and feelings either via "self-focused" empathy (how would *I* feel in their shoes?), "other-focused" empathy (how would *they* feel in their shoes?), or "dual-perspective" empathy where we imagine both perspectives. Oxley, *Moral Dimensions of Empathy*, 23. Jean Porter observes that other-focused virtues cannot be cleanly separated from self-focused virtues. Porter, "Virtue Ethics," in *Textbook of Christian Ethics*, ed. Robin Gill, 4th ed. (1986. Reprint: London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 120, 123.

[13] Oxley, *Moral Dimensions of Empathy*, 41.

These emotions, however, do not always produce positive responses or actions helpful to the one suffering.[14] Certainly the distress could motivate sympathy and compassion, but it could also provoke anger, indignation at injustice, fear, avoidance, despair, guilt over inaction, guilt over causing the pain in the other, and so on. Empathy is also biased towards suffering we can see, suffering which is more urgent, and suffering experienced by those more similar than different to us.[15] There can be other defects of selfishness in our character that form additional barriers to empathy.[16] By itself, therefore, empathetic distress is not enough. Mature empathy requires a respect for the other entity or person as valuable, and must be exercised along with other virtues such as prudence, courage, humble temperance, righteousness, faith(fulness), hope, and love.[17]

These balancing virtues will keep us from the extremes of sentimentalism, on the one hand, where the cheesy and cliché reign supreme, and callous apathy, on the other hand, where we simply don't feel anything emotional even when entire watersheds are suffering from human carelessness.

2.3 Environmental empathy as sentimentalism or open-mindedness?

Since we are about to look at personified suffering of the non-human world in the Old Testament, we must address the issue of whether personifying non-human creatures and features of the landscape is a legitimate means of empathizing with them. We in the West are very quick to scoff at anthropomorphic plants or animals (as found, for example, in Disney's *Pocahontas*). We tend to dismiss this as so much sentimentalism, romanticism, or animism. But this dismissal is often informed by our faith in scientific modernism, which has disenchanted the world—a faith that is at odds with many parts of the biblical tradition.[18] In our disenchanted modernism, "The world around us has become an 'it' rather than a 'thou.'"[19]

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[14] For studies linking empathy to "prosocial" behavior see Nancy Eisenberg, Tracy L. Spinrad, and Zoe E. Taylor, "Sympathy," in *The Handbook of Virtue Ethics*, ed. Stan van Hooft (Bristol, CT: Acumen, 2014), 410.

[15] Slote, "Virtue Ethics and Moral Sentimentalism," 59; Oxley, *Moral Dimensions of Empathy*, 146.

[16] For example, there might be a deficit of previous suffering in one's life, a selfish bent to relieve, or wallow in, only one's *own* pain, as Jonah did (Jonah 4:3–11; see the insightful comment in Job 14:22). Or there might be an emotional dissociation from one's former or future vulnerability that breeds contempt for others who are weak or suffering. On these possibilities, see Roberts, *Spiritual Emotions*, 183–86. Eisenberg, Spinrad, and Taylor, "Sympathy," 410 describe the second obstacle—known in the literature as "personal distress"—as resulting in "the egoistic motivation to make oneself, not the other person, feel better."

[17] Blanchard and O'Brien, *Introduction to Christian Environmentalism*. Se also Roberts, *Spiritual Emotions*, 191–93. Other relevant publications on ecological virtue ethics include Steven Bouma-Prediger, "Creation Care and Character: The Nature and Necessity of the Ecological Virtues," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 50/3 (1998): 6–21; Steven Bouma-Prediger, *For the Beauty of the Earth: A Christian Vision for Creation Care*, Engaging Culture (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001); Ronald L. Sandler and Philip Cafaro, eds., *Environmental Virtue Ethics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005); Marilyn Holly, "Environmental Virtue Ethics: A Review of Some Current Work," *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 19/4 (2006): 391–424; Ronald L. Sandler, *Character and Environment: A Virtue-Oriented Approach to Environmental Ethics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); Philip Cafaro and Ronald L. Sandler, eds., *Virtue Ethics and the Environment* (New York: Springer, 2010).

To be sure, re-enchanting our feelings toward the world does not involve "naïve literalism" when we hear: "The land mourns and languishes" (Isa 33:9) or "How the animals groan!" (Joel 1:18). Yet neither is it proper to dismiss these personifications as "just" metaphors; that would result in our objectifying any creature that was not human, which would distance us from the rest of creation.[20] Perhaps we could resist a hasty and reductive imagination that considers only neurological pain and rational willpower. As an alternative, we could consider that some organisms experience pain and that even plants exercise something analogous to intentionality, though this would be in a different manner than our own—as when plants respond to loss by scarring or drooping.[21]

True, trees cannot literally "clap their hands" with joy (Isa 55:12) as humans can, but such metaphors portray the literal reality that trees can, indeed, respond to their Creator and to other creatures with various degrees of living responsiveness, whether in flourishing or in suffering.[22] If we have missed this ecologically significant fact, is it because our scientific modernism tends to "make us deaf to the actual experiences of creaturely responsibility and kinship?"[23] The biblical metaphors help us not only "hear" the responsiveness of trees, but also shape our ethical vision of mutual roles in the world.[24] Rather than primarily viewing trees as "lumber," such metaphors encourage us to treat them (and other creatures) as "kin rather than commodity."[25]

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[18] Brian J. Walsh, Marianne B. Karsh, and Nik Ansell, "Trees, Forestry, and the Responsiveness of Creation," *Cross Currents* 44/2 (1994): 151–52.

[19] Thomas Berry, *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future* (New York: Bell Tower, 1999), 17.

[20] Walsh, Karsh, and Ansell, "Trees, Forestry," 153.

[21] See Walsh, Karsh, and Ansell, "Trees, Forestry" for an excellent treatment of the biological and metaphorical dimensions of whether trees (and by extension other nonhuman creatures) can act as agents when our disenchanted Western imaginations fight against this way of seeing the world.

[22] Ibid., 160.

[23] Steven Bouma-Prediger, *The Greening of Theology: The Ecological Models of Rosemary Radford Ruether, Joseph Sittler, and Juergen Moltmann*, AARAS 91 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 283.

[24] Walsh, Karsh, and Ansell, "Trees, Forestry," 160. They note that metaphors function "both as visions *of* the world (or interpretive frameworks) and as visions *for* the world (providing an orientation for cultural and ecological praxis)."

[25] Earth Bible Team, "The Voice of Earth: More than Metaphor?" in *The Earth Story in the Psalms and the Prophets*, ed. Norman C. Habel, The Earth Bible 4 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001), 28. "Earthlings" (אדם) and "earth" (אדמה) are not just mutual servants in Gen 2:5 and 15, after all, but kin with literal common "ground" (Gen 2:7), observes William P. Brown, "The Moral Cosmologies of Creation," in *Character Ethics and the Old Testament: Moral Dimensions of Scripture*, ed. M. Daniel Carroll R. and Jacqueline E. Lapsley (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 14. See more on ecological metaphors and personification of the natural world in Terence E. Fretheim, "Nature's Praise of God in the Psalms," *ExAud* 3 (1987), 16–30; Hilary Marlow, "The Hills Are Alive! The Personification of Nature in the Psalter," in *Leshon Limmudim: Essays*

In a recent encyclical on ecological issues, Pope Francis encouraged all people to nurture a "fraternity with all creation" in the spirit of Francis of Assisi, who called other creatures and elements his brothers and sisters.[26] The Pope insists: "Such a conviction cannot be written off as naive romanticism, for . . . if we no longer speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world, our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters."[27]

In addition, even if another creature or feature of the world's ecosystem cannot literally suffer or respond, we could acknowledge God-given functions for each creature and ecosystem as part of a life-sustaining and theocentric whole, and we could thus experience empathetic suffering whenever we learn of a dysfunctional creature or feature.[28] Geoffrey Frasz explains:

> [So, I can] use my imaginative powers to see the world either from the perspective of another sentient being who is a center of a life or even as a natural entity that is made of many biotic and abiotic parts, such as a swamp, forest, or ecosystem. I can meaningfully ask what actions would benefit or harm that kind of entity as well, even though it is not conscious or sentient.[29]

This system-functional perspective on empathy will more amenable to those who find the approach of the Earth Bible publications to be too literal at times—too much like a Gaia hypothesis—when it comes to the "voice" of the planet and its inanimate parts.[30]

A few final caveats before we get to the biblical theology: Eventually, our capacity for other-centered empathy must expand beyond the cute and interesting flora and fauna to the mundane and even dangerous creatures where we live—

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on the Language and Literature of the Hebrew Bible in Honour of A. A. Macintosh, ed. David A. Baer and R. P. Gordon, LHBOTS 593 (New York: T&T Clark, 2013), 189–203; Beth M. Stovell, "'Sky Will Answer Earth, Earth Will Answer Grain': The Personification of Nature in the Book of the Twelve" (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the SBL, Baltimore, MD, November 24, 2013); Beth M. Stovell, "'I Will Make Her Like a Desert': Intertextual Allusions and Feminine Agricultural Metaphors in the Book of the Twelve," in *The Book of the Twelve and the New Form Criticism*, ed. Mark J. Boda, Michael H. Floyd, and Colin M. Toffelmire, ANEM 10 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 37–61. See also a previous issue of *Canadian Theological Review* for the importance of metaphor and personification as a means of "listening" to the nonhuman world: Deborah Bowen, "'Seeing Beyond the Scenery': Exploring the World through Metaphor," *Canadian Theological Review* 2.1 (2013): 59–78.

[26] Pope Francis, "Encyclical On Care for Our Common Home (24 May 2015)," *Laudato si'* AAS 107 (2015): 221, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html. Cf. sections 1, 2, 11, 49, 53, 87, 92, 221, 228, 246.

[27] Ibid., section 11.

[28] See Geoffrey Frasz, "Environmental Virtue Ethics: A New Direction for Environmental Ethics," *Environmental Ethics* 15/3 (1993): 129.

[29] Ibid.

[30] See Earth Bible Team, "Voice of Earth," 24.

even to entire species, ecosystems, and watersheds.[31] We must not operate solely with a "beauty bias" but must attend to the ugly, disheartening parts of the world.[32] Similarly, we must realize that death and animal predation are not necessarily evil in God's creation. The book of Job and life experience teach us that some chaotic and violent elements in the world are necessary parts of God's design in mysterious ways,[33] even if pain and death are finally enemies that will disappear (Isa 25:6–9; 1 Cor 15:26, 54–57; Rev 20:4). In other words, our compassion toward the non-human world need not be overly sentimental.

Informed empathy will take larger ecosystems into account and balance non-human interests and suffering with human interests and suffering.[34] We must also find a balance between the extremes of free-market environmentalism, on the one hand, where financial incentives and human self-interest are supreme, and Dr. Seuss's *Lorax* on the other hand, since the Loraxes of the world believe that we can save the world if we just care "a whole awful lot."[35]

To summarize so far, our emotions are impressions of the world that can be cultivated into passions formative of our character. Various influences, including mediated association through texts, can mold our empathy and sympathy—so we can suffer with and for others—even if this suffering does not always result in compassionate care by itself. Empathy for non-human creatures and features is possible if we are not narrow about creaturely responsiveness or our importance in God's world. We must avoid favoring only the beautiful flora and fauna, and avoid extreme sentimentalism that denies the positive role of death and predation at present. Likewise, however, we must avoid apathy or contempt in relation to other creatures and habitats, lest we become callous, cynical, or heartlessly economic about what is worthwhile. Wisdom and other virtues are needed to supplement empathy.

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[31] Frasz, "Environmental Virtue Ethics," 126.

[32] Tara Flanagan, "The Broken Body of God: Moving Beyond the Beauty Bias in Ecological Ethics," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 39.2 (2012): 146–50.

[33] See Brown, "Moral Cosmologies," 18–20; Tom McLeish, *Faith and Wisdom in Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 102–45. Job learns of a fierce but good world that is not centered around humans. Both sacrificing and (eventually) the eating of animals are permitted within biblical tradition, but the creature's life is respected via the prohibition against consuming its blood, which represents its life (Gen 9:3–4; Lev 17:10–14).

[34] We can eat meat, fight against certain insects, and reduce deer where overpopulation exists, for example. Throughout this study I assume the complementary perspectives of hierarchy and mutuality in Gen 1 and Gen 2 in which we have more responsibilities than other creatures and yet are connected to them and to the land more deeply than we often assume (Jonah 4:9–11; Deut 20:19–20). But we should not fight against everything that seems to be a chaotic "enemy," partly because not everything really is an enemy. Forest fires that are "bad" for some creatures and habitats are "good" for others. It is no simple task to determine our responses to "chaos" when humans are no longer the measure of all things. We must also pick our battles, and we need much wisdom in order to address natural disasters thoughtfully. John McPhee describes various attempts by Americans to control the Mississippi River and the damage this has caused to the ecosystem of the river basin for decades. McPhee, *The Control of Nature* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1989), 5–91.

[35] Dr. Seuss, *The Lorax* (New York: Random House, 1999), 58. For the debate between the Loraxes of the world and the free-market environmentalists see Blanchard and O'Brien, *Introduction to Christian Environmentalism*, 27–40.

3. Earth's Lament in the Old Testament

Turning to a biblical theology of ecological suffering, I will limit the examples to *personified* suffering because these are the most potent examples that can stimulate our empathy.[36] With these limits, it is interesting that personified suffering only appears in the prophetic literature of the Old Testament.

3.1 What members lament, and how is suffering expressed?

The *kinds* of personified suffering appear in what we could call "3-D pain": *dehydration*, *disturbance*, and *death*. Earth's lament includes mourning rituals of plants losing vegetation and the disturbance or death of earth's functions and members. Creatures and features in sea, sky, and land are affected.[37] Consider

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[36] Although early examples of ecological tension include the banishment curses of Gen 3:17–19 and 4:11–12 (also 5:29) or the cataclysm during Noah's generation (Gen 6–8), the theme of the natural world suffering along with, and as judgment on, humans is most frequent in the prophetic books (e.g., Isa 6:8–13; 13:9–13; 16:8; Isa 24; 33:7–9; Isa 34; Jer 4:23–28; 7:16–20; 12:1–4, 7–13; 23:9–11; Hos 4:1–3; Joel 1:5–20; Amos 1:2; 4:6–10; 5:7–9; 8:4–10; 9:1–6; Mic 6:11–15; Nah 1:2–8; Hab 2:17; 3:3–19; Zeph 1:2–6, 18; Hag 1:3–11). Interestingly, personified ecological suffering is found only in the writing prophets. Passages where the created order reacts to theophanies or divine wrath without clearly personified sorrow in the literary context (e.g., Pss 18:7–15; 97:5; Nah 1:4; Hab 3:3–15) will not be discussed here. My focus on the theme of lament means that this study will likewise exclude passages where non-human creatures and features are addressed or personified as legal witnesses (e.g., Isa 1:2; Jer 22:29; Mic 6:2), as sources of moral wisdom and knowledge of God (e.g., Pss 19:1–6; 97:6; Prov 6:6–8; Isa 1:3; Jer 8:7), or where they rejoice or praise God (e.g., Job 38:7; Pss 65:8–13; 96:11–13; 97:1; 145:10; 148:1–10, 13; Isa 55:12). Neither will I treat the parabolic uses of plants and animals the refer to humans (e.g., Judg 9:7–15; 2 Kgs 14:8–10; Ezek 6:1–7; 31:15), nor the mourning or complaints of inanimate artifacts of human culture, such as towns, gates, walls, or domestic masonry (e.g., Isa 23:4; Jer 14:2; Lam 2:8; Hab 2:11–12), or Daughter/Mother Zion as a physical city.

[37] For categories of creatures and features which "mourn" (אבל), consider the following texts which involve the dying or withered foliage located on mountain slopes (Isa 33:9; Jer 4:24; Amos 1:2), in fertile regions (Isa 33:9; Jer 4:26; 12:10), or the herbage of grazing lands away from farms (Isa 33:9; Jer 12:4; Joel 1:18–19; Amos 1:2). There are also references to the damaged land of Israel/Judah in general (Jer 12:4, 9–11; 23:10; Amos 8:8; 9:5) or its cultivated crops (Joel 1:5–20); famished herds and flocks (Joel 1:18); parched animals untamed by humans (Joel 1:20; cf. Jer 14:6); perishing birds (Jer 4:25), or both birds and land animals (Jer 12:4; 14:5). Then ther is the disrupted functioning of Israelite land and sky, along with the normal creatures and visible features of each zone (Jer 4:23–28); the disruption and death of the whole Israelite ecosystem, with its humans, wild animals, birds, and fish (Hos 4:3); and even the devastation of the entire earth (Isa 24).

Other personifications of the natural world associated with mourning could be added, such as the cracking "dismay" of the ground during drought (Jer 14:4) and the darkening of the sky's lights either pictured as the donning of sackcloth or as a diseased, horrified, or gloomy countenance (Isa 24:4; 50:3; Jer 2:12; 4:28). The domesticated livestock in Nineveh are held to the same fasting and sackcloth as the humans who repent in that foreign city (Jonah 3:7–8), and these "many animals" are part of the reason God pities the city and spares it from destruction (4:11), however satirical or ironic the reason may also be. In his final protest of innocence, Job suggests that his land has never the following two examples: In Amos 1:2, we hear, "The Lord roars from Zion, / And from Jerusalem He utters His voice; / And the shepherds' pasture grounds mourn, / And the summit of Carmel dries up" (Amos 1:2 NASB). In Isaiah 50:3 the divine voice says, "I clothe the heavens with blackness, / and make sackcloth their covering" (NRSV resumes).

One of the most poignant aspects of this mourning is that the land undergoes rites analogous to human rituals for public displays of grief. In a book-length study of this theme, Katherine Hayes observes the parallels between humans and vegetation that are more than coincidental:

> In these rituals the [human] mourner fasts, strips off clothing, shaves the head, bows down toward the ground or sits on it, and pours dust or ashes over the head and body. So in a state of drought the earth "fasts," or is deprived of water; plants and trees wilt and droop toward the ground; the vegetative covering withers and is shed; and dust is everywhere.[38]

In other words, when the earth "mourns" (אבל) in the Old Testament or today, the withering, starvation, and death of its members do not merely *accompany* the mourning, as if mourning were only a poetic portrayal of internal emotion. Rather, these phenomena are *the way* the earth mourns, stripping off beautiful clothing (foliage) to sit humbled in the dust. The metaphor magnifies not only God's power, but also the extent of human involvement and connection to the rest of creation.[39]

3.2 Reasons for ecological suffering

In all the texts where earth and its non-human members lament, their sorrow and suffering is ultimately related to human evil in one form or another, even if God brings the punishment directly on the ecosystem because of human evil.[40] The dirty laundry list that generates non-human suffering includes the following overlapping categories:

- social injustices (Amos 1:2; 8:8–9; 9:5–6; Hos 4:1–3; Joel)

"cried out" against him or "wept" (Job 31:38; cf. 31:38–40), which assumes that such weeping or crying out is possible. Less clear as potential examples of personification are Jer 49:21 and Hab 3:3–15.

[38] Katherine M. Hayes, *"The Earth Mourns": Prophetic Metaphor and Oral Aesthetic*, SBL AcBib 8 (Atlanta: SBL, 2002), 15–16.

[39] Ibid., 244.

[40] Quite a diversity of details persists between the major and minor prophets. Isaiah and especially Jeremiah contain several important contributions to this motif and attribute ecological damage to divine punishment for the infidelity of God's people and for their wicked behavior toward each other (Isa 50:1; Jer 2:5–19; 4:18, 22–28; 12:4, 7–13; 14:7, 10; 23:10–14). Occasionally the damage occurs via foreign armies (Isa 33:7–9; Jer 12:7, 9–12; cf. Joel 1:6; 2:2–11), or is suffered in a non-Israelite territory (Jer 49:16), or in the global ecosystem as a whole (Isa 24).

- interpersonal infidelity (Jer 23:10, 14; Hos 4:1–3)
- infidelity against God/Yahweh (Isa 50:1; Jer 2:5–19; 14:7, 10; Amos 8:8–9; 9:5–6)
- wartime damage (Isa 33:7–8)
- corruption among society's leaders (Jer 2:8; 23:11, 13–14)
- violence between and within nations (Isa 24:5, 20; Jer 49:16; Amos 1:2; Jonah)
- irreverence, theft, deception (Hos 4:1–3)
- affluent lifestyles (Joel 1:5; most of Amos)

In the shorter prophetic books (the Twelve), only Joel gives extended attention to ecological damage,[41] but the pain surfaces at key points in some of the others. In Amos the divine lion (Yahweh) "roars" to signal the capture of nations (including Judah and Israel) who have treated other nations or their own citizens with inhumane oppression (Amos 1:2; cf. Amos 1:3–2:16). This roar literarily signifies or echoes the earthquake and consequent drought mentioned in the opening discourse (Amos 1:1–2).[42] Social injustice and disloyalty to Yahweh in the Northern Kingdom (Israel) are the reasons for social and natural disturbances in the book (Amos 8:8–9; 9:5–6).[43] In Hosea the charge is essentially the same, and Hosea 4 summarizes the prophetic testimony on this point quite well (Hos 4:1–3):

1 Hear the word of the LORD, O people of Israel;
for the LORD has an indictment against the inhabitants of the land.
There is no faithfulness or loyalty,
and no knowledge of God in the land.

2 Swearing, lying, and murder,
and stealing and adultery break out;
bloodshed follows bloodshed.

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[41] See Laurie J. Braaten, "Earth Community in Joel: A Call to Identify with the Rest of Creation," in *Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics*, ed. Norman C. Habel and Peter L. Trudinger, SBL SymS 46 (Atlanta: SBL, 2008), 69. The reason for the ecological damage is quite vague but may be related to drunkenness and the oppression of the weak that sometimes accompanies it (Joel 1:5; cf. Isa 5:11–13, 20–23; Amos 6:4–7).

[42] Cf. Katherine M. Hayes, "The Mourning Earth (Amos 1:2) and the God Who Is," *Word and World* 28.2 (2008): 141–49.

[43] Throughout Amos, then, the voice of the non-human world is an additional prophetic voice (besides Amos's own) warning humanity and cooperating with God as an agent of judgment (and blessing), as noted in Hilary Marlow, *Biblical Prophets and Contemporary Environmental Ethics: Re-Reading Amos, Hosea and First Isaiah* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 146, 152, 156. See also Hilary Marlow, "The Other Prophet! The Voice of Earth in the Book of Amos," in *Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics*, ed. Norman C. Habel and Peter L. Trudinger, SBL SymS 46 (Atlanta: SBL, 2008), 75–83.

3 Therefore the land mourns,
and all who live in it languish;
together with the wild animals
and the birds of the air,
even the fish of the sea are perishing.

As many scholars have noted, the legal indictment here reverses the created order described in Genesis 1:20–28, thus portraying "an unmaking of creation."[44] In this court case, then, "Earth stands as both judge and victim . . . mourning in response to Israel's crimes and suffering the cosmic devastation that is the result of its own grief."[45]

3.3 Biblical responses to ecological suffering

Since dysfunction in the ecosystem is mostly blamed on our human negligence and deeds, it comes as no surprise that the main biblical response centers on human distress at our complicity in causing the damage. This empathetic distress should lead to *repentance,* consisting of a relational, contrition-filled return to God and a reversal of unjust practices and of idolatrous worship.[46] Repentant contrition may also include mourning rituals expressing our sorrow and our appeals to God.[47] Ecological devastation can instill a fear of God in us, and both increase our accountability as his scattered but covenant people, and also comfort those who have been wronged by injustice (Jer 49:7–22; Amos 1:3–2:16).[48]

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[44] Melissa Tubbs Loya, "'Therefore the Earth Mourns': The Grievance of Earth in Hosea 4:1–3," in *Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics*, ed. Norman C. Habel and Peter L. Trudinger, SBL SymS 46 (Atlanta: SBL, 2008), 60.

[45] Ibid., 62.

[46] See Hos 3:4–5; 4:15; 5:15; 6:1–3; 7:10; 10:12; 11:10–11; 12:6; 14:1–3; Joel 2:12–14; Amos 4:6–13; 5:7, 10–15; 5:21–27; 8:4–14; 9:10; Jonah 3:8–10. Despite much continuity between the people of God in the Old Testament (before Jesus inaugurated the new covenant) and the church today, there are significant organizational shifts for God's people. So while I take the Old Testament texts as fully authoritative for the church, their authority is *paradigmatic* in guiding our responses in contemporary contexts. For a balanced discussion, see Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 2004), 23–47, 62–75, 85–99, 457–69.

[47] After all, ecological damage resulting in crop failures and droughts affect everyone from the over-consumer to the poor, from religious functionaries to farm workers, from human populace to domestic and wild animals, to say nothing of the plants themselves (Joel 1:5, 9–13, 17–20). Appropriate actions may include tears (Joel 1:5); wailing (Joel 1:5, 11, 13); wearing mourners' clothing (Joel 1:8, 13; Jonah 3:5–6, 8); feeling shame, which mirrors the "dismay/withering" (בוֹשׁ) of the crops (Joel 1:10–12); abstinence from food and water (Joel 1:14; 2:12, 15; Jonah 3:5, 7); public assemblies for appealing to God in prayer (Hos 5:15—6:3; Joel 1:14; 2:15–17; Amos 5:6; Jonah 3:8), private prayers (Joel 1:19; Jonah 3:8); prayer by leadership (Joel 2:17), postponing social plans as significant as marriage (Joel 2:16–17); and, of course, oral and written expressions of repentance and sorrow (as all these biblical texts testify). Some repentance and worship rituals are not genuine and merely reflect sorrow over the *losses* experienced rather than sorrow and confession over wrongs committed against others (Hos 7:14; 9:4). Images of the natural world suffering are designed to provoke us to shame and acceptance of our guilt as unfaithful, rebellious people of God (Jer 2–3), since the skies have to be horrified for us (Isa 50:3; Jer 2:12). This need not be a paralyzing shame, however, because God's offered mercy gives real hope for reconciliation (cf. Jer 3:3, 12–14, 22–25). If pain is God's "megaphone to rouse a deaf world," as C. S. Lewis memorably put it, then the suffering of the nonhuman world is God's eco-phone to summon a

Of course, not all natural disasters are directly caused by human mismanagement or injustice, and not all are punishments. But our ignorance in the face of some disasters coexists with increasing knowledge of how we are to blame for a good many of the world's devastating events. The Old Testament focuses primarily on ruptures in the relationship between God and other people, while the environmental movement focuses on people and the ecosystem, but these may be two sides of the same coin. In view of the planet's ecological damage, what the texts call for is no less than an "ecological conversion," as Cristina Vanin observes in a recent *CTR* article.[49] Such an ecological conversion would require a shift in our thinking, feeling, and living from merely economic or human-centered factors to include other places and faces, both of the creatures and of the Creator.[50]

There is a second and final major category of responses that cluster around other-focused sympathy and compassion: As Katherine Hayes puts it, "When none repents, earth laments."[51] As it laments, our own empathetic distress should develop into sympathy and compassion for our fellow sufferers. This is very clear in Jeremiah 12, in God's (implicit) response to the prophet's question. First Jeremiah asks:

> How long will the land mourn,
> and the grass of every field wither?
> For the wickedness of those who live in it
> the animals and the birds are swept away,
> and because people said, "He is blind to our ways." (Jer 12:4)

Then Yahweh responds:

> They have made it a desolation;
> desolate, it mourns to me.

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world with fingers stuck in our ears, preoccupied with what we imagine to be our self-contained pleasures and pains. C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: Macmillan, 1940), 91.

[48] F. B. Huey, Jr., *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, NAC 16 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 373–76. It can either inspire fear among the ungodly and acknowledgment of God's power to judge (Isa 33:10–14; Joel 2:1–11) or it can be a setting for assurance to believers of deliverance from enemies (Isa 33:15–24).

[49] Cristina Vanin, "Expanding the Boundaries of Human Subjectivity: The Need for Ecological Conversion," *Canadian Theological Review* 3.1 (2014): 55–65.

[50] Ibid., 57, 59, 61.

[51] Katherine M. Hayes, "When None Repents, Earth Laments: The Chorus of Lament in Jeremiah and Joel," in *Seeking the Favor of God: The Origins of Penitential Prayer in Second Temple Judaism*, ed. Mark J. Boda, Daniel K. Falk, and Rodney A. Werline (Atlanta: SBL, 2006), 121, 132.

The whole land is made desolate,
 but no one lays it to heart. (Jer 12:11)

Notice that both the prophet and our God are caught up in the emotional suffering of this pitiful scene. Indeed, it is up to the reader to distinguish the voice of the prophet from the voice of God; in the text, the voices bleed into each other in suffering with and for the hurting land and creatures.[52] We can thus follow the example of both God and prophet in mourning the destruction of the land (we might say planet) and in pleading for God to bring healing (Jer 14:7–9; Amos 7:1–6). We can also act compassionately as we learn how to help rather than hurt. As we lament the pain and as we pray, we may be pleasantly relieved to find that God speaks a passionate promise of restoration for the ecosystem, as he does in Joel 2 (and also in Hos 2:14–23; Amos 9:13–15):

18 Then the Lord became jealous [or "passionate"] for his land,
 and had pity on his people.
 . . .

21 Do not fear, O soil;
 be glad and rejoice,
 for the Lord has done great things!

22 Do not fear, you animals of the field,
 for the pastures of the wilderness are green;
 the tree bears its fruit,
 the fig tree and vine give their full yield.

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[52] Though it is possible that the prophet rather than God is lamenting here in Jer 12, Terence E. Fretheim notes that Jer 12 (like Jer 8:18–9:3) "makes little effort to distinguish between the prophet's words and God's words (explicit only in 12.14); their voices tend to 'bleed' into one another." Fretheim, "The Earth Story in Jeremiah 12," in *Readings from the Perspective of Earth*, ed. Norman C. Habel, The Earth Bible 1 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 98.

Complicating the emotional picture, Yahweh's anger is partly responsible for the ecological damage as a response to human corruption (Jer 12:7–13) (Fretheim, "Earth Story in Jeremiah 12," 100–101). But anger is not the opposite of love; the opposite of love is apathy, and Yahweh is not an apathetic deity. For those skeptical of the justice of this divine anger for the ecosystem, there are several reasonable justifications. See Hilary Marlow, "Justice for Whom? Social and Environmental Ethics and the Hebrew Prophets," in *Ethical and Unethical in the Old Testament: God and Humans in Dialogue,* ed. Katharine J. Dell, LHBOTS 528 (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 111–13. Marlow makes three important points: 1) In many cases, the rich may have acquired the land from the poor—Amos and Micah certainly imply as much—and thus it is the oppressors who are brought down to the level of the poor with these environmental catastrophes; 2) the land as a conditional, covenantal gift can be revoked upon Israel's disobedience, since Yahweh owns it; and 3) collective sins justify collective punishment that affects the whole environment rather than just specific individuals. Beyond that, God often brings judgment via the natural consequences of our actions. See Terence E. Fretheim, *Creation Untamed: The Bible, God, and Natural Disasters* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 49–55. Also see Fretheim, "Earth Story in Jeremiah 12," 101–102.

23 O children of Zion, be glad
and rejoice in the Lord your God;
for he has given the early rain for your vindication,
he has poured down for you abundant rain,
the early and the later rain, as before.
(Joel 2:18, 21–23; larger unit 2:18–27)

4. Conclusion

Like a canary in a coal mine—the non-human community suffers first, and often dies first. And yet this ecological mourning is a call to us to pay attention, to listen to the pain, and to move towards repentance and compassion as needed. We may not presume on God's compassion, but we can stand prophetically for those who have no human voice. We can lament the destruction of the planet that is taking place and plead for God to bring healing as we act in compassionate ways.

Shaped by the narratives we buy into, the life experiences we have, the things we habitually do, and so on, our ability to experience empathetic and sympathetic distress—to emotionally suffer with and for others—can produce a host of responses that are inwardly and outwardly focused. In order to be compassionate people, we must exercise our imaginations in role-taking and in mediated, textual depictions of suffering, and we must cultivate other virtues, particularly love.

By turning our empathetic care toward non-human creatures and features of the cosmos, we refuse to have a narrow-minded view of who is capable of suffering and of responsive agency; and we mourn the dysfunctional operations of the world, even if the inanimate parts might not have the same degree of responsiveness as living organisms. Thus we can listen and hear that the hills *are* alive with the sound of occasional weeping, just not in human language. With time and perseverance, our moral vision may extend beyond cute and cuddly animals to embrace others more foreign and even threatening to us. A God-centered wisdom and humility will help us avoid mere sentimentalism, on the one hand, and presumptuous contempt, on the other.

In seeking to cultivate this kind of character in our Christian communities, we must be ready for the obstacles such as passivity, prideful denial, and fear-filled despair at the magnitude of the problems. To avoid passive empathy aimed "out there somewhere" or at "the whole world" we will need to be actively looking for connections between the biblical text and our local contexts.[53] We must love "the global through the local," as Russell Moore noted in a recent *JETS* article.[54]

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[53] Megan Boler, *Feeling Power: Emotions and Education* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 170.

[54] Russell D. Moore, "Heaven and Nature Sing: How Evangelical Theology Can Inform the Task of Environmental Protection (and Vice Versa)," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 57.3 (2014): 583.

We must also work to become ecologically literate so that our concerns are increasingly guided by informed understandings of how we can love our non-human neighbors as ourselves (Lev 19:18; Luke 10:27). An attitude of denial will ask, "And who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29), expecting no answer besides what is comfortable.

Humility will be open to new insights about non-human neighbors and neighborhoods (habitats), even if they are inconvenient to help or painful to acknowledge. Still, there is no substitute for actually spending time outside observing, feeling, and attending to the earth and her creatures.[55] We will only love places and creatures that we know and experience, and will lovingly suffer with them only if we deeply experience our ecological "places of the heart."[56] Those who lack such "places of the heart," according to Steven Bouma-Prediger, may be apathetic precisely because they "know no place well enough to really inhabit it."[57] So, the most spiritual thing to do after finishing this article might well be to step away from our restless routines and schedule a hike in a park or preserve near home. Joy and hope in God's creative, redemptive purposes will sustain us in the sorrow that will also be found along the journey. And we will not be alone in the "world of wounds." Other hikers in fellowship with the Creator will walk the trails too.

This study is a call to engagement with, rather than retreat from, the world. It is a call to "Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep" (Rom 12:15), knowing that ultimately those who weep will be comforted (Matt 5:4) by a priestly king who has suffered and is able to sympathize with our weaknesses on the journey (Heb 2:9–10; 4:15; 5:7–8). The Spirit of God groans along with the earth and its human members until our resurrection hope is realized (Rom 8:18–27). As we journey, we cannot do everything, but let that not be our excuse to avoid doing *some* things. After all, heaven has no sorrow that earth cannot feel.

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[55] Vanin observes: "If we are going to respond adequately to the ecological crisis, one critical step we need to take is to recover a capacity for being in communion with the natural world." Vanin, "Expanding the Boundaries," 58.

[56] Bouma-Prediger, *Beauty of the Earth*, 21. Getting to know the places where we live is not merely an individual task, but a pedagogical task for teachers to consider incorporating into their courses. See an example in Steven Bouma-Prediger, "What Kind of Person Would Do Something Like That? A Christian Ecological Virtue Ethic," *International Journal of Christianity & Education* 20/1 (2016): 20–31.

[57] Bouma-Prediger, *Beauty of the Earth*, 149.

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A Social-Scientific Reading of Hebrews 13:11–14 from a Postcolonial Milieu[1]

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Abstract

This essay demonstrates that matters of social disparity, stemming from colonization, within a South African context can be addressed by a social-scientific reading of Hebrews 13:11–14. Social-scientific criticism is concerned with laying bare the cultural and social influences upon a text in the ancient world. It is a hermeneutical approach that brings the ancient and the contemporary into dialogue by providing a pool of shared presuppositions that enhance the apprehension of meaning, while safeguarding the modern reader from the merely subjective. This article's central thesis advances a tension in the understanding of the Christ who suffered "outside the camp" and the social reengineering that results in the communities born of his crucifixion. Like the movement from Leviticus 16 to Hebrews 13:11–14' a movement from Hebrews 13:11–14 to modern South African society is qualified, presenting redemptive parallels in a continuum that ultimately addresses South African social ills when "outside the camp" is read from a postcolonial vantage point.

1. Introduction

In Hebrews 13:11–14 the preacher[2] develops analogies from the Old Testament Levitical ritual of *Yom Kippur* (Leviticus 16) as he reinvigorates a faith community to continued solidarity with the Christ who suffered "outside the camp." This community's marginal existence in an imperial society[3] will inform my analysis of the stated text, resulting in a consideration of the postcolonial context. This essay contends that postcolonialism is a present-day reality, and not a bygone social ill.[4] Although postcolonialism has a global reach, this article will restrict itself to South Africa in matters of application. Methodologically, social-science models based in a sociology of knowledge will be employed before viable application, pertinent to South Africa, is extrapolated from the text. Through this approach, this article aims to safeguard against the pitfalls of anachronistic interpretation by demonstrating that social-scientific criticism is a cross-cultural exercise that respects the hermeneutical distance between the author, the original audience, and the contemporary South African church participating in the broader mission of God.

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[1] This article represents a slightly revised version of a paper presented at the Canadian Evangelical Theological Association/Northeastern Seminary joint theological conference, "Participating in God's Mission," held at Northeastern Seminary, Rochester, NY, March 19, 2016. My thanks go to Dr. Kevin G. Smith and Dr. Terence Paige for their constructive feedback on earlier versions of this article. I am also grateful to Mrs. Lindsey Moyo for honing this essay into its current state.

[2] I will be referring to the author/preacher of Hebrews in the masculine based on the evidence of Heb 11:32, where the masculine suffix in the participle *diēgoumenon* is employed.

2. Theoretical and Methodological Framework

2.1 Social-scientific criticism

Social-scientific criticism is concerned with laying bare the cultural and social influences upon a text in the ancient world. It is a hermeneutical approach that brings the ancient and the contemporary into dialogue by providing a pool of shared presuppositions that enhance the apprehension of meaning.[5] It is precisely because of this implied intercultural activity, latent within this methodological approach, that Jonker and Arendse define social-scientific criticism as a method that "stresses the indispensable significance of analyzing the interaction between the biblical text and the socio-cultural world in which it was first produced."[6] Like most approaches in Bible interpretation, social-scientific criticism does not stand removed from other methodologies. Affinities between social-scientific criticism and the historical-critical approaches do exist. However, where historical-critical approaches are driven by questions such as "when?," "what?," "who?," and "where?," vis-à-vis doctrine and experience, social-scientific models are preoccupied with the "how?" and the "why?"[7] Furthermore, social-scientific criticism is by its very nature multi-faceted, rendering it a worthy candidate for "hybridization" in the broader universe of Bible interpretation.[8] Arguably, this emerges from the fact that the approach is informed by multiple factors that shaped biblical texts, based on their function within the ancient world. Such factors include politics, economics, language, social systems, and customs; this justifies the multiple layers the approach uses to investigate meaning.

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[3] Although the location and dating of the text are inconclusive, the second half of the first-century CE seems a plausible range. It is in this broad context that argumentation for an imperial context, ranging from Nero (pre-64 CE) to the Flavian dynasty (69–96 CE), seems likely, based mainly on the reference in Heb 13:24.

[4] Laura E. Donaldson, "Postcolonialism and Biblical Reading: An Introduction," *Semeia* 75 (1996): 5.

[5] David A. deSilva, *The Letter to the Hebrews in Social Scientific Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012); T. Schmeller, "Sociology and New Testament Studies," in *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation K-Z*, ed. John H. Hayes (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 487.

[6] Louis J. Jonker and Roger Arendse, "Approaches Focusing on the Production of Texts," *Fishing for Jonah (anew): Various approaches to Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Louis J. Jonker and Douglas L. Lawrie (Stellenbosch: SunPress, 2005), 49.

[7] Ibid., 50.

Social description, social history, the sociology of knowledge, and social-science models constitute overlapping pillars in the methodological tool box that the social-scientific interpreter draws from.[9] These pillars do not stand in isolation but are made to interact.[10] Perhaps the reason behind such crossover could be ascribed to the fact that ancient societies are not unitary, nor even binary, in constitution. They are neither homogenous nor uniform in ideology, language, or composition. Rhoads alludes to this reality by suggesting:

> The New Testament is a profoundly social document. Each writing in the New Testament emerged from a community. Each writing addressed specific people with a unique message for a given time, place, and circumstance . . . . The writings of the New Testament were social acts.

Our reading of the New Testament is also a social act.[11]

With the above in mind, how can social-scientific criticism be employed in a reading of Heb 13:11–14? What element of this broad methodology is most suited to the interpretation of the text and why?

2.2 Hebrews 13 and social-scientific criticism

The peroration (or conclusion)[12] of the letter to the Hebrews (13:1–21)[13] is composed of admonitions strung together in an exhortatory style. These admonitions collectively describe the communal implications of life under the new covenant, made ever more vivid by the hortatory subjunctive[14] (13:13), which encourages identification with Jesus's suffering "outside the camp" (13:11–13). In Hebrews, the Son's superiority to angels (1:1–5), to Moses (3:1–6), to the Levitical cultus (chaps. 7–10), along with the encomium of faith (11:1–40), course the length of an oration culminating in practical injunctions for the community born of his crucifixion (13:13).

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[8] Thomas Schmeller, "Sociology and New Testament Studies," *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation K–Z*, 487.

[9] On this, see Jonker and Arendse, "Production of Texts," 48; and Naomi Steinberg, "Social-Scientific Criticism," in *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation K–Z*, ed. John H. Hayes (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 478–79.

[10] Schmeller, "Sociology and New Testament Studies," 490.

[11] David Rhoads, "Social Criticism: Crossing Boundaries," in *Mark and Method: New Approaches to Biblical Studies*, ed. Janice C. Anderson and Stephen D. Moore (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 135.

[12] Koester states that "'Peroration' is the term for the conclusion of a speech, according to the canons of classical rhetoric . . . . the peroration gave the speaker a final opportunity to influence the listeners by reviewing key arguments and appealing to the emotions." Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 36 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 554. I delimit the peroration in Hebrews as running from 13:1–21. Koester, however, sees it running from 12:28–13:21.

[13] This work advocates harmony between 13:1–12 and 13:13 based on the thematic and stylistic continuity between the two sections.

From the Patristic era until the late eighteenth century,[15] Hebrews was regarded as a somewhat "enigmatic epistle" because of its typical epistolary ending (13:18–25), which stands at sharp odds with the preamble (1:1–4).[16] Those who regarded Hebrews as an unusual epistle relied on its placement within the Pauline corpus to support their position. Nevertheless, evidence from 13:22, specifically the phrase "word of exhortation," demonstrates that this text is not an epistle on the order of Paul's works, but a homily laden with rhetorical prowess.[17] In an attempt to undermine this, some scholars called into question the integrity of chapter 13.[18] In response, Attridge states that "suspicions about the integrity of Hebrews, and especially of chap. 13, are unfounded."[19] Thiselton is even more direct: "the vocabulary and especially the key themes which relate closely to issues which would face a pilgrim orientation argue for the integrity of the entire epistle."[20] In light of the unitary nature of Hebrews, this article divides chapter 13 as follows:[21]

1. PERORATION: 13:1–21
1.1 Ethical injunctions: 13:1–6
1.2 Examples to follow: 13:7–8
1.3 The true Christian sacrifices: 13:9–16
1.4 Submission to guides: 13:17
1.5 Request for prayer: 13:18
1.6 Benediction: 13:20–21
2. FINAL GREETINGS: 13:22–25

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[14] Heb 4:11, 16; 10:22, 23, 24; 12:1, 22 demonstrate the preacher's widespread use of this rhetorical device, suggesting a deliberate and learned employment of the tool.

[15] In 1797 J. Berger introduced a view that diverged with the traditional assumption. This view regarded Hebrews to be a sermon. See Koester, *Hebrews*, 80.

[16] See Koester, *Hebrews*, 80; and Harold W. Attridge, "Epistle to the Hebrews," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary H–J*, ed. David N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 98.

[17] See Gareth L. Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 15; and Thomas G. Long, *Hebrews* (Louisville: John Knox, 1997), 2.

[18] Buchanan (1967, p.267) cited in Anthony C. Thiselton, "Hebrews," in *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible,* ed. James D. G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 1453, claims that "Ch. 13 is an addition prepared for a different group. . . . The benediction [13:20–21] and 'Pauline' postscript [vv. 22–25] may have been added." See, Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 384–85, for a more developed layout of the matter.

[19] Attridge, "Hebrews," 98.

[20] Thiselton, "Hebrews," 1453.

[21] These headings are borrowed from F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 367–92; and Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 384–410.

Having established the structure of Hebrews 13, and how it relates to what precedes it, it becomes imperative to substantiate the relevance of the social-scientific methodology for this study. First, an emphasis on ancient Israel and the Levitical cultus (vis-à-vis Lev 16) is underscored, as part of a contrast between the antiquated and the new covenant community (13:11–12). Second, the preacher is primarily addressing the new covenant community that was negotiating the realities of exclusion in the context of first-century imperial society (13:12–13). Third, the eschatological motif of the city to come is advanced by the homily (13:14), thus signalling a new symbolic universe. This theme also encourages allegiance from adherents (13:15). The implied communal motif, underscored by the movement of symbols from Leviticus 16 to the new covenant community and the eschatological city, warrants social hermeneutical inquiry, specifically, an investigation via a sociology of knowledge, which is a sub-category of social-scientific criticism.[22]

Unlike other branches of social-scientific criticism, a sociology of knowledge goes beyond describing the social order, and involves the reconstruction of the worldview of a given group as it functioned in the world and the symbols that were employed to police its continuity. Rhoads puts it as follows: "Whereas social description focuses on the material realities of a society, sociology of knowledge deals with how that society organizes and interprets those realities."[23]

2.3 Honour and shame, challenge-riposte, and patron-broker-client relations

2.3.1 Honour and shame

In the ancient world, honour was a limited and highly-prized commodity. What honour one possessed was always taken from another, either through "challenge-riposte," or inheritance/birth.[24] Malina calls these "acquired" honour and "ascribed" honour, respectively.[25] It was of grave importance to retain honour, since gaining honour (through challenge-riposte) to move up the rungs of social standing was a reality that preoccupied nearly every first-century Mediterranean citizen. Evidently, this rendered the undertones of social interaction somewhat competitive. The antonym reality of "shame" also held true, and on this matter Cockerill comments:

> It was crucial to have a sense of what was shameful since a person's identity and reputation were closely identified with the honor and recognition given one for appropriately fulfilling his or her place

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[22] See Rhoads, "Social Criticism," 139.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 370.

[25] Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 32–33.

> in society. Furthermore, one shared the honor—or shame—of one's social group. Thus it was honorable to act in such a way that one protected the honor and public approval of those groups to which one belonged.[26]

Worth noting here is Crook's evaluation of the individualistic focus and description of honour and shame, as advanced by Malina (and Cockerill).[27] Crook demonstrates that Malina's description, while accurate in underscoring honour and shame as pivotal values in social interactions within the ancient Mediterranean world, was neither defined nor regulated by the individual. Arguably, such an individualistic approach is anachronistic, deviating from the collective nature of the ancient Mediterranean milieu. It is precisely because of this that Crook remarks: "In defining honour, we should not start with focus on the individual. We should, rather, start with the focus on the collectivistic PCR [Public Court of Reputation]. When this is accomplished, the PCR becomes the first, last, and only arbiter of honourable and shameful behaviour."[28]

This is not the only aspect of Malina's description of honour and shame that has been negatively critiqued. The view that women in the ancient world were inherently shameful compared to men, and that their honour was linked to their chastity and modesty, has also been challenged. Among those antagonistic to this claim is Wikan, who states:

> Would anyone seriously maintain that a woman cannot gain value in her own and other's eyes, and that this is a male prerogative? Moreover, does it seem plausible that men should regard a woman's value as wholly dependent upon her sexual conduct, so that if she misbehaves, she has no value at all and that women's ideas on this point should be identical with those of men? Such extraordinary assertions could only arise from the anthropologist's failure to observe the range of contexts and processes within which persons are granted honour, in different circles and sectors of a society (including its 50 per cent. of female members!).[29]

In light of such distinctions in critique of the traditional view, this paper aligns itself with Crook and Wikan in their respective use and description of the ancient couplet of "honour and shame." It is the *community* that ascribes and regulates honour, and this honour is broader, and more nuanced and complex, than a mere linear, reductionistic, and chauvinistic ascription.

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[26] Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 18.

[27] Zeba A. Crook, "Honor, Shame, and Social Status Revisited," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 125.3 (2009): 598–99.

[28] Ibid., 599.

[29] Unni Wikan, "Shame and Honour: A Contestable Pair," *Man* 19 (1984): 639.

2.3.2 Patrons, brokers, and clients

This paper upholds the view that a culture of honour and shame was widely prevalent in the first-century Greco-Roman world, albeit nuanced depending on locale. Generally, for those seeking honour beyond their station, honour independent of "challenge-riposte," the auspices of a broker were sought after.[30] Malina and Rohrbaugh point out:

> Patron-client systems are socially fixed relations of generalized reciprocity between social unequals in which a lower-status person (called a client) has his needs met by having recourse for favors to a higher-status, well situated person (called a patron).[31]

Malina and Rohrbaugh go on to explain that brokers usually mediated between patrons and clients, benefiting the latter with patronage and the former with praise that further enhanced their honour status.[32] However, the manner in which a patron responded to a request for patronage could render them honourable or shameful. Similarly, laxness in displaying loyalty or public orations of praise towards a patron could render a client shameful.[33]

Sweeping across the New Testament is the presentation of God as ultimate Patron from whom all grace proceeds,[34] a point deSilva develops regarding Hebrews. He explains: "The author presents what the audience has received as a result of joining the Christian community, what they've experienced as part of this community, and what they've been *told* they've received (but of which they have no first-hand experience) all as gifts and privileges bestowed upon them by God, their divine patron."[35]

Linked to God's patronage is the role of Christ as the ultimate mediator or broker (2:17–18 and 4:14–5:10) of grace.[36] When Hebrews is read through this lens, we learn that the preacher sought to revitalize his audience's confidence (10:35–36) by appealing to their shame, a shame imposed by wider society (10:33; cf. 12:1–3), which he reverses and reinterprets as honour in the eyes of God, their Patron (cf. 2:17b). Concerning the public's role in imposing shame, deSilva states: "The public imposition of disgrace constituted a principal strategy for the exercise of social control. The members of the larger society were attempting to 'correct' what they perceived as deviant knowledge and deviant behaviour in their midst, and to dissuade others from being attracted to this group."[37]

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[30] See Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 18.

[31] Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary*, 388.

[32] Ibid, 389.

[33] Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 18.

[34] Cf. Heb 3:5–6 and 4:16.

[35] deSilva, *Hebrews*, 96; emphasis original.

[36] Heb 4:14–16, 6:19–20, 7:26–28, 8:6, 9:15, and 12:24. Cf. Mark 1:40–45, 2:5, 2:10, 3:13–19, 5:6–7, 10:35–45, 10:47, and 11:9–10.

This grave reality is also observed by Thompson, who sees the alienation of the house church from the wider Greco-Roman world, motivated by the public's disgruntlement with their contrasting value system, among other things.[38] To combat the disillusionment that ensued from the host society's critique, the preacher revisits the benefits received by the new covenant community, while reminding them of God's patronage. This patronage, unlike any other, secured for them eternal graces mediated by the suffering and shame of God's eternal broker, Christ, "outside the camp" (13:13).

The preacher to the Hebrews is, however, not motivated by individual acquisitions of honour, but by the communal, as evidenced by the use of multiple hortatory subjunctives,[39] and the development of broader motifs ranging from Israel to the new covenant community. It is therefore worthwhile underscoring that both divine patronage and diving brokerage are used as socio-rhetorical strategies, addressing the community rather than the individual per se.

It can be seen then, that "honour" and "shame," "patron-client" relations, and "challenge-riposte" were pivotal in the interactions between the homily's audience and their host society. Ironically, it is these universal social values that brought them suffering and shame,[40] thus motivating the preacher to deliver a homily that functioned as an apologetic to reawaken confidence in the Christ, whose shame "outside the camp" serves as a gateway to eternal glory, which is true honour.

3. A Social-Scientific Analysis of Hebrews 13:11–14

3.1 Hebrews 13:11: The Christ and the high priest

Hebrews 2:17 is the homily's first association of Christ with the high priestly role, a theme that recurs in 3:1, 4:14–15, 5:1–10, 6:20, 7:1, 7:26–8:3, 9:7, 11, 25, and 13:11. Cockerill asserts that "the pastor never compares Christ with contemporary Judaism but with the institutions of the Old Covenant and priestly system as described in the Pentateuch."[41] However, complex as this may be, the office of high priest is one that undergirds the development of various Christological motifs spanning the length of the ancient sermon.[42] One of these is explicated in chapter 5, where Psalms 2:7 and 110:4 are amalgamated to advance both abasement through suffering and Christ's subsequent exaltation.[43] Although this advances the very abasement of the Christ to serve the purposes of the homily's argument, it does so in reversal to the trajectory of Psalm 110:4, which is not abased, but transcendent.

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[37] deSilva, *Hebrews*, 48–49.

[38] James W. Thompson, "Insider Ethics for Outsiders: Ethics for Aliens in Hebrews," *Restoration Quarterly* 53.4 (2011), 209.

[39] Heb 4:11, 16; 10:22, 23, 24; 12:1, 22.

[40] See Heb 10:32–34.

[41] Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 21.

[42] David A. deSilva, "Letter to the Hebrews," *The New Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible D–H*, ed. Katharine D. Sakenfeld (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007), 783.

Another theme closely related to the mention of the high priest in Hebrews is that of Melchizedek,[44] an enigmatic Old Testament figure, who, apart from Hebrews, is only mentioned in Genesis 14:17–20 and Psalm 110:4. Unlike priests in the Levitical order, established and regulated by the Torah, the author presents Melchizedek as one appointed to office by divine edict in Hebrews 7:16–17. Added to this, Melchizedek is presented in Hebrews 7:17 as one with no successor, a sharp contrast to the Aaronic order (of which the Levitical priests were a part). The uniqueness of this figure in relation to the Levitical order is summarised by Cortez, who states that "the transition from the old to the new covenant implies a transition from *many to one* priest . . . . This transition from many to one priest implies a transition from *many* sacrifices to *one*."[45]

Leviticus 16:27 reads, "The bull and the goat for the sin offerings, whose blood was brought into the Most Holy Place to make atonement, must be taken outside the camp; their hides flesh and intestines are to be burned." When Leviticus 16:27 is read with Hebrews 13:11 it is evident that the latter loosely employs the former to explain the ritual of *Yom Kippur*.[46] However, a striking difference between the two is that the priest is not mentioned in Leviticus 16:27, but is mentioned as the one responsible for bringing the blood of animal sacrifices into the holy places in Hebrews 13:11. In Leviticus 16:27 the one responsible for taking these animals outside the camp is an unnamed man who stands distinct to the Levitical priest. By noting this loose association with the facts of the Levitical text, one may conclude that the preacher is reinterpreting *Yom Kippur* in light of Christ's death and priesthood, and is more concerned with implications of the latter than the former.

3.2 Hebrews 13:12–13: The Christ and "outside the camp"

Hebrews 13:12 completes a comparative parallel between "outside the camp"/ "outside the gate" and "animals"/ "Jesus" that begins in 13:11. Regarding the former pairing, Koester comments: "The Israelite camp was arranged in concentric rings of holiness. . . . Unclean things were taken outside its boundaries (Exod

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[43] Attridge, "Hebrews," 101.

[44] Heb 5:6, 5:10, 6:20, 7:1, 7:10, 11, 7:15, and 7:17.

[45] Felix H. Cortez, "From the Holy to the Most Holy Place: The Period of Hebrews 9:6–10 and the Day of Atonement as a Metaphor of Transition," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 125.3 (2006), 543.

[46] Attridge, *Hebrews*, 397.

29:14, Lev 9:11, and 16:27)."[47] This point is elucidated by the later (third Century CE) Mishnah (*Kelim* 1:6–9), which claims:

1) The land of Israel is holier than any other land
2) The walled cities of Israel are still more holy
3) Within the walls of Jerusalem is still more holy
4) The Temple Mount is the more holy
5) The rampart is still more holy
6) The Court of Women is still more holy
7) The Court of the Israelites is still more holy
8) The Court of Priests is still more holy
9) Between the porch and altar is still more holy
10) The Holy of Holies is still more holy

Notable here are the concentric circles of holiness, together with the increased sense of holiness, in a movement towards the inner chamber of the tabernacle/temple.[48] These concentric circles not only function as determinants of "geographical holiness" but also serve to underscore the rungs of honour held by different citizens. In contrast to the above, Cockerill reinterprets these circles in relation to "outside the camp": Inside and outside the gate are both conditions of life in this world. The first is the place for worldly security and acceptance for those who reject Christ. The second is the place of Christ's crucifixion and thus the place of rejection by the unbelieving world that despised him.[49]

It is clear that the phrase "outside the camp" evokes the imagery of Leviticus 16 while at the same time alluding to a point of significance in its employment, that is, the impurity associated with all the happenings that occur outside the borders of holiness, as defined by the establishment. From Hebrews 13:11, we note that "outside" invites the believing community to "enter" it as they "follow the path pioneered by the Son through suffering to glory."[50]

When Christ's suffering "outside the camp," a suffering that leads to his death, is juxtaposed with that of the new covenant community, clear continuity between the head of the sectarian movement and his followers is established. Hebfews 13:13 says, "and bear the reproach he endured," indicating a communal identity wrought of Christ's shame (see 12:2). Here, a sociology of knowledge would bring into focus the social dynamics surrounding crucifixion, by demonstrating how it was viewed in the ancient world. Malina and Rohrbaugh say that "New

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[47] Koester, *Hebrews*, 570.

[48] Ibid., 120. Although these gradations of holiness do not quite match the structure of the tabernacle or the temple in ancient Israel (which, for example, had no Court of Women), the general idea of a gradation of holiness is found across different interpretive epochs.

[49] Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 700.

[50] deSilva, "Hebrews," 783.

Testament authors reflect the general perception of crucifixion in the Greco-Roman world as shame . . . the crucifixion process was marked by a progressive public humiliation and deprivation of honor."[51] The stripping away of honour can be correlated to the journey outside the city gates, which as seen in *Kelim* 1:6–9, is a place of pollution and abundant shame. Malina and Rohrbaugh expand on this by giving a subjective view in relation to the PCR:

> The real test of the victim, in the Mediterranean context, was not in the brutal pain itself, but rather in the endurance of pain and suffering, as a mark of *andreia,* manly courage. Silence of the victim during torture proved his honor. And yet the loss of honor evidenced by the whole process and inability to defend one's honor were deemed far worse than the physical pain involved.[52]

The recurrent theme of "enduring suffering" hinges on Christ's suffering (see Heb 2:9, 2:10, 2:18, 5:8; 10:32, and 11:36). Through this suffering, the believing community stands at odds with its host society, because of its resocialization at the primary level. It is from a place of shame and abasement that the new covenant community is born. And it is from this abased virtue that it launches into the *missio Dei*, as underscored in Hebrews 13:12.

3.3 Hebrews 13:14: The Christ and the lasting city

Hebrews 13:14 reads: "For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come." Koester suggests that the "city" they "do not have" here is Rome,[53] a point corroborated by Whitlark.[54] If this is the case then the encouragement given by the author functions as quasi-subversive propaganda within an imperial setting, undermining what is regarded as eternal via the introduction of an eschatological motif reminiscent of the motivation in Hebrews 12:22. Whitlark gives greater insight on the comparison of the cities alluded to by suggesting:

> Hebrews 13:13–14 then appears to argue against the temptation for people to assimilate back into the imperial culture and the relief and prosperity such identification offered. . . . The draw to identify with Rome and its claims seems to stem from the fear of imperial reprisals for the community's Christian confession. Thus, the movement of the exhortation in vv. 13–14 is a movement from

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[51] Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary*, 346.

[52] Ibid., 347.

[53] Koester, *Hebrews*, 571.

[54] Jason A. Whitlark, "Here We Do Not Have a City That Remains: A Figured Critique of Roman Imperial Propaganda in Hebrews 13:14," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 131.1 (2012): 172.

> identification with Rome and its claims to identification with Jesus, his present shame, and the glory of God's future promise.[55]

Here, the oppressive power of the empire, also alluded to in 10:32–39, cannot be ignored, especially when juxtaposed with Hebrews 13:14. Thompson stresses that "[t]he marginalization of the community is analogous to the experience of others who lived outside the dominant culture."[56] Of importance here is the encouragement given by the author to "maintain communal solidarity as it experiences abuse from the outside world."[57] In light of postcolonial discourse, and a sociology of knowledge, the solidarity encouraged could be regarded as intra-textual opposition to the empire as the community endures shame and pain while inhabiting an alternate symbolic reality.

4. Appropriating Hebrews 13:11–14 in a Postcolonial Milieu

4.1 Postcolonial discourse

Dube Shomanah says the term postcolonial "is used to cover all the culture affected by imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day."[58] Commenting on Orientalism, Donaldson alerts students of postcolonial theory to the dissemination into the discursive of what was historically a political enterprise. This is seen in the manner in which this ideology engages in "*resistance* to . . . colonialist ideologies, and their contemporary forms and subjectificatory legacies."[59] This exposes the need to freshly define the term postcolonial, since its effects continue to exist in a new paradigm. Segovia provides a worthy nuance to the term as follows: "[postcolonialism] is a field of studies that is by no means monolithic but rather highly diverse and conflicted, so that even the definition of the term 'postcolonial' emerges as not at all unproblematic."[60] This amplifies the obligation to provide a working description of postcolonial reading. According to Dube's characterization, a postcolonial reading is:

> not a discourse of historical accusations, but a committed search and struggle for decolonization and liberation of the oppressed. In terms of classification, it refers to a complex collection of texts that are brought, born, and used in imperial settings, to legitimate, resist, or collaborate with imperialism. While this definition is an umbrel-

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[55] Ibid., 176.

[56] Thompson, "Insider Ethics," 210.

[57] Ibid., 219.

[58] Musa W. Dube Shomanah, "Postcolonial Bible Interpretations," in *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation K–Z*, ed. John H. Hayes (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 299.

[59] Donaldson, "Postcolonialism," 3; emphasis original.

[60] Fernando F. Segovia, "Mapping the Postcolonial Optic in Biblical Criticism: Meaning and Scope," *Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: Interdisciplinary Intersections*, ed. Stephen D. Moore and Fernado F. Segovia (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 25.

> la term that includes the texts of the colonizer and the colonized, the phrase "colonial discourse" is also used to distinguish the former from the latter. . . . As an umbrella term, a post-colonial approach is best understood as a complex myriad of methods and theories which study a wide range of texts and their participation in the making or subversion of imperialism.[61]

Sugirtharajah corroborates Dube's understanding by asserting that "postcolonialism is about . . . confronting the after-effects of imperial and the new effect of neo-imperial control."[62] From Dube, we note the subversive nature of postcolonial ideology and the inherent drive to grant liberty to the "shackled" other,[63] all within historic, text-bound, or contemporary imperial paradigms.[64] Dube comments elsewhere that the postcolonial is about "challenging all readers and writers to examine their practices for imperial and colonial currents of domination and suppression."[65] Concerning the historic and text-bound, Brett observes that this decolonization is embracing of all literary fields, including the biblical. He says that "there is no reason to exclude the study of ancient colonial relationships within which the bulk of biblical material was produced. . . . We should all confess that much biblical interpretation, ancient and modern, has been enabled or constrained by imperialist social systems,"[66] which is a view shared by Berquist.[67]

Unlike the statements of the commentators above, this article's motivation is concerned not primarily with the history behind the text, but with what is in front of the text, namely, the postcolonial South African experience. Arguably, this approach retains the uniqueness of the Christian message and ethos, and encourages the church to continue participating in the mission of God in a contextually attentive manner. This it does by avoiding conflation or continuity with extra-Christian creeds, which, coincidentally, mirrors the very thrust of the hortatory injunction in Hebrews13:11–14. Like the first-century sectarian Christian community, which was shamed by its host society but honoured by God, the church in South Africa is invited to exist in a social tension. This tension involves the church concertedly identifying with shame in order to be honoured by God, while advocating God as the ultimate Patron of grace.

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[61] Musa Dube, "Toward a Post-Colonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible," *Semeia* 78 (1997): 15.

[62] R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Exploring Postcolonial Biblical Criticism* (Malden and Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 14.

[63] Sharon H. Ringe, "When Women Interpret the Bible," in *Women's Bible Commentary,* ed. Carol A. Newson and Sharon H. Ringe (Louisville: John Knox, 1998), 4.

[64] Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Biblical Criticism*, 14.

[65] Dube Shomanah, "Postcolonial Bible Interpretations," 299.

[66] Mark G. Brett, "The Ethics of Postcolonial Criticism," *Semeia* 75 (1996): 219.

[67] Jon L. Berquist, "Postcolonialism and Imperial Motives for Canonization," *Semeia* 75 (1996): 26.

4.2 Hebrews 13:11–14 and the South African postcolonial reality

South Africa is awash with vestiges of the colonial reality, ranging from chronic socio-economic disparity[68] to socio-political volatility.[69] In an article titled, "Pan-Africanism is More Important than Ever," Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, the chairperson to the African Union Commission, says, "We should look at [African Renaissance] as a process not as an event. It has to start with liberation because you can't have a renaissance of a people who are repressed."[70] This comment indicates that economic independence is the next phase of liberation within the postcolonial African discourse. Furthermore, with Christianity's locus migrating from the West to the Global South, questions arise in an analysis of texts such as Hebrews 13:11–14. These questions include: What is the author-intended meaning of these verses? What does a Christocentric meaning of the text look like for the church participating in the *missio Dei* in a society grossly affected by socio-economic disparity?

With South Africa labelled one of the most socially unequal countries in the world, holding a Gini coefficient of between 0.63 and 0.7,[71] it is a major contention of this essay that a reading of Hebrews 13:11–14 must not only speak to salvation received, but also to salvation expressed, bringing about the transformation of social strata, even in the socio-economic. By its very nature, socio-economic disparity contributes to the stratification of society, a synchronic parallel to the organisation of the first-century Jewish world, as described earlier in this article.

According to Oxfam, this stratification is the bedrock of social incoherence,[72] a point Pope Francis corroborates by saying, "Inequality is the root of social evil."[73] For the church in South Africa, when participating in the *missio Dei* in light of such social reality and commentary, it becomes imperative to answer the pragmatic question of how we appropriate Hebrews 13:11–14 in our context.

First, the solidarity Hebrews 13:11–14 prompts the question of how this solidarity can establish an authentic alternative community around the person of Christ in South Africa. Here Volf provides insightful commentary:

> As the Gospel has been preached to many nations, the church has taken root in many cultures, changing them as well as being profoundly shaped by them. Yet the many churches in diverse cultures are one, just as the triune God is one. No church in a given culture

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[68] Oxfam, *An Economy for the 1%* (Oxford: Oxfam International, 2016).

[69] Mamphela Ramphele, *Conversations with My Sons and Daughters* (Johannesburg: Penguin, 2012), 117.

[70] Elissa Jobson and Parselelo Kantai, "Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma: Pan-Africanism is More Important than Ever," *The Africa Report* 50 (2013): 27.

[71] Oxfam, *Even It Up: Time to End Extreme Inequality* (Oxford: Oxfam International, 2014), 38.

[72] Ibid., 49.

[73] Pope Francis, cited in Oxfam, *Even It Up*, 49.

> may isolate itself from other churches in other cultures declaring itself sufficient to itself and to its own culture.[74]

Volf's comments implicitly point to the diversity latent in genuine catholicity. This diversity is not limited to matters of ethnicity and culture, but extends to socio-economic realities as well. Evidently, a South African church that harnesses these virtues in ethos and practice is going "outside the camp" as described by Hebrews 13:11–14 and Ephesians 2:11–22. In going "outside the camp," a counter-current motion, obedient to the injunction of the preacher to the Hebrews, is continued in a postcolonial context, transcending (yet informed by) overt cultural distinctions.

Second, Hebrews 13:11–14 calls for focus towards the enduring city. However, in focusing on the enduring city, the social injunctions of Hebrews 13 portray the tension all Christ-centred communities experience. This eschatological tension can function as an instrument of hope for communities at the bitter end of the poles of disparity, by alleviating present ills with a healthy proclamation of future grace. Added to hope, this motif can also function as an instrument of warning for the privileged members of the new covenant community, anticipating as it does the return of the Christ and the coming new heavens and new earth (Rev 21–22). It does this by drawing attention to the eschatological reward implied in the warning passages in Hebrews (2:1–4; 3:6–4:13; 5:11–6:12; 10:19–39). The responsibility of the rich to aid the poor, especially within the new covenant community, is boldly underscored in the wider New Testament corpus (see Jas 5:7–12), and can be qualified by a social-scientific reading. Furthermore, the dual motif of "hope and judgment," within an eschatological paradigm, is not foreign to Hebrews as seen in the warning passages.

Third, the ethics of defining who is "in" and who is "out" based on shared principles is fundamental to the participation and success of the enterprise. Such an approach, though necessary to the identity of any contemporary Christian group, does not mean that the group remains insulated from the world without. Exclusion, for the church in South Africa, should function not as a defender of polarity, but a gateway to diversity and social-reengineering through the Gospel. Evidence of this can be seen in Hebrews 13:11–14, where the Christ inaugurates a new order through a reversal of the antiquated ethics of the Levitical, by his death outside the borders of the *status quo*. Here the contemporary church in South Africa is conditioned to the fact that socio-economic disparities are a reality that should not be limited to a historical consciousness, but should rather motivate a missional outworking, through practical engagement and collaborations across fields.

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[74] Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 51.

5. Conclusion

This article has aimed to read Hebrews 13:11–14 using social-science approaches, for a postcolonial milieu. Matters of Christology, moving from the Levitical order to the Christ, may be drawn out from this text, to motivate the South African church to be ministers of the new creation in areas ravaged by legacies of colonialism. Furthermore, the understanding of holiness, as it functions in the Greco-Roman paradigms of honour and shame, demonstrates that the revision brought about by the Christ's suffering outside the camp are counter-cultural across interpretive epochs. With this understanding, the church in South Africa may be motivated to address matters of social disparity, latent in the postcolonial experience, by outworking Christ-centred solidarity with those in the margins in a way that does not patronise, but "goes outside the camp," for the sake of eternal glory, a glory that is true honour.

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The Mother of All Sanctuaries: Deep Feminism and *bassēter,* "in Secret," in Psalm 139:15

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Abstract

The present study reconsiders the line, "I was being made in secret [*bassēter*]" in Psalm 139:15. In all its twenty-three other occurrences, *bassēter* connotes safety from detection and hostile intervention, and, more specifically, safety *in God's sanctuary*. Several verbs in Psalm 139:13–15 resonate with their occurrences in Exodus in relation to *the tabernacle* and to Israel's *safety* as "set apart" by God. The application of *bassēter* to God's creation of the psalmist, as the core of the psalmist's praise and knowledge of God's works (v. 14), suggests that the "ancient way" the psalmist asks to be led in (v. 24b) may refer to God's generous mother-love that brought the world (and the psalmist) into being. This distinctive "way," grounded in the creative sanctuary / *bassēter* of God, is the basis for the psalmist's safety in the face of evil. Significantly, God's "ancient way" is contrasted with a "wicked [lit. idolatrous] way" (v. 24a), right after mention of God's enemies (vv. 19–22). Could these two "ways" reflect a contrast between radical *safety in vulnerability* (safe in the sanctuary of God's love that founded the world), and *safety through main force* (as found, e.g., in the Babylonian account of creation through conflict)? Are walls such as those of Babylon an idolatrous contrary to the walls of the mother's womb?

The psalmist in a sense never leaves the womb; he regards his life as one of seamlessly sustained favor established in the womb and continued throughout his life outside it.

— William P. Brown

In the present study, which focuses on the phrase, "in secret" (*bassēter*), I propose to show that Psalm 139:13–15 identifies the existential origin and continuing foundation for the thematics of divine refuge as associated with the sanctuary in the Psalms and, indeed, in the Bible as a whole. That the psalm likely was composed later than the other psalms referring to God's "secret place" of sanctuary does not, I think, vitiate such a proposal, but may go to support it. For in general, the search for what is originating and foundational begins with surface discoveries, and moves in stages until arrival, at last, at what is of first and enduring import.[1] I take Psalm 139:13–15 to provide just such an imaginative "depth" report—following the vein of Psalm 22:9–10[2] and Jeremiah 1:5—of the experiential basis of confidence in God vis-à-vis one's enemies. I shall begin with the existential situation of the psalmist.

The Existential Context of Psalm 139:13–15

The psalmist—beleaguered by haters of God who would threaten her life by enticing her to idolatry—cries out, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; / test me and know my thoughts. / See if there is an *idolatrous way* in me / And lead me in the *ancient way*."[3] As Goldingay says, that "ancient way" is the "way that goes back to Israel's beginnings before its corruption"—the corruption in question being the idolatry of the golden calf. Before this idolatry, Israel's ancient way was its origin in the exodus, its responsive covenanting with God at Sinai, and God's provision for a sanctuary. For this psalmist, there is a personal "ancient way" that anchors and protects her in the face of the idolatrous enticements and dangers that beset her. That personal way is recalled when she makes her affirmation in verses 13–15. By way of suggesting the resonance between Israel's and the psalmist's respective "ancient ways," I note several features of verses 13–15.

First, "I was being made in secret [*bassēter*]" is generally taken to mean that God's action is totally hidden, known only to God. Goldingay writes: "No human being witnesses that intricate process. It happens in secret. But it is not concealed from YHWH."[4] However, this takes the Hebrew phrase in a sense peculiar to this passage. In its twenty-three other occurrences, *bassēter* or *bĕse̱ter*-X always connotes a place where an action or situation is not only hidden, but *safe from negative intervention*. It is hard to suppose that the issue here is with the safety of God's action! Rather, the issue is the psalmist's safety.

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[1] A case in point: The present essay was conceived and written only after the publication of my collection of exegetical essays entitled, *When Prayer Takes Place: Forays into a Biblical World* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012). This essay, belated as it is, identifies the foundation, theologically speaking, for all the others.

[2] I shall cite biblical references as in English translations; scholars who consult the original texts will know how to adjust for differences where applicable.

[3] In so construing the Hebrew, I follow John Goldingay, *Psalms*, vol. 3: *Psalms 90–150* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 639; Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, WBC 21 (Waco: Word Books, 1983), 253; and Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 3: A Commentary on Psalms 101–150* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 545.

[4] Goldingay, *Psalms 90–150*, 635.

Secondly, the Psalms repeatedly use the noun, *sēter* (Pss 27:5; 31:20; 32:7; 91:1), along with the verb, *sāter*, "to hide" (Pss 17:8; 31:20; 64:2), of God's sanctuary as a refuge.[5] Third, that *bassēter* in Psalm 139 resonates with this sanctuary theme is supported by several verbs in verses 13–15. *Intricately woven* (*ruqqamtî*) occurs elsewhere only in reference to the weaving of tabernacle hangings. *Knit together* (*tĕsukēnî*), in its noun form, *māsāḵ*, refers, in twenty-two of its twenty-five occurrences, to a woven tabernacle screen. And, underscoring *bassēter* as connoting safety, the verb "set apart" (*niplāh*), often rendered "wonderfully made," occurs elsewhere only in Exodus, of Israel set apart for safety, and in two psalms, where it also connotes safety.[6] Moreover, celebration of God's "works" (plural) in verse 14 as "awesome" and "wonderful" generally concerns God's foundational works in Israel's history. These details converge in such a way as to characterize the mother's womb as not only a place of origin, but also a sanctuary, the place of refuge *par excellence*.

Psalm 139:13–15: Form as Content

In this section I shall show how the form of verses 13–15communicates their content. The text below is largely an amalgam of the NRSV (as my base text), the KJV, and (in line three) John Goldingay's translation.[7] Also, I translate the last word in line 1 literally, and in line 4 I attempt to echo the Hebrew verb-less sentence as an ejaculatory exclamation.

It was you who formed my kidneys; (line 1)
you knit me together *in my mother's womb.* (line 2)
  *I praise you, for awesomely am I set apart. (line 3)
    Wonderful your works! (line 4)
  that my soul knows very well.* (line 5)
My frame was not hidden from you, (line 6)

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[5] As Jerome F. D. Creach shows, in his *Yahweh as Refuge and the Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, JSOTSup 217 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), *refuge*, as conveyed by a whole family of verbs and nouns, is one of the central themes of the Psalter, beginning with the last line of Psalm 2, "blessed are all who *take refuge* in him." The noun *sēter* and its verbal cognate are integral members of this thematic family.

[6] Such a connotation may be supported by the verb in v 15, "my frame was not hidden [*niḵḥaḏ*] from you," construed as in 2 Sam 18:13, where a soldier refuses to act against Absalom for fear of David's avenging wrath, "and there is nothing hidden [*yikāḥēḏ*] from the king." With such a construal of the verb in Ps 139:15, contrast the confidence of the psalmist in Ps 138:6 with the assumption of the ungodly in Ps 10:11–12, that "God will never see" nor "call to account" their assaults on the innocent (similarly, Ps 73:11); and with Job's fears to the same effect (Job 22:13–14).

[7] Goldingay, *Psalms 90–150*, 633: "because I was set apart awesomely."

when I was being made *in secret*, (line 7)
intricately woven *in the depths of the earth*. (line 8)

Here I note five rhetorical points that interweave to convey meaning. (1) In the three-fold repetition of the prepositional phrase "in-" with spatial connotation (lines 2, 7, 8), the first and third (*in my mother's womb* and *in the depths of the earth*) are social/material loci that encompass the second (*in secret*), which indicates the existential significance of those loci.

(2) Lines 3 and 5 are bracketed by the identity in form and sound of the opening syllable in line 3 (*ʾ**ôd**ĕkā* in "I praise you") and the closing syllable in line 5 (*meʾ**ōd*** in "very well"). In this enclosure, the verbs "I praise you" and "I know" are thrown into close semantic interaction around their focus on God's wonderful works; and these three lines lie *within* the opening and closing "in" phrases, underscoring that this knowing praise arises within an "insider" standpoint.

(3) This "insider" standpoint of the psalmist is signaled in another way, by the positioning, and the shifts in the subjects and the voice (active/ passive) of the verbs. In lines 1–2 God is the subject of two active verbs (formed, knit), while in lines 3–8 the remaining six verbs have the psalmist as their subject. Then, in the central section, lines 3–5, the two active verbs, of praising and knowing, enclose the first passive verb, "am I set apart." This implies that among the wonderful works that the psalmist praises and knows is the experience of being "set apart" in safety.[8]

(4) The shift from active to passive voice signals a shift in focus from God as acting, in lines 1–2, to the psalmist, in line 3, as the one *undergoing* and *experiencing* these actions as they unfold, and in some sense therein *knowing* them. The psalmist thus casts herself as having been in some sense privy to those procreative acts, and now recollecting those acts *as one who was there to experience and know them and to praise God for them as they occurred*. This I take to be the significance of the shifts in the subjects and voices of the verbs of these verses, from God to the psalmist, and from active to passive voice.

(5) Another triad identifies the results of God's creative actions in "my kidneys," "my soul," "my frame." Here a particular difficulty confronts the translator. Each of these terms—Hebrew, *kĕlāyōt*, *nep̱eš*, and *ʿeṣem* (or *ʿoṣem*)—refers, in the first instance, to some aspect of the person's natural/ physical body. The first refers to the kidneys, the second to the breath that fills and animates the body, the third to the encompassing (sic) skeletal frame. But each term, in ancient Hebrew understanding, also carries psychological and ethical/ spiritual connotations. As H. Wheeler Robinson put it in a classic essay:

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[8] As Israel was "set apart," or made "distinct," in Exod 8:22; 9:4; 11:7; 33:16.

> There is no distinction [for the ancient Hebrews] of the psychical and ethical from the physical[.] . . . Psychical and ethical functions are considered to be just as appropriate to the bodily organs as the physiological[.] . . . [M]an's consciousness, with its ethical qualities, was thought to be so diffused through the whole body that the flesh and bones, as well as the mouth, eye, ear, hand, had a quasi-consciousness of their own.[9]

The content of the psalmist's *praise* and *knowledge*[10] is something that, we may say, the psalmist feels in her very bones, with every breath that she takes, and in her very kidneys. This praise is, at the time, the nascent organism's "here I am!"[11] in response to the divine "let there be."[12] When the psalmist engages *now* in such praise, I suggest, it is a conscious surfacing of that originary, elemental praise, that originary, below-consciousness knowing, which has continued to resonate in and as the psalmist's inner depths—in the psalmist's kidneys, soul, and bones. As William Brown has it, "the psalmist in a sense never leaves the womb; he regards his life as one of seamlessly sustained favor established in the womb and continued throughout his life outside it."[13] In support of such a construal of the origins and depths of the psalmist's knowing, in verses 13–15, I want to adduce some lines of argument and evidence from extra-biblical disciplines.

Deep Subjectivity and a Deep Hermeneutics

Thinkers in various disciplines propose that all forms of organic existence not only display an objective exterior, but enjoy a subjective interior (whether conscious or unconscious), a capacity in some mode and degree to register and react to their surroundings. Thomas Nagel throws down the gauntlet to evolutionary biology as grounded solely in materialist presuppositions, arguing (as an avowed atheist) for "an alternative secular conception . . . that acknowledge[s] mind and all that it implies . . . . as a fundamental principle of nature along with physical law."[14] In a footnote to his discussion of panpsychism, in which "all the elements of the physical world are also mental," he refers to Whitehead as arguing "that concrete entities, all the way down to the level of the electrons, should be understood as somehow embodying a standpoint on the world."[15]

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[9] H. Wheeler Robinson, "Hebrew Psychology," in Arthur S. Peake, ed., *The People and the Book* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), 353–82 (here, 353–54). See also, more recently, Mark S. Smith, "The Heart and Innards in Israelite Emotional Expressions: Notes from Anthropology and Psychobiology," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 117 (1998): 427–36.

[10] On the dynamic and epistemological connection between praising and knowing, see Daniel W. Hardy and David F. Ford, *Praising and Knowing God* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1985).

[11] Compare the thunder and lightnings in Job 38:35; and contrast the untrusting, unresponsive hesitancy in the imaginative "in utero" scenario in Isa 45:(9–)10.

[12] As Wallace Stevens has it in his poem, "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven," "A poem is the cry of its occasion, / Part of the *res* itself and not about it." Just so, the knowing praise is the nascent organism's response to the divine action, its "standing forth" when God calls (Isa 48:13).

[13] William P. Brown, "*Creatio Corporis* and the Rhetoric of Defense in Job 10 and Psalm 119," in William P. Brown and S. Dean McBride, eds., *God Who Creates*, W. S. Towner Festschrift (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 123. Earlier (110) Brown writes: "From beginning to end, YHWH is profiled as an enduring presence, the source of wonder and self-knowledge . . . . Knowledge of God affirms and protects the human self, although its potential to convict and correct the self lies ever in the background." I would only reverse the relation between the last two clauses: it is the primal knowledge of God, "as an enduring presence," that "lies ever in the background" providing the "traction" for conviction and correction as needed.

But Whitehead's pertinence for the present paper goes deeper than Nagel indicates. In his major work, *Process and Reality*, in a chapter titled, "Organisms and Environment," Whitehead observes, critically, that "[p]hilosophers have disdained the information about the universe obtained through their *visceral feelings*, and have concentrated on visual feelings."[16] His point is that the five senses are already highly abstract results of the processing of the body's unconscious feelings of the various forces impinging upon it from its environment. Those feelings underlie consciousness, or emerge into its twilight, as vague awarenesses, dim emotions or moods, and fugitive intuitions. Elsewhere, in writing of religion as "a transforming agency" where "your character is developed according to your faith," he suggests that "[r]eligion is force of belief cleansing the inward parts."[17] As with his phrase, "visceral feelings," the resonance with biblical sensibilities of this reference to the "inward parts" is suggested by the frequent occurrence of the latter phrase in the KJV (on which Whitehead was raised)—Job 38:36; Psalm 51:6; Proverbs 20:27, 30; and Jeremiah 31:33, all in reference to God's wisdom, truth, spirit or *torah* in that bodily locus.

As though on Whitehead's heels, Hans Loewald proposes, in a neo-Freudian vein, that modern science's purely objectivist, materialist construal of the natural world serves the human project of power over nature that proceeds by "repressing"[18] the subjective dimension of nature and rendering it merely, vacuously, "objective." In contrast, he proposes that "the projection of psychology into the external world—the earmark, according to Freud, of the mythological/ religious worldview or ‘metaphysics’—takes place because *there are unconscious forces operating in the external world no less than in the internal world of the individual*.”[19] Such a “deeper understanding of nature will widen the horizons of a science of nature and increase . . . its power of mastery, a mastery that involves *yielding no less than dominion*. Such deeper understanding subordinates the traditional view to a more comprehensive perspective on nature as unconscious activity.”[20] With respect to my construal of the psalmist’s *in utero* organic “knowing” as in some sense concurrent with the divine creative activity “in secret,” I note Loewald’s comment that “[u]nison and reverberation, as regards other human beings, is called empathy. But it would be erroneous to assume that this *empathic resonance* stops at the frontier of human mentality. Our knowledge of organic and so-called inorganic nature is likely to derive from similar attunements.”[21]

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[14] Thomas Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature is Almost Certainly False* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 22.

[15] Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos*, 57, n. 16. In his late (1938) work, *Modes of Thought*, Whitehead critiques the materialist presuppositions of modern science in a chapter titled, "Nature Lifeless," and presents his constructive alternative in a chapter titled, "Nature Alive," concluding, "[t]he key notion from which such construction should start is that the energetic activity considered in physics is the emotional intensity entertained in life." Alfred North Whitehead, *Modes of Thought* (New York: The Free Press, 1968), 168.

[16] Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929), 184 (II.IV.VII); italics mine. Whitehead repeatedly describes his cosmology as "the philosophy of organism." In one place—in pointed contrast to Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*—he characterizes *Process and Reality* as "a critique of pure feeling" (174 [II.IV.II]).

[17] Alfred North Whitehead, *Religion in the Making* (Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1960), 15.

[18] Compare, below, Marduk's slaying of Tiamat, in the Babylonian creation myth, *Enuma Elish*, and my further comments there.

Like an underground stream, I suggest, this organic, “resonant” awareness in humans underlies and feeds the river of consciousness.[22] In the case of infants, Christopher Bollas calls this awareness “the unthought known,” informing consciousness as elemental moods, images, and symbols. He writes: “Each person’s spatio-temporal idiom reflects the ego’s record of the infant’s early experiences of his place in the object setting. This *body memory* conveys *memories of our earliest existence*. It is a form of knowledge which has yet to be thought, and constitutes part of the unthought known.”[23]

For their part, the evolutionary neuroscientists Panksepp and Biven report that, in all creatures with post-reptilian brains, *emotional* and *physical* experiences are registered in the same areas of the brain; and, they go on to say, “[o]ur earliest social bonds, when firm and secure, nourish our psychological health for a lifetime.”[24] Such “deep” organic experiences of *enclosed safety and nurture*—what Bollas calls “the unthought known,” and Loewald would refer to as our resonance with the dynamic, living forces of nature, would be reflected, it seems to me, in later symbolic expressions such as material sanctuaries and psalms of sanctuary.

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[19] Hans Loewald, “Psychoanalysis in Search of Nature: Thoughts on Metapsychology, ‘Metaphysics,’ Projection,” in *The Annual of Psychoanalysis*, vol. 16 (New York: International Universities Press, 1988), 53; italics mine.

[20] Loewald, “Psychoanalysis in Search of Nature,” 51; italics mine.

[21] Loewald, “Psychoanalysis in Search of Nature,” 50; italics mine.

[22] Compare the way the Gihon (*gîḥôn*, “a bursting forth”), the second of the “headwaters” (*rāʾšîm*) branching from the primordial river in Eden (Gen 2:13), surfaces just outside Jerusalem in the form of the spring Gihon where David has Solomon anointed king to succeed him (1Kgs 1:32–40); and the way these waters are later brought inside the walled city through the Siloam Tunnel. And then note the association of the verb, *gîḥ*, with childbirth as a bursting forth from the womb (Ps 22:10; Mic 4:10; Job 38:8). Finally, we have the threefold analogy, in Isa 51:1–3, between primordial Eden, historical Sarah, and eschatological Zion as places of flourishing. The symbolism is suggestive of primal realities.

[23] Christopher Bollas, *The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 46; italics mine.

[24] Jaak Panksepp and Lucy Biven, *The Archaeology of Mind: Neuroevolutionary Origins of Human Emotions* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2012), 313–14.

The question of the symbolic relation between the material sanctuary of the temple and the maternal sanctuary of the womb (that is, the question of which is the reality and which the symbol) receives additional, if inadvertent, illumination in some remarks by Gaston Bachelard in his phenomenological study of the poetics of space.[25] Writing of "the house," he seeks to "show that the house is one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind." He goes on: "In the life of a man, the house thrusts aside contingencies, its councils of continuity are unceasing. . . . It maintains him through the storms of the heavens and through those of life. It is the human being's first world." In critique of Martin Heidegger, he writes: "Before he is 'cast into the world,' man is laid in the cradle of the house. . . . Life begins well, it begins enclosed, protected, all warm in the bosom of the home." Astonishingly, Bachelard overlooks a human being's first "world," first "cradle," first space of warm protection, in the mother's womb. He fails, then, to appreciate how the human house—and, all the more, the house of God—is the material symbol of the maternal reality. (A house is, so to speak, "our womb away from womb.") In that more radical perspective, all that he says about the house can be applied to what the psalmist speaks of in Psalm 139. With an eye to Loewald's and Bollas's depth-perspectives, and looking forward to the bearing of Psalm 16 on our topic, I shall conclude this section with Bachelard's comment that

> if I were asked to name the chief benefit of the house, I should say: the house shelters daydreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace. Thought and experience are not the only things that sanction human values. The values that belong to daydreaming mark humanity in its depths. . . . [T]he places in which we have *experienced daydreaming* reconstitute themselves in a new daydream, and it is because our memories of former dwelling-places are relived as daydreams that those dwelling-places of the past remain in us for all time."[26]

I take, then, the various perspectives canvassed in this section to sponsor a "deep" hermeneutics of Psalm 139:13–15 as not simply a poetic conceit, but an imaginative expression of *an originary, deep sense—mediated and symbolized in the mother's womb—of safety in God as sanctuary*, a sense that arises as an organic awareness in and through the mother's body, and that continues to exist like an underground stream deep within the psalmist,[27] as the *ancient way* of God with the psalmist, over against the *way of idolatry* that later attempts to tempt the psalmist. That organic sense may arise to consciousness in the form of a fleeting visitation or pervasive sense of wellbeing and security; or it may come to symbolic expression during sleep (Jer 31:26), in dreams and visions (e.g., Genesis 15), or (as in Psalm 16) in counsels of the night.

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[25] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 6–7.

[26] Ibid., 6.

Walled Babylon as (Betrayal of the) Womb

I want, now, to introduce another Old Testament theme, relative to the idolatry the psalmist is resisting. In his monograph, *The Liberating Image*,[28] Richard Middleton explores the implications of the *imago Dei* in Genesis 1 vis-à-vis the *imago* theme among Israel's neighbors; and he points to one prominent form of idolatry against which Genesis 1 and its human *imago* are opposed. That idolatry expresses itself in a royal statecraft that models itself on divine creative activity taken to be warlike, conquering chaos and subjecting it by force of arms.

The mythic scenario as set forth in Babylon's central myth, *Enuma Elish*, may be summarized as follows: In the opening scene the primordial pair, Apsu and Tiamat (divinities immanent, respectively, in the sweet waters of the Tigris-Euphrates and the salt waters of the Persian Gulf), "mingle" to give rise to successive generations of gods (immanent in the vegetable and animal life that arises in the delta where the silt from the sweet water settles in the shallow mingling water and builds up). When the younger gods show signs of rebellious turbulence, and Apsu's vizier counsels a war-like response, Tiamat intercedes for these "children," counseling painstaking patience, but Apsu follows his vizier's advice. In the ensuing conflict, Apsu is slain and the younger gods survive.

When they again threaten rebellion, Tiamat's older divine children protest her reluctance to take action against their younger divine siblings, complaining, "You do not love us!"[29] In response to this appeal to her maternal feelings, she herself takes up arms, aided by her lieutenant, Kingu. The young god Marduk arises as his near-siblings' champion, slays Tiamat, slices her body in two, and within her two clam-shell-like body-parts, creates the cosmos together with all its vegetable and animal denizens, humankind being fashioned out of the blood of slain Kingu. In gratitude, the young gods build the (walled) city of Babylon, with its tower-temple a place for their and Marduk's "rest," and they proclaim him their king. As Middleton documents, the human king becomes the *imago* of Marduk, ruling the world from this walled city that is a microcosm of the cosmos that arises within (sic) Tiamat's dead body.[30]

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[27] Compare the brook, in Robert Frost's poem, "A Brook in the City"—an "immortal force" that, "no longer needed," has been "thrown / Deep in a sewer dungeon under stone," now traceable only by "ancient maps," yet still obscurely troubling city-folk in "both work and sleep."

[28] J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005).

[29] *Enuma Elish*, tablet I, line 119.

In contrast to the dominant thematics of *Enuma Elish*, Middleton shows that God, in the "ancient way" of Genesis 1, creates by non-violent means, means I would characterize as *generative*.[31] In a systematic theological vein, Jürgen Moltmann characterizes that primordial way in terms of Isaac Luria's image of *zimzum*, or drawing back, in which "God creates the world by letting his world become and be *in himself*: Let it be!"[32] In Nicholas Ansell's words, "This '*living space in God*' is described [in Moltmann] by using the German term '*Geborgenheit*,' a 'safekeeping' associated with 'the mother's womb.'"[33] This *Geborgenheit*, literally "hiddenness," precisely accords with *bassēter* in Psalm 139; and Moltmann's characterization of cosmic origins through this feminine, generative image coheres with the Psalmist's characterization of individual origins.

It is just such an originary experience of God's generative creativity that forms the content of our Psalmist's praise-and-knowledge of God. And it *in-forms* the psalmist's implicit *self*-knowledge as *imago Dei*. This is the "ancient way" that the psalmist aspires to remain faithful to, when beset and enticed by those who follow "idolatrous ways."

We may note that this theme of God's "ancient way," in contrast to Israel's idolatrous ways, occurs also twice in Jeremiah (6:16; 18:15)—a prophet who traced *his* deepest self-knowledge to God's knowing him before he was in the womb and consecrating him before he was born (Jer 1:5). In fact, the resonance between Jeremiah and Psalm 139 is rather broad, and calls for detailed investigation at this point.

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[30] The Freudian significance of walled Babylon as microcosm of a cosmos that *arises within the slain body* of Tiamat is palpable: These structures represent a bogus attempt to replicate the prenatal safety that these gods once enjoyed within her living body. Insofar as Babylon lives to a considerable degree on fish from the Tigris-Euphrates waters, and the rice that grows in that watershed; and insofar as these rivers and their two major tributaries originate in the north-eastern mountains; the fact that, in the myth, Marduk plants mountains over Tiamat's two (dead) eyes and over her two (dead) breasts, suggests to me a subliminal, if inadvertent, recognition on the part of the myth-makers that Babylon's existence continues in some sense to depend on the intercessory tears and nourishing breasts of this "repressed" Ur-mother. Compare again Robert Frost's poem, "A Brook in the City."

[31] Frank Moore Cross identifies Genesis 1, in terms of *genre*, as nearer to the *theogonic* myths of origin (compare the primal "mingling" of Apsu and Tiamat) than to the *cosmogonic* myths (compare Marduk's creative violence). See Frank Moore Cross, "The 'Olden Gods' in Ancient Near Eastern Creation Myths," in *Magnalia Dei: The Mighty Acts of God*, ed. Frank Moore Cross, et al. (Garden City: Doubleday, 1976), 329–38.

[32] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), 109; and *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 86–93.

[33] Nicholas Ansell, *The Annihilation of Hell: Universal Salvation and the Redemption of Time in the Eschatology of Jürgen Moltmann* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade, 2013), 148–49. With this *Geborgenheit* compare the theological anthropology of Gerhard Sauter, *Das verborgene Leben* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2011), an extended reflection, engaged with contemporary thought, centered in the image, "hid with Christ in God," in Col 3:1–4. He offers a penetrating discussion of Ps 139:13–15 on pp. 212–19.

God in our "Kidneys" (*kĕlāyôṯ*) in Psalm 139, Jeremiah, and Elsewhere

Why, does the psalmist begin her "recollection" of her creation at God's hands with a reference to her kidneys? Why not a more general reference to her "interior" (*q̱ereḇ*)? Why, specifically, the *kĕlāyôṯ*? And why, given the *deep interior* placement and connotations of this organ, does it formally *fall outside* the enclosure formed by the three "in-" phrases in lines 2–8 as set out above? In my view, the "un-naturalness" of this exterior placement serves to highlight its significance for the psalm, as the key to the psalmist's self-understanding vis-à-vis the wicked in verses 19–22. To appreciate this, it is necessary to canvass the connotations of the *kĕlāyôṯ* in related contexts.

The related contexts are those that, like Psalm 139:1, 23–24, speak of God as searching and testing the heart. Jeremiah, who, like the speaker in Psalm 139, becomes conscious of God's creative and consecrating activity in the womb (Jer 1:5), testifies as follows (I revise the key words to conform the translation to that in Psalm 139),

> You, O LORD of hosts, judge righteously,
> you try the *kĕlāyôṯ* and the heart (Jer 11:20).
>
> I the LORD search the heart
> and try the *kĕlāyôṯ* (Jer 17:10).
>
> O LORD of hosts, you try the righteous,
> you see the *kĕlāyôṯ* and the heart (Jer 20:12).

This formulaic expression occurs also in two psalms:

> You who try the hearts and *kĕlāyôṯ*,
> O righteous God (Ps 7:9).
>
> Try me, O LORD, and prove me;
> test my *kĕlāyôṯ* and heart (Ps 26:2).

It is generally recognized that in these passages the kidneys are (as in H. Wheeler Robinson's analysis) the physiological locus and metaphor for the human person in ethical and spiritual relation to God; in other words, the kidneys connote the human conscience as a sensitivity toward God's relational claims.[34] When, in Jeremiah 12:2, the prophet declares of the wicked who prosper, "you are near in their mouths, / yet far from their *kĕlāyôṯ*," he is diagnosing them as devoid of a conscience attuned to God's presence and claim on their lives.

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[34] Compare an Old Babylonian letter (early Second Millennium, BCE), which includes the sentence, "your thorns have pierced my kidneys [*kelītu*]." In Miguel Civil, et al., *The Assyrian Dictionary*, vol. 8 (Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1971), 75.

When, then, Psalm 139 opens and closes on the same theme, using the same accompanying formulaic terms, "try," and "heart," in reference to the same issue of loyalty to YHWH vis-à-vis defection to other gods, the conclusion seems inescapable that *kĕlāyôṯ* in Psalm 139:13 refers both to the physical organ and to its function as the seat of the psalmist's feeling-conscience toward YHWH.[35] In contrast to those of whom Jeremiah complains (Jer 12:2), the psalmist's mouth, in the form of her words in the psalm, and her *kĕlāyôṯ* have been at one in their attunement to God since her very beginning in the womb.

Two other occurrences of *kĕlāyôṯ* bear on the present study. The first comes in Psalm 73, where the complaint of Jeremiah 12:1–4 comes to fuller expression and, not incidentally, is resolved through the psalmist's presence in the sanctuary. The sight of the wicked, who prosper, thinking, "How can God know? / Is there knowledge in the Most High?" (Ps 73:11), tempts the psalmist to view his piety as futile (vv. 13–14)—"until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I perceived their end" (v. 17). Within the sanctuary (emblematic of a foundational, unconscious embodied memory?), the psalmist recalls how, outside of that sacred context, "When my heart [*lēḇāḇ*] was embittered, / when I was pricked in my *kĕlāyôṯ*,[36] / I was stupid and ignorant, / I was like a brute beast toward you" (vv. 21–22). But now, regaining the "insider" perspective afforded by the sanctuary, the psalmist affirms his loyalty as exclusive to YHWH (v. 24), in the conviction that "you hold [*ʾāḥaztā*] my right hand, / you guide me [*ṯanḥēnî*] with your counsel [*ʿăsātĕkā*]" (vv. 23–24).[37] The psalmist's affirmation that "God is the strength of my heart, and my *portion* forever" (v. 26), together with the thematics of God's counsel (v. 24) as associated with the psalmist's *kĕlāyôṯ*, associates this psalmist's religious perspective with the psalmist in Psalm 16, a psalm that adds another dimension to the rich connotations of the *kĕlāyôṯ* as locus of sensibilities open toward God.

Associated by some commentators with Levitical circles (that is, attendants at the sanctuary), Psalm 16 is a psalm of refuge: Vis-à-vis those who "run after" (*māhārû*) another god (Ps 16:4), the psalmist's "chosen *portion* and cup" (v. 5) is

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[35] Compare Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, vol. 3, trans. Davis Eaton (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, n.d.), 350: "The reins are made especially prominent, in order to characterize them, the seat of the tenderest and most secret emotions, as the work of Him who trieth the heart and reins." Interestingly, the Geneva Bible and KJV render *kĕlāyôṯ* as "kidneys" in Exodus and Leviticus, but "reins" (from Latin *renes*, "kidneys") where the context highlights the moral connotation of the word. Their rendering with "reins" in Ps 139:13 reflects a construal of the word there similar to Delitzsch's and my own.

[36] Compare, again, the image in the Old Babylonian letter, with its "your thorns have pierced my kidneys [*kelītu*]."

[37] I note the resonance of these lines with the confident assertion in Ps 139:10 that "even [in the uttermost parts of the sea] your hand shall lead [*ṯanḥēnî*] me / and your right hand shall hold me fast [*ṯōʾḥăzēnî*]."

YHWH, in whom is refuge and safety (v. 1). The existential situation, then, is not unlike that in Psalm 139. In this situation, the psalmist affirms, "I bless the LORD who *gives me counsel* [*yĕʿāṣānî*]; / in the night also my *kĕlāyôṯ* instruct me [*yissĕrûnî*]" (v. 7). Several things are noteworthy here.

First, the verbs "counsel" and "instruct" in verse 7 are native to wisdom lore; they have to do with moral and spiritual teaching and formation. Secondly, while this teaching and formation comes ultimately from YHWH, it comes through the psalmist's *kĕlāyôṯ*, that is, his deep, interior, embodied sense of moral and spiritual realities as pertaining to the world of flesh-and-blood existence.[38]

Thirdly, the psalmist is instructed by, or through, his *kĕlāyôṯ* at *night* (Ps 16:7), when his daytime consciousness is inactive and he awakes, in the "consciousness" of a dream state (Bachelard, take note!), to the deeper wisdom of what we would call his unconscious, the wisdom arising out of his "unthought known." (Compare Jacob's "ladder" visitation, while asleep at the sanctuary in Bethel.) Presumably this nighttime "instruction" addresses existential concerns of the sort that might lead some to worship other gods but that, through the psalmist's faithfulness to this "counsel," issues in steadfastness with YHWH as place of refuge (v. 1). Finally, there is the affirmation in verse 9: "Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul [*kĕbôḏî*, literally, "my glory"] rejoices; / my body [*bĕśārî*, "flesh"] also dwells [*yiškōn*] secure [*lābeṭaḥ*]."

The last word here, *beṭaḥ*, derives from a verb which means "to trust," as, for example, in Psalm 22:4–5; so that when a causative form of this verb occurs in Psalm 22:9, "You are he who took me from the womb; you *kept me safe* [*mabṭîḥî*] upon my mother's breasts," the connotation that underlies the translation is that God caused the psalmist to trust (or rest safe/ secure) on his mother's breasts. It is this concrete, organic context for this psalmist's originary experience of *trust/ safety* that underlies, I suggest, the image, in v. 9, of the psalmist's *flesh* abiding in *beṭaḥ*. The holistic feeling-sense in this verse has moral-spiritual, affective, and physiological aspects. When, then, the psalmist in 139:13 speaks of God as forming her *kĕlāyôṯ*, in the "secret place" of her mother's womb, it should be clear that the psalmist employs this term with a double reference—not only to her kidneys as such, but to this organ as the seat-and-symbol of her innermost, deepest awareness of God, the innermost locus of her sense of safety, and thereby the compass that keeps her oriented trustingly and faithfully toward God in the face of enticements by her enemies to go after other gods.

Naïve Trust and the Vicissitudes of Experience

I want, now, to characterize such radical trust as *naïve*, in the root sense of that word, cognate with *natal*, “new-born.” According to Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary, the adjective can mean, among other things, “deficient in worldly wisdom or informed judgment; especially: credulous,” or “not previously subjected to experimentation or a particular experimental situation.”[39] In the face of the Psalter’s largest group of psalms, the psalms of complaint, and in view of the experience of Job, how seriously can we take the affirmation of safety in Psalm 139? Anyone who has heard an infant’s bewildered cry of pain at its first earache will know how quickly naïve, undiscriminating trust can give way to the awareness of the world as a place of pains as well as pleasures, of danger as well as safety, of betrayal as well as trustworthiness, of evil as well as goodness.

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[38] Here, *and in Ps 139:13*, NJPS renders *kĕlāyôṯ* with "conscience."

Consider, in similar vein, the following voices: In Psalm 22 the speaker acknowledges (22:4–5) how the ancestors “trusted [*bāṭĕḥû*], and were not disappointed”; but, under a sense of God’s abandonment, he cries out, “Yet it was you who took me from the womb; / you kept me safe [*mabṭîḥî*][40] on my mother’s breast. / On you I was cast from my birth, / and since my mother bore me you have been my God.” This cry of dereliction arises out of the painful difference between that primal sense of security and the psalmist’s present situation.

Job portrays his conception, birth, and early nurture in even more graphic terms (Job 10:10–12), but only to contrast this early idyllic picture with his present agonizing situation (10:13). As he puts it in his first soliloquy, in chapter 3, “Why did I not die at birth, / come forth from the womb and expire? / Why did the knees receive me? / Or why the breasts, that I should *suck* [*yānaq*]?” (Job 3:11–12) To have died at birth would be to have been spared all the trouble that ensues.

Then there is Jeremiah, whose awareness of having been known and consecrated while in his mother’s womb (Jer 1:5), seems (all but) erased by his subsequent sufferings at the hands of his adversaries, moving him, like Job in Job 3, to curse the day he was born (Jer 20:14–18). This, after God’s promise that, in the face of his enemies, “I make you this day a fortified city, an iron pillar, and bronze walls” (Jer 1:18).

This then raises the question of the realism of the *sanctuary* picture in Psalm 139 as I have been reading it. For, is there anything more vulnerable in a war-torn world than a pregnant woman and her nascent child (2 Kgs 8:12)? What of a crack baby, invaded by toxic substances while yet in the womb? What of those traumas that so scar the body-and-soul as to render such primal awareness all but inaccessible?[41] What kind of image of safety *is* Psalm 139:15, vis-à-vis the vicissitudes of the world as we know it? In the face of such vulnerability, such challenge to naïve trust, I propose that it is precisely in this psalm that we find, in their most radical form, the implications of Richard Middleton's argument concerning Genesis 1, as giving us the liberating account of how we are called to image God as non-violent creator of all things.

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[39] http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/naïve.

[40] The basic, Qal form of the verb means “to trust”; in the present instance the Hiphil or causative form can mean, “to cause to trust,” as though God as the midwife lay the newborn psalmist on its mother’s breast to give it its first post-natal experience of an external world that it could trust. In that sense, the newborn’s naïve trust is not without experiential confirmation, whatever may follow.

Let me return to Job, who in chapter 14 asks, "If a man [*gever*] dies, shall he live again?" I note the imagery in which he briefly conceives the possibility.

> Oh that you would *hide* me [*taṣpinēnî*] in Sheol,
> that you would *conceal* me [*tastirēnî*] until your wrath is past,
> that you would appoint me a set time, and remember me!
> All the days of my service I would wait,
> till my renewal should come.
> You would call, and I would answer you;
> you would long for the work [*maʿaseh*] of your hands.
> (Job 14:13–15)

Here, Sheol would become—of all things!—a "safe house" for the time being, until God would, in a microcosmic version of, for example, Isaiah 48:13, call on Job to "stand forth" into life renewed. It is often noted that when Job, in the Prologue, says, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there," the word "there" refers to the grave or Sheol; and it is often noted that the poetic parallelism intimates some sort of semantic connection between Sheol and the womb—just as we have it in Psalm 139, where the mother's womb is also called "the depths of the earth." Strikingly, then, Job's brief, hypothetical vision, in which his death would not be the end, but rather the point of a new creation, reframes post-mortem Sheol as a place in which God would *conceal* him (the verbal cognate of our noun, *sēter*, "hiding-place, sanctuary").

In this brief conception, Job derives his "eschatological" imagery,[42] I suggest, from his originary experience in the womb as a theater of God's "care" and "steadfast love" (10:12). Though he falls back from this vision in 14:13–15, the imagery that generates it intrigues me. And I note that, although his hopeful vision in chapter 14 is fleeting, *something* enables him, in 27:1–6, to take an oath of innocence with "the breath that is in me, / and the spirit of God in my nostrils." That is, he anchors his standing before God in the very life and breath that God has given him. And his second, more elaborate oath in chapter 31 includes a disavowal (31:26–27) of the sort of idolatry that enticed Jeremiah's compatriots.[43] Even though his brief vision in 14:13–15, quickly fades with the emphatic "but" (*wĕʾûlām*) of 14:18, the fidelity in these later oaths testifies, however fugitively, to a deep, perhaps unconscious trust whose roots are reflected in the imagery of the "shoots" of 14:7 (literally "suckers" [*yōneqet*], echoing the verb "suck" in 3:12), budding at the *scent* of water (14:9).

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[41] For a sobering prognosis in the case of profound trauma, see Bessel van der Kolk, "The Body Keeps the Score: Memory and the Evolving Psychobiology of Post Traumatic Stress," *Harvard Review of Psychiatry* 1(5) (1994): 253–65, accessible online at http://www.trauma-pages.com/a/vanderk4.php.

[42] Note the similarity of the language in Job 8:7 and 42:12 with "former/latter" language in Isaiah 40–55.

The prominence of the imagery of rain in God's address in chapter 39 suggests the power of the generative scenario in that chapter to revive Job in accordance with his brief vision. For the divine speeches convey Job's sense of the cosmos as an all-encompassing *building*,[44] at the foundations of which (Job 38:2–6) all the denizens of heaven erupt in a unison of *praise* (38:7), and his sense that this cosmos is pervaded by generative, and nourishing and restorative (38:26–27) potency. If we take the prose conclusion to this book as integral to Job's story, and if we follow NJPS in its translation of the very last verse—"So Job died old and contented" (the last verb means, literally, "sated")—we may be entitled to see in this narrator's comment, as well as in Job's willingness to pray for friends who had so egregiously assaulted him with their accusations, signs of what Paul Ricoeur has called "second naïveté." As in Job's story, such naïveté is hard-won. Where it is arrived at, it attests a trustworthy Presence that underlies all life in the face of all the evils and outrages of the world.

Such Joban "second naïveté" testifies in its own way to what Oliver O'Donovan calls "the vindication of creation." O'Donovan writes, "We are driven to concentrate on the resurrection as our starting-point because it tells us of God's vindication of his creation. . . . [T]he resurrection of Christ is a new affirmation of God's first decision that Adam should live."[45] If O'Donovan means, in the first instance, God's vindication of the divine *action* and *intention* in *creating* the world and humankind in it, I take his phrasing also, in a secondary sense as God's vindicating the *creation*, vindicating all God's creatures, in the face of all the evils that have assaulted it and them. Such a reading of O'Donovan's phrasing, in the light of Romans 8, leads me to conclude this essay with a few brief remarks on the thematics of "the secret place" of Psalm 139 as echoed in the New Testament.

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[43] They worshipped "the queen of heaven" (Jer 7:18; 44:17–25). Some commentators take Job's "covenant" with his eyes to not "look on a virgin" (31:1) to be a reference to the virgin goddess Ishtar.

[44] Job's sudden transformed sense of the cosmos as shot through with divine presence and address has the effect on him that entry into the sanctuary has for the psalmist in Psalm 73. For such a relation between sanctuary and cosmos, see Jon Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1969), chap. 7: "Cosmos and Microcosm," 78–99, esp. 99: "To view creation within the precincts of the Temple is to summon up an *ideal world* that is far from the mundane reality of profane life and its persistent evil. It is that ideal world which is the result of God's creative labors."

[45] Oliver O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 13–14.

Echoes of the *Secret Place* in the New Testament

When the angel announces to Mary, "the power of the Most High will overshadow you" (Luke 1:35), the verb "overshadow," *episkiazō*, resonates with connotations of *protection*, as it does in all four of its occurrences in the Septuagint. According to Exodus 40:35, "Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled [*epeskiazen*] upon it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle." Psalm 91, which opens with "One who dwells in the shelter [*bĕsēṯer*] of the Most High [sic], / who abides in the shadow of the Almighty," continues, in verse 4 with, "he will cover [*episkiasei*] you with his pinions [*pterygas*], / and under his wings you will find refuge [*teḥseh*]."

Ironically, it is precisely through the words of Psalm 91 that Satan tempts Jesus to idolatrous conceptions of God's safekeeping. By the time of Jesus, this psalm would be construed in the first instance as referring to David as author and royal Patron of the Psalter. Insofar, then, as Psalm 2, concerning God's anointed (royal) son, ends on the note, "Blessed are all who take refuge [*ḥôsê*] in him"; and insofar as "David" affirms, in Psalm 140:7, "O LORD, my Lord, my strong deliverer, / you have covered [*epeskiasas*] my head in the day of battle"; and insofar as the image of the "pinnacle" (*pterygion*) of the temple to which Satan takes Jesus, in quoting Psalm 91, might evoke the connotations of God's sheltering wings [*pterygas*]," Jesus might well be tempted to misconstrue the nature of the security that he as God's anointed Son may anticipate (compare the imagery in Matt 23:37!). That those temptations are endemic to humankind—not least to those enjoying stations of power—is suggested by the (ironic?) observation in Proverbs 18:11, "A rich man's wealth is his strong city, / and like a high wall protecting [*episkiazei*] him."

When the angel says, further, to Mary, "a sword shall pierce your own heart also" (Luke 2:35), I suggest that Mary's earlier response, "behold the handmaiden of the Lord" (Luke 1:38), signals her faithfulness to the *ancient way*; and as such, it humanly grounds Jesus' steadfast resistance to Satan's enticement—he remains loyal to the *ancient way* that he and Mary have trodden together in organic resonance. So, when the Word through whom all things were made becomes flesh and tabernacles among us, and then a spear pierces his own side, the pains he therein shares with Mary his mother are pains that they share with the whole creation that groans in *travail* and in *pain together*.[46] For that, finally, is the place of safety in

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[46] It is within such a frame of reference that I read the exchange between Myrna Landers and Armand Gamache in Louise Penny's novel, *The Long Way Home* (New York: Minotaur Books, 2014), 146: "'So you have to leave sanctuary in order to have it?' she asked. 'You did,' he said."

God—the place in which, like Mary, like Jesus, we accept the risk of vulnerable, organic *solidarity and participation* in the *travail of the New Creation's coming into being*, and we discover that in doing so we participate in the *travail of God*, whose Spirit *groans* in intercession for us, to the end that, if we suffer *together*, we shall be glorified *together*.

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Being "In Christ" Today: Paul's Letter to the Contemporary Church in North America[1]

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Abstract

As I was preparing to give a presentation on Paul and the mission of the church in North America, I remembered a little-known Pauline letter that did not make it into the New Testament canon. In fact, it was discovered and read in public for the first time just sixty years ago. The person who "discovered" and proclaimed this letter was the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. It was titled "Paul's Letter to American Christians," preached at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama on November 4, 1956.[2] After recalling and then rereading the letter, I decided that it might be valuable to ask Paul to write yet another letter for another time and purpose—though the 1956 letter is still highly relevant and I commend it. Paul complied with my request, so you have the good fortune of reading, not my words, but those of the apostle himself. His letter is about the mission of God and the church in North America.

Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and writing at the request of our mutual friend and brother,

To the church of God that happens to be in North America, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those from every tribe and race and ethnicity, from minorities and refugees and immigrants around the world and in your own backyard, documented and undocumented, who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:

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[1] This essay was originally the first of two keynote lectures at the 2016 Theology Conference on the subject "Participation in God's Mission" at Northeastern Seminary, Rochester, New York, given on March 18, 2016. It was intended primarily not for academics, but for the general public. I am grateful to Richard Middleton and Doug Cullum for the invitation to present the lecture, to Richard for suggesting its publication, and to Christopher Zoccali and the journal for accepting it. The original presentation has been lightly edited for the present context.

[2] http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/documentsentry/doc_pauls_letter_to_american_christians.1.html

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched, both spiritually in Christ and materially—though we may need to return to the latter kind of wealth in another letter. God will also strengthen you, so that you may be faithful to the end and blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful; by him you were called to participate in the life of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord (that which, as I understand it, you generally call "fellowship.")

As you know, one of my favorite ways to speak about our life together is with the short phrase "in Christ." You may have noticed that I have already used it three or four times. That phrase will be the subject of my letter. It is what you sometimes call "spirituality"; it may surprise you that it also means "mission." It is what one of my interpreters calls "cruciformity" (cross-shaped living) or even "cruciform missional theosis." (I will try to interpret them and him for you later.)

But before I get too far into my letter, let me go back to those first two words: grace and peace. These are not epistolary niceties, brothers and sisters. They constitute the core of my message, the heart of God's heart.

Grace and Peace

It is evident to me that you are very comfortable with the word grace. (Parenthetically, however, I would recommend that you take a look at the new book by John Barclay, *Paul and The Gift*, to understand the obligations associated with grace more fully.[3] Or you could re-read Bonhoeffer's classic, *The Cost of Discipleship*.)

It is far less apparent to me that you understand the word "peace"—*shalom* in Hebrew. To be sure, this word means inner peace and security. But it signifies much more. It means wholeness and harmony; right relations between us and God, within the human family, and between us and the rest of creation. "Peace" is one of those scriptural words that sums up what God is up to in the world—the mission of God, or *missio Dei*. I use it and many other words and images in my letters to convey the essence of this divine mission: reconciliation, saving justice, new creation, and so on.

But you live in a culture that does not know the way of peace. As I said to the believers in Rome, quoting Scripture (I'm really not very original):

> We have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin, as it is written: "There is no one who is righteous, not even one; there is no one who has understanding, there is no

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[3] John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and The Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015).

> one who seeks God. All have turned aside, together they have become worthless; there is no one who shows kindness, there is not even one." "Their throats are opened graves; they use their tongues to deceive." "The venom of vipers is under their lips." "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness." "Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery are in their paths, and the way of peace they have not known." "There is no fear of God before their eyes." (Rom 3:9–18)

Sadly, this is the culture and world in which I lived and in which you live, a world of verbal and physical violence—the culture of death, as one of your great church leaders, John Paul II, called it.[4] Even more sadly, however, this culture has infiltrated the church in North America, particularly southern North America. There the Second Amendment trumps the teachings of Jesus, which I myself repeated and riffed for several churches, not least once again for the churches in Rome, the capital of the Empire—something like your Washington, DC:

> Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Rom 12:14–21)

If you want to be missional, start right here. What an amazing witness to Jesus this would be—a community that practices peace, both internally and externally. This is not merely pragmatic, or worse still, idealistic, advice. It is what God is up to in the world in Christ, making peace by the blood of his cross in order to reconcile all things to himself, as my letter to the Colossians says (Col 1:20). (Parenthetically, that comment should settle the dispute about authorship!) Or, as I said to the Romans, God reconciled us when we were God's enemies (Rom 5:10). If that's how God treats enemies, how then shall we live?

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[4] See Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* (*The Gospel of Life*), an encyclical issued in 1995 and available online: http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae.html/

Allow me to quote one of my favorite theologians from your era, Miroslav Volf:

> In a world of violence, the Cross, that eminently counter-cultural symbol that lives at the heart of the Christian faith, is a scandal . . . there is no genuinely Christian way around the scandal. In the final analysis, the only available options are either to reject the cross and with it the core of the Christian faith or to take up one's cross, follow the Crucified—and be scandalized ever anew by the challenge.[5]

Think of the powerful witness of the Lord's people in Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania, in 2006 when five innocent children were murdered by a gunman in their school room. Their peacefulness and forgiveness touched the world and continue to do so as the shooter's mother bears witness even today. So does the school built to replace the murder site: New Hope School. It was and is amazing, even from my current vantage point.

You are part of a culture gripped by fear. You are afraid of terrorists in other lands, in your cities, in your schools, and even in your churches. But if you learn to practice peace, then you can legitimately quote my letter to the faithful in Philippi:

> Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you. (Phil 4:4–9)

Again: what a witness, what evangelism this kind of peace could be. If you seek peace and pursue it, you will know the truth of another Scripture text I quote to the Roman churches: "[T]he kingdom of God is . . . righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom 14:17, borrowed from Psalm 85:10 and Isa 32:16–18).

This does not mean you will escape danger, "for God has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well" (Phil 1:29), though I see precious little of that in North America right now, despite claims to the contrary. But it is clearly happening in other parts of the church elsewhere in the world, and you really do need to "weep with those who weep." That is part of *your* mission—to feel the pain of those who are suffering because of their participation in *God's* mission.

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[5] Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 26.

Back to Basics

I have gotten way ahead of myself. (No wonder your commentary writers cannot agree on how to outline one of my letters!) But now I want to get back to basics. What does it mean to be "in Christ"? Let me begin with a few fundamental points, based on rereading my letters while observing your particular situation in North America. I hear this is now called "missional hermeneutics." We simply called it "prophecy."

Community

First, to be in Christ is **to be in community**. I think the problem here is the modern version of the English language. When the King James Version was popular, it was better because you had the singular pronouns "thou" and "thee" and "thy" and "thine" in addition to the plural pronoun "ye." Today all you have is various forms of "you." Furthermore, your English verb forms don't distinguish between singular and plural. Is "go!" directed at one person or a group? So when my letters and other Scripture passages are read, you English-readers don't realize that most of the "you" pronouns are plural and most of the imperative verbs are plural. For example, to the Philippians I wrote:

> Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure. (Phil 2:12–13; NRSV)

What I meant is this:

> Therefore, my beloved brothers and sisters, just as you have always obeyed ~~me~~ [God; I did not say "me"], not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, ~~work out~~ put into practice your own corporate salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work ~~in~~ among you, enabling all of you together both to will and to work for his good pleasure. (Phil 2:12–13)

Do you see the difference? Yes, it is important that individuals put their salvation into practice in daily life, but the point of my letters is to form communities into more faithful communities. Together the church is a witness in the world.

This language problem is a serious spiritual matter. It reinforces Western individualism. It suggests that a person can be a "good Christian" without being part of the church. That may be partly true if you're in prison (I speak from experience), but even there you are part of the church. You come from and return to a particular manifestation of the universal church. I did not say it, but it is true: "outside of the church there is no salvation."

By the way, there are some solutions to your English-language problem. You could learn Spanish, which would be very missionally useful anyhow, especially in the United States, because it has plural pronouns and verbs. Or French, which might not be a bad idea anyhow in Canada. Or you could learn my language, Greek. Or you could pick up one of the American regional dialects:

> it is God who is at work among **y'all / you all / you guys / youse guys / yinz / all y'all**, enabling **y'all / you all / you guys / youse guys / yinz / all y'all** both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

These two verses from Philippians, by the way, are immediately followed by three that stress the importance of communal witness:

> **You guys** must do all things without murmuring and arguing, so that **y'all** may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which **you all together** shine like stars in the world. It is by **y'all's** holding fast to (or "holding forth") the word of life that I can boast on the day of Christ that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. (Phil 2:14–16)

There has been debate about what I meant in 2:16: holding forth the word of life, or holding fast to the word of life. This may be a legitimate question for a scholarly essay, but theologically and practically it is a false dichotomy. You would not need to hold fast unless you had first held forth. Only the reality of pushback to a public witness—that is, representing Christ outside the believing community, even if in a private setting like a home—and the corollary temptation to capitulate, makes sense of what I said. That was the situation in Philippi; the believers' faithful witness got them into trouble, just as it had done to me.

My point is this: when we responded to the gospel and were baptized, we entered a family, a body, and it is as a family and a body, not just as individuals, that we are called to bear witness. As Laceye Warner and her colleague Stephen Chapman have said, evangelism is a "group activity" of "living out the reign of God together" that "entails a whole range of practices, habits, dispositions, activities, and choices."[6]

An alternative community

This claim by Warner and Chapman leads to my second point. To be in Christ is **to be an *alternative* community, even an alternative *political* community**. Your Christian communities need to be more political. Those are dangerous words in your cultural environment, so let me explain carefully.

First, let me emphasize what I do *not* mean. I do not—repeat *not*—mean that you should become more involved in local or national politics.[7] Specifically, I do not mean that you should be trying to grab political power or looking for ways to restore Christendom's civic muscle and influence. That was and is a really bad idea. Why? Because the central reality of our faith, the one message I preached everywhere, is Christ *crucified*—and that is the antithesis of worldly political power. Recall what I said to the Corinthian church:

> [W]e proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength. (1 Cor 1:23–25)

Let me update and expand this a bit for you:

> [W]e proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to those who connect religion with political power, and foolishness to those who actually have secular status and power. But to those who are the called to bear witness to God's way of life, the crucified Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than the wisdom of those who seek to foster civil religion for the supposed good of God and country, and God's weakness is stronger than Western military, political, and economic strength.

What I do mean by "political" is that the Christian community is an alternative way of being in the world, an alternative way of being human, an alternative way of ordering relationships, an alternative "body." Actually, it is not only *an* alternative, it is *the* alternative—a sign of the new creation that God has inaugurated in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

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[6] Stephen B. Chapman and Laceye Warner, "Jonah and the Imitation of God: Rethinking Evangelism and the Old Testament," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 2.1 (2008): 43–69 (here 68, 59).

[7] This is not to say that none of you should seek involvement in politics in this normal sense of the word (a question that would take another letter to address fully), but simply that this is not the kind of politics and political involvement I am talking about here.

I made this quite clear to the Philippian believers. Once again, however, English generally fails you; this time you *really need to learn Greek*. I wrote to the Philippians,

> Live out your citizenship as God's colony [Gk. *politeuesthe*] within the Roman colony of Philippi in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one Spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, and are in no way intimidated by your opponents. (Phil 1:27–28a MJG)

Notice what I said here:

- The church is a colony within a colony, a city within a city. It is a "contrast society," as some of your interpreters have called it, but it is not an isolated sect, a "holy huddle," to borrow one of your modern idioms.
- Believers' life together must be worthy of the gospel, must reflect the gospel. This is a process of ongoing conversion, as Roman Catholics (especially) aptly say.
- Believers must stand firm and united in their proclamation of the gospel.
- They must not be intimidated by opposition.

It is no accident that I wrote these words in the Philippian letter shortly before the words I quoted earlier about being children of God, shining like stars, a light to the nations (as Isaiah put it), holding forth the word of life in a culture of death, and holding fast to it even in the face of death.

One of my favorite Christian writers, C. S. Lewis, once wrote these words:

> Enemy-occupied territory—that is what this world is. Christianity is the story of how the rightful king has landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling us all to take part in a great campaign of sabotage.[8]

This benevolent sabotage is not aimed at the state or any other institution. It is not a Christian takeover, a religiously based coup d'état. Rather, as Kavin Rowe of Duke said in describing the gist of the Acts of the Apostles (which I heartily recommend), "New culture, yes—coup, no."[9] The goal is a complete conversion of the human imagination, as Kavin's distinguished colleague Richard Hays says in multiple places.[10]

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[8] C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001; orig. 1952]), 44. This section of the chapter is titled "The Invasion."

[9] C. Kavin Rowe, *World Upside Down: Reading Acts in the Graeco-Roman Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 5.

The goal of the church, then, is not to take over anything but to be a foretaste of something—the new creation that has come and is coming. One of my finest interpreters, N. T. Wright, puts it this way: the church is a "microcosmos, a little world… the prototype of what [is] to come."[11] It is, he rightly says, a

> place of reconciliation between God and the world; a place where humans might be reconciled to one another; a microcosmos in which the world is contained in a nutshell as a sign of what God intends to do for the whole creation; a new sort of polis in which heaven and earth come together. . . .[12]

This reminds me of a really fabulous documentary I saw about the people of the French village of LeChambon during your Second World War. In the midst of brutality, on the one hand, and the spirit of hatred and revenge, on the other, these simple rural people, under the informal leadership of Pastor André Trocmé, became a "conspiracy of goodness," as the narrator said, rescuing and hiding thousands of Jews in their Christian homes. As Pastor Trocmé said in a church newsletter, alluding to my letter to the Ephesians, they would act only with "the weapons of the Spirit."

You North American Christians speak a lot about being "spiritual," but where are the Trocmés in your churches? Where are the churches of LeChambon? Your current political and cultural climate is one, quite frankly, not only of fear and death, but also of idolatry. You are enslaved to your various –isms: consumerism, racism, nationalism, ethnocentrism, exceptionalism, Americanism, postmodernism, militarism. What a beautiful thing it would be if you could catch God's vision of what the Spirit was up to in my day and is up to in yours: creating an international network of multicultural, socio-economically diverse communities joyfully acknowledging Jesus as Lord, truly worshipping God, and bearing witness in word and deed to God's work of new creation by conformity to his Son.

I rejoice that some of you ("you" plural) are trying to be and do this now, especially in the midst of the world's worst refugee crisis in a long time. It seems that in-Christ communities north of the border are doing a better job of cruciform hospitality than most of those south of the border, where some significant conversion of heart and will is needed. As the Macedonians in northern Greece were an example to the Corinthians in southern Greece, perhaps northern assemblies could once again influence southerners. We live in hope.

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[10] See, e.g., Richard B. Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

[11] This is N. T. Wright's summary of the character of the church according to Paul (*Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, vol. 4 of Christian Origins and the Question of God [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013], 1492).

[12] Ibid.

A living exegesis of the Gospel

All of this leads to my third point about being in Christ. To be in Christ as an alternative community is *to be a living exegesis, or faithful interpretation, of the gospel*. It is *to become like Christ* and therefore, in a profound sense, it is *to become the gospel* by becoming a communal commentary on it. *That*, brothers and sisters, is fellowship—participation in God's work. Allow me to quote the important missiologist Lesslie Newbigin:

> I have come to feel that the primary reality of which we have to take account in seeking for a Christian impact on public life is the Christian congregation. How is it possible that the gospel should be credible, that people should come to believe that the power which has the last word in human affairs is represented by a man hanging on a cross? I am suggesting that the only answer, the only hermeneutic [means of interpretation] of the gospel, is a congregation of men and women who believe it and live by it.[13]

I have observed the North American church's fascination with the cross of Jesus. I share this commitment to Christ crucified, as I said to the Corinthian church: "I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ; that is, Jesus Christ *crucified*" (1 Cor 2:2; MJG's translation and emphasis). Of course this does not eliminate the resurrection, as I will stress shortly. But it does remind us, in the words of one of my interpreters from the last century, that the cross is the signature of the one who is risen (Ernst Käsemann).[14] But I sense from your hymns and sermons, your books and tapes, that for you the cross is mostly about the cross as the *source* of your salvation. You are fond of arguing about which "model of the atonement" is correct. Well, of course the death of Jesus is the *source* of our salvation, but it is also the *shape* of our salvation. That's what I mean when I said "work out," or put into practice, your salvation.

So people of the resurrection will always be people of the cross. They will learn to wash feet, as my colleague John reported in his Gospel. I actually wrote a poem about that event, with a short introduction (Phil 2:5–11). I offer the translation of our mutual friend:

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[13] Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 27, in a chapter entitled "The Congregation as Hermeneutic of the Gospel."

[14] Ernst Käsemann, "The Saving Significance of the Death of Jesus," in *Perspectives on Paul,* trans. Margaret Kohl (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971; reprint, Mifflintown, PA: Sigler, 1996), 56.

> Cultivate this mindset — this way of thinking, acting, and feeling — in your community, which is in fact a community in the Messiah Jesus:
>
> Although—and because—he was in the form of God,
>
> He did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited for his own advantage,
>
> but rather emptied himself by taking the form of a slave—that is, by being born as a human being.
>
> And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.
>
> For this reason God superexalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,
>
> so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bend—
> in heaven and on earth and under the earth—
> and every tongue will acclaim, "Jesus the Messiah is Lord!"
> to the glory of God the Father.

I am quite pleased that some churches still sing this poem in your time and place. Our translator refers to it as my "master story," and I basically approve of that characterization.[15] It is a story of downward mobility, of renouncing power and prestige and status for the benefit of others, like Jesus' footwashing:

> And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. (John 13:2b–5)

Jesus interpreted this for his disciples:

> After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you

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[15] See especially Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 88–92 and elsewhere in his work. For the translation of Phil 2:5–11 offered here, see Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul and His Letters*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 125–28; ch. 13.

> an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. (John 13:12–16)

Similarly, I interpreted my poem for the churches on several occasions. Here is he interpretation directly connected to the text of the poem in my letter to the Philippians:

> If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. (Phil 2:1–4)

In our tradition, this has generally been called *imitatio Christi*, or the imitation of Christ. Others, including our translator of the poem, also call this "cruciformity," or cross-shaped living. Some have insisted that this is not merely *imitation*; it is *participation*. I completely agree. It is about Christ being in us and about us being in Christ—individually and together.

You may notice that my poem tells a story. As a story of downward mobility, the first stanza is a story in three stages. It has sometimes been described as "although [x] not [y] but [z]," where [x] is status, [y] is selfish exploitation, and [z] is self-giving for others.[16]

So let me cut to the chase, brothers and sisters. Is this what your in-Christ community looks like? Is this how you decide your priorities? Your budget? Your mission activity? If you truly believe that Christ crucified is the power of God, and you want the power of God to be at work in and through your Christian community, you will seek to become a community shaped by my master story—which is really God's master story. Now this may be the most important thing I say in this letter: You see, the crucified Jesus was a Christophany—revealing what the Messiah is like. But it is also a *theo*phany—revealing what *God* is like. And it is also an *ecclesi*ophany—revealing what the church is supposed to be like. And ultimately it is also an *anthro*phany—revealing what human beings are meant to be like.

It may appear from Philippians 2 and John 13 that this kind of servanthood is only for life within the community. But that is not what Jesus or John meant, nor I. If you read my letter and John's Gospel carefully, you will see that this self-giving love is meant to be offered to all people. It is what defines you as a Christian community—and what may very well get you in trouble when you take it to the streets. Just read the first chapter of my letter to the Philippians, or the book of Acts, or what happens to the footwashing Jesus and his disciples. The church's inner and public life must match, just as the individual believer's private and public lives must match. That is why I told Philemon that the slave Onesimus, newly converted to Christ, was coming back to him "no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother . . . both in the flesh and in the Lord" (Philemon 16). In the flesh means "out there in the world" and "in the Lord" means right here in the church.

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[16] See Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 90–91 et passim, and elsewhere in his work.

To participate in the mission of God is to discern, in your particular context, what it means to embody the story of Jesus and thus to "become"—please put that in quotation marks—the gospel to and for all. "Become" not in the sense of replacing the gospel, as if you or I were the savior, but of bearing witness to it in a coherent individual and corporate life of word and deed. And "all" in the sense of the "all" of your world, as you experience it, whether near or far. I made it quite clear on several occasions that we are called to reach out to all, beyond our own churches, but not everyone reads my letters as carefully as they should. (I offer just two examples, from one of my earliest letters: ("increase and abound in love for one another and for all" [1 Thess 3:12]; "See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all" [1 Thess 5:15]).

The paradox in all of this is that life comes through death. The life of the world comes through the death of the Messiah, not least because God raised him from the dead. So too, life for the world comes through our cross-shaped existence, which is, paradoxically, being raised to newness of life. I know: it makes no sense at all. But it is true. I experienced it throughout my life, and I wrote about it numerous times, most extensively in my second canonical letter to the Corinthian believers. Of many lines I could quote, here are just a few:

> We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you. (2 Cor 4:8–12)

Becoming like God

I have just mentioned that the crucified Messiah is an ecclesiophany, revealing what the church is supposed to be like, and an anthrophany, revealing what human beings are meant to be like. *My fourth point is that to be in Christ is to become* *what God is like because God in Christ became like us*. I want to explain this a bit more fully by quoting again from my second letter to the Corinthians:

> For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them. From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; [19]that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness [or justice] of God. (2 Cor 5:14–21)

This, by the way, is one of my favorite passages. Yes, I was specifically referring to my colleagues and me as Christ's ambassadors. But I was implying that all believers are ambassadors. Look at the last verse: all of us in Christ are becoming God's righteousness. What a powerful line about transformation! As my early theological successors like Irenaeus and Athanasius said, "He became what we are so that we could become what he is." More recently, one of my very favorite interpreters, Richard Hays, said this:

> [Paul] does not say "that we might *know about* the righteousness of God," nor "that we might *believe in* the righteousness of God," nor even "that we might *receive* the righteousness of God." Instead, the church is to *become* the righteousness of God: where the church embodies in its life together the world-reconciling love of Jesus Christ, the new creation is manifest. The church incarnates the righteousness of God.[17]

I absolutely *love* it when an interpreter says something even better than I did!

What Richard and I are saying is this: God's mission is to "put the world to rights," as Tom Wright likes to say. The prophetic promises of God for a new creation are coming true. That means that God's righteousness—God's saving character and transformative activity that bring about God's kind of justice and *shalom*—is happening now, and we get to be part of it! Yes, it's about individuals being reconciled with God and being transformed into people who no longer live for themselves but for Christ. But it's about much more than that, too. It's about those individuals becoming the kind of community that faithfully represents the God who recreates, rectifies, and renews because God has the whole world in mind.

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[17] Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation; A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1996), 24.

This has sometimes been referred to as "missional theosis."[18] Theosis, or deification (as it is also called), refers to the process of becoming like God by participating in the life of God. This is not a term known to everyone in your time and place, but it's a good one. The term's chief proponent even adds two more adjectives to the phrase and calls it "communal, cruciform, missional theosis." It means that we become like God when we participate together in the cross-shaped mission and life of God, Father, Son, and Spirit.

Lest you think that either I or some ancient or contemporary Christian theologian invented this idea out of the blue, recall the scriptural mandate, "You shall be holy, for I am holy" (Lev 11:45; 19:2; 20:26). More specifically, with special relevance for your missional context, recall the words of Deuteronomy, one of my favorite books:

> Although heaven and the heaven of heavens belong to the Lord your God, the earth with all that is in it, yet the Lord set his heart in love on your ancestors alone and chose you, their descendants after them, out of all the peoples, as it is today. Circumcise, then, the foreskin of your heart, and do not be stubborn any longer. For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, [18]who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. (Deut 10:14–18)

The Lord loves you; the Lord loves the stranger; you too should love the stranger. Then you will be like God. That is missional theosis.

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[18] See, e.g., Michael J. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015). For a more technical account, see his "Paul's Corporate, Cruciform, Missional Theosis in Second Corinthians," in *'In Christ' in Paul: Explorations in Paul's Theology of Union and Participation*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Constantine R. Campbell, and Michael J. Thate, WUNT II/384; Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 181–208.

A Practical Word before the Conclusion

Before I conclude, I should offer a few practical words about implementing this vision. With the Spirit's help, it is not as difficult as it might appear.

First of all, work at caring for one another and unity in your own congregation. It will spill over to other contexts.

Second, as I told everyone, but especially the Corinthian believers, flee from sexual immorality and idolatry, including especially the false gods of Rights and Power. These are the fundamental sins of every culture I know, but especially yours, and they undermine your integrity as a missional contrast society. Absolute Rights and Absolute Power are absolutely idolatrous. Embrace virtue, and there you will find joy. Embrace weakness, and there you will find the power of God.

Third, as I also told the Corinthians, speak and live the gospel not only in your fellowship, but also with your unbelieving family members at home (1 Cor 7:10–16) and with your friends (1 Cor 10:23–11:1).

Finally, for now, as I (once again) also told the Corinthians, make your worship services truly missional. You are fighting about what kind of music, worship style, "messages," and doughnuts or bagels will be most "appealing" to seekers. You are trying to make the gospel palatable. That strategy is demeaning both to our Lord and to those seekers. You have no business trying to make the gospel *palatable*, but you should, as I told the Corinthians (1 Cor 14), make it *intelligible*.

It should be clear that my emphasis in this letter on you-plural does not cancel out the importance of you-singular. As our African brothers and sisters say, "I am because we are"—but the "I" has not disappeared.

Conclusion

I lived in the time *before* Christendom in the Roman Empire. You now live in the time *after* Christendom in North America. So our contexts are remarkably similar despite all the differences. I therefore resonate with the words of Bryan Stone, who summarizes his book *Evangelism after Christendom* as follows:

> [T]he most evangelistic thing the church can do today is to be the church—to be formed imaginatively by the Holy Spirit through core practices such as worship, forgiveness, hospitality, and economic sharing into a distinctive people in the world, a new social option, the body of Christ.[19]

My last words for you would be these, which I consider to be a commissioning prayer. I hope that it will inspire the conversion of your imagination as you—plural and singular—try to discern where and how God is calling you to be the church more fully, and thereby to participate in the saving, healing mission of God in your part of the world.

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[19] Bryan P. Stone, *Evangelism after Christendom: The Theology and Practice of Christian Witness* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2006), 15.

> For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Eph 3:14–21)

BOOK REVIEWS

The *Canadian Theological Review* gratefully accepts book review requests as well as book review submissions from potential contributors and publishers. All review submissions should be of academic quality and should conform to the standards laid out within the principal scholarly handbooks of style. We are also happy to provide publishers with prepublication reviews of their submitted material upon request. Review submissions, requests, and publisher volumes relating to the broader disciplines of Theology, Scripture, and Culture can be directed to the book review editor at the following address:

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Field Hospital: The Church's Engagement with a Wounded World. William T. Cavanaugh. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016. ISBN: 9780802872975. Pp. viii + 268. $24.00 (USD).

William Cavanaugh (DePaul University) appropriates Pope Francis' vision of "the church as a field hospital after battle" (2) as a metaphor by which to weave together his own recent writings on economics, political theology, and violence. Cavanaugh envisions the church tending the wounds of the world within specific locales or spaces in the world without laying claim to, or seeking to carve out, a space for itself. In identifying itself in solidarity with the world, the church gives expression to the Kingdom of God in a tangible manner.

The thirteen chapters in *Field Hospital* are divided into three parts: the first part brings together four essays on economics, the second part another four on political theology, and the third part, five essays on the theme of violence. A relatively short introduction lays out Cavanaugh's rationale for this collection of his writings, his intention that they be read together as "a coherent argument for a merciful church" (10).

Narrating Westphalia, Iowa—a supposedly idyllic Catholic enclave in the mid-twentieth-century, pre-Vatican II era—provides Cavanaugh the occasion for proposing that the church-world relationship is more complex than just the choice between acceptance or rejection of the world, posited upon the church-sect distinction developed by Weber and Troeltsch, whose work he labels as "Protestant sociology" (39). His reading of Westphalia serves to highlight three concerns that are central to Cavanaugh's work: first, overcoming the idolatries of the market and the state, fostered, at least in part, by the modern conception of the separation of religion from the rest of life; second, a recovery of the Catholic tradition to resource the church's engagement with the postmodern world; and third, an emphasis on local practices of faithful Catholic communities as a way to make the Kingdom of God real and tangible in the places where the world is wounded and needs healing. Cavanaugh's comment (52) is tellingly ironic: the post-Vatican II era is, in a sense, "characterized not by engagement but by a profound disengagement with the world." A more complex and nuanced understanding of the ways in which "the followers of Christ" can relate to the world should encourage the church "to create new spaces of engagement with earthly life that do not simply bow to the inevitability of 'the world'" (53).

In the second (and in my opinion the most substantive) part of this volume, Cavanaugh begins by making a case for bringing back theology into political theology. His argument is built upon the fundamental insight that the religious/secular divide is a modern construct that itself is theological in motivation: it seeks to replace the ecclesiastical with the nation-state, and situates ultimate authority and power in the supposedly "secular" nation-state. Cavanaugh understands this as an attempt to substitute a false god—the nation-state—for the true God. In this idolatrous context, an incarnational and sacramental understanding of life opens up the possibility of a contingent, embodied response to the wounded.

In the second chapter in this part, Cavanaugh reads Pope Benedict XVI's social encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* as lying within a radical Catholic tradition "that emphasized the importance of decentralized forms of social life" (134). He lauds the encyclical's vision for a multiplicity of social, economic, and political spaces that would counteract the damaging hegemony of the free market and the all-powerful nation-state. The following chapter explores "some convergences between Augustine's *City of God* and the work of secular political theorist Sheldon Wolin, one of the principal proponents of what is called 'radical democracy'" (141). This then leads Cavanaugh to envision a politics of multiplicity where contingently enacted performances of the city of God open up "spaces of resistance" (155).

In the third part, Cavanaugh's writings are about religious violence. Having previously written about what he calls the modern myth of religious violence, he argues that "secular" ideologies and institutions are just as likely to be violent as "religious" ones. The claim that religion is inherently violent depends upon a distinction between "religious" and "secular." These, however, are "invented categories," invented in the West in modern times for political reasons. There is no essential difference between the two. The first essay in this part summarizes the argument of Cavanaugh's book *The Myth of Religious Violence* and then responds to objections voiced in opposition to his arguments there. The second essay argues against the commonly accepted idea that theology and politics should be separated lest superstition, irrationality, and violence result. The secular functions as an alternative religion, replacing loyalty to the transcendent God with loyalty to the nation-state. Therefore, what is needed is good political theology rather than an idolatrous political theology.

Field Hospital is an important work that deserves to be read not only by specialists in political theology and Christian social ethics but by all who value a compassionate and careful engagement with the world, grounded in a distinctly Christian theological vision. Even though Cavanaugh writes as a Roman Catholic, his vision of the church and the world is ecumenical. Cavanaugh's method of critiquing the underlying assumptions and generally accepted terms of a debate in order to move beyond deadlocked argumentation and to uncover fresh insights should prove particularly instructive for graduate students of theology. For other researchers, theologians, and religious practitioners, this book should be suggestive of several diverse lines of inquiry, thought, and action that would help build upon this book's insightful and engaging analysis. It does include some fairly technical discussions in its field, which might limit its audience. Yet its concerns are the concerns of us all, for all of us face the onslaught of the market and the state that seem to demand that we surrender an increasing amount of space within our lives to them. In the face of the absolutist invasions of our persons, families, and communities—invasions that continue to wound people—the church can indeed function like a field hospital, lean, mobile, and purposeful as it binds up the wounds of the suffering.

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Surprised by Scripture: Engaging Contemporary Issues. N. T. Wright. New York: HarperOne, 2015. ISBN: 780062230546. Pp. xi + 223. $15.99 (USD).

There is no shortage of books coming from the pen of N. T. Wright these days. *Surprised by Scripture* is a bit different, however, as readers will find transcripts of lectures delivered between 2004 and 2013. Because of this format, some of Wright's keenest insights into the world of New Testament Christianity (among other things) are delivered with clear prose in a highly accessible volume.

Fans of the renowned British historian and biblical scholar will not be disappointed in (re)discovering Wright's opinions about the most controversial subjects—women in ministry, evolution and the "historical Adam," politics, the problem of evil, and other issues. Few punches are held back as Wright lucidly outlines a "mere Christian" perspective on these topics, in a tone typical of his other popular works (e.g., *Surprised by Hope*, *Scripture and the Authority of God,* etc.). Disappointment may come, however, when faster readers find themselves poring over the same concepts—sometimes virtually the same paragraphs—multiple times. For this "certain amount of repetition," Wright concedes, "I apologize" (ix). Despite this distracting feature, readers who take each chapter at a time may appreciate the review.

The first chapter tackles the "divide between science and religion." Here, the difference between the European and the American situation is directly confronted (e.g., "the United Kingdom never had a Scopes trial," 2). Wright also notes that the rise of modern science was not viewed as threatening by all religious parties. One of the key reasons for the eventual "divide" is because of the hidden assumptions of Epicurean philosophy—a point he makes numerous times in the volume. The basic fallacy in this ancient Greek perspective was that divine activity and the world of human events constitute a zero-sum game: either God does something, or people do. When people didn't have knowledge of how certain things happened, they attributed this to "God." But when the sciences came to explain how "things worked" without reference to God, it is no surprise that the world became a much more godless, secular, and shallow place.

In contrast to this worldview, Christianity (and Judaism, for that matter) saw heaven and earth as overlapping realms, and God as omniscient and sovereign over the whole world—not just over a "religious" or "spiritual" sphere. Thus, in speaking of events, "The danger in using the word *miracle* . . . is that we assume the zero-sum either/or" (14; italics original). After revisiting hermeneutical issues in Genesis, the chapter concludes with the eschatological observation about creation as the first temple and the current world as God's "new temple project": "the project, in other words, in which *heaven and earth are brought together at last,* with God's sovereign rule extending *on earth as in heaven* through the mission of Jesus" (24; italics original).

The second chapter asks, "Do We Need a Historical Adam?" Knowing that this is not quite an adequate question, Wright dives into Paul's view of Adam, the larger theology of what Adam and Eve represent, and potential perspectives from a common-descent perspective. His take?

> [T]hat just as God chose Israel from the rest of humankind for a special, strange, demanding vocation, so perhaps what Genesis is

> telling us is that *God chose one pair from the rest of early hominids for a special, strange, demanding vocation.* This pair (call them Adam and Eve if you like) were to be the representatives of the whole human race. . . . [I]f we can study Genesis and human origins without hearing *the call to be an image-bearing human being renewed in Jesus*, we are massively missing the point . . . (37, 39; italics original)

Chapter 3 revisits the reasonableness of the resurrection. The essay is the closest thing to a short summary of Wright's tome *The Resurrection of the Son of God* that one will probably find. The key points in his argument are (my organization): (1) History observes things that are always *unrepeatable* (this is important for those with "scientific" or "empirical" demands); (2) "resurrection" meant physical, bodily resurrection in the NT context (as opposed to "spiritual" or purely symbolic); (3) the resurrection of Jesus is integral to the Christian story, not an accessory; (4) resurrection of individuals during the first century was not expected; the Messiah also wasn't expected to be resurrected because he wasn't expected to die in the first place; (5) it is virtually impossible to account "for the early Christian belief in Jesus as Messiah without the resurrection" (50); (6) the various resurrection teachings in Christianity demand a historical explanation, and Jesus' physical resurrection is the only one that ultimately suffices.

Chapter 4 lays out "The Biblical Case for Ordaining Women." The essay contains little new content for this topic. Wright's overall position resonates with Philip Payne's *Man and Woman, One in Christ,* and more recently with Cindy Westfall's *Paul and Gender*. I was not aware, however, of one interesting detail in the Mary/Martha pericope in Luke 10: "Mary was sitting at Jesus' feet *in the male part of the house* rather than being kept in the back rooms with the other women. . . . *Jesus declares that she is right to do so*" (70; italics original).

Chapter 5 ("Jesus Is Coming—Plant a Tree!") extends some of the theological implications taken up earlier regarding the resurrection (i.e., ecological care), much as Chapter 8 ("Idolatry 2.0") does with spiritual formation, delivering a penetrating critique of the real and powerful Western gods of today's world (consumerism, sex, status, etc.). Chapter 6 is more distinct in its topical treatment of evil. Wright's goal seems to be putting up guardrails for the church's struggle in handling this issue. The first of these is that "there are no easy answers" (114). Second, "the line between good and evil" is not a simple "us" and "them," but runs through every person and institution. Third, there is, in fact, a difference between evils involving people and those that do not (e.g., natural disasters). In the end, Jesus' own confrontation with evil on earth serves as a template for how Christians might frame the discussion. Demons, storms, disease, betrayal, lies, administrative power plays, terror—Jesus faced it all. "What the Gospels offer is not a philosophical explanation of evil—what it is or why it's there—but the story of an *event* in which the living God *deals with it* . . . in which . . . we may perhaps glimpse God's presence in the deepest darkness of our world" (122; italics original).

The chapter (7) on "How the Bible Reads the Modern World" addresses the "Enlightenment" worldview shift and what, in retrospect, the Bible really has to offer today. In "Our Politics Are Too Small" (chapter 8) and "How to Engage Tomorrow's World" (9), Wright attempts to dislodge some of the common gridlocks in political opinion, critiquing needless military violence as well as people's faith in the "right" leadership, and highlighting the inevitable political implications of the NT story and God's "public Kingdom project" (174). "We need to let Paul remind us," he says, "precisely when major cultural change is upon us, that our confidence is not in the solidity of Western culture or the basic goodness of modern democracy" (185). And whether we like it or not, functions of both the press and the state have gone too far; reclaiming a biblical vision of the church's purpose is difficult but necessary: "We would be claiming back ground that we've not only lost but in most cases have forgotten we ever possessed" (195).

Chapter 9 iterates the irreplaceable prophetic and revelatory purpose of art, beauty, and music. Finally, chapter 10 ("Becoming a People of Hope") provides signposts to what following Christ might look like on an internal, personal level. "As with Mary and her tears, as with Thomas and his skepticism, Jesus comes halfway with Peter" (217). The people who have seen Jesus die and rise to life were as broken and confused as anyone today—and yet that is precisely where Jesus is willing to come and work. It is in this world and encounter that Christians today find genuine hope—in becoming such people of hope.

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Strong and Weak: Embracing a Life of Love, Risk and True Flourishing. Andy Crouch. Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2016. ISBN: 978083084432. Pp. 192. $20.00 (USD).

Christianity Today's executive editor has produced a follow-up to his earlier *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling* and *Playing God: Redeeming the Gift of Power* (IVP, 2009 and 2013 respectively). This book is considerably shorter and smaller than its cousins, deceptively lightweight in style and profile, but it proves to be a good and necessary extrapolation of Crouch's argument in *Playing God*. Where that book explored in greater theological depth the interrelated themes of power, idolatry, and divine image-bearing, this one asks us, more simply, to consider how we as Christians might reflect God's image by helping others to flourish. Flourishing, for Crouch, means "not just to survive, but to thrive; not just to exist, but to explore and expand. . . . To be fully alive would connect us not just to our own proper human purpose but to the very heights and depths of divine glory," becoming "both strong and weak," embracing "both capacity and frailty" (10–11, building from definitions established in *Playing God*, 35, e.g.).

The mainstay of the book is what Crouch happily admits is "one of my favorite things: a 2x2 chart," a simple graphic that "helps us grasp the nature of paradox" and the complementary ideas contained therein (12). Crouch's most favoured chart features four quadrants—Flourishing, Suffering, Withdrawing and Exploiting—demarcated by an *x*-axis of Vulnerability and a *y*-axis of Authority: thus his titular "true flourishing" is found in the top-right quadrant, where vulnerability and authority increase together. Helpfully, the chart also functions as an atlas for the book. Thus we journey first through each of the four quadrants, after which our tour guide reminds us that "we must be willing to bear the burden of *visible* authority with *hidden* vulnerability. . . [without which] we will never truly be able to serve the flourishing of others" (114; italics original). But, he adds, "we must also choose the way of Suffering . . . the ultimate experience of risk without the possibility of meaningful action, the land of the dead. Only if we visit these two quadrants, in the right time and in the right way, will we bear the image of the most transformative human being the world has ever known" (115).

The journey through the four quadrants is for the most part engaging, convincing, and convicting. Beginning with Quadrant I, Flourishing, Crouch reminds us that even the most vulnerable can flourish if they have (or are given) a measure of authority, "*the capacity for meaningful action*" (35; italics original). But to contribute toward others' flourishing requires a form of vulnerability "so committed . . . that everything meaningful is at risk" (48). In Quadrant II, Suffering, Crouch includes close-to-home encounters with injustice and tragically early deaths, as well as more distant forms, such as social media firms' outsourcing of anti-pornography measures: "the depredations of a few, the pornographers and exploiters who seek power without vulnerability (Exploiting), are foisted on those with no alternative (Suffering) in order to allow the privileged to live in ignorant comfort (Withdrawing). It's a world in which poverty of spirit is bought at near-poverty wages" (65). In these varied contexts of suffering, many "needs may remain unmet in any material sense," but Crouch argues that "the gospel restores hope and dignity, meaningful action and meaningful risk" (68).

Quadrant III, Withdrawing, confronts us with temptations hidden in the affluence (or relative affluence) of North American culture. "The greatest challenge of success," Crouch writes, "is the freedom it gives you to opt out of real risk and real authority" by substituting *simulated* authority and vulnerability (77). Here, I think he could have said more, concerning what Withdrawing looks like in interpersonal and/or church contexts. Aside from the example of a university student who "confided that in each of his four closest friendships, he was experiencing overwhelming temptation to minimize risk, avoid real engagement and abandon them" (89), we hear a little too little about what Withdrawing from relationships really looks or feels like—though we may be able to fill in the gaps with our own experiences. Quadrant IV, Exploiting, considers temptations toward control and conquest, authority without vulnerability, as in readily apparent examples of militarized policing in the United States. After an interlude where we are asked how to "move from the story of Exploiting and Suffering to the story of Safety and Flourishing" (111), Crouch offers his answer, a more detailed exploration of his "hidden" vulnerability (a matter of public perception versus confidential reality), followed by the promised descent to "the land of the dead, the realm of those who have lost all capacity for action" (144–45). This is a reclamation of the Apostles' Creed's *descendit ad inferos*, a vulnerable self-emptying so that others might flourish. The interaction with the Creed and its biblical referent, 1 Peter 3:19, is rather light (perhaps wisely so, given the intended lay audience), but with Crouch as Virgil to our Dante, the subsequent examples of Christ-like leadership are telling enough.

Two minor complaints: first, the book's frequent sidebars are usually a welcome repetition for emphasis of a point from their respective pages, but occasionally—as in one instance when Crouch has already repeated the same point on the page, so that it ends up appearing *three* times (112)—they feel more like Twitter-friendly quotables than truly defining points. Second, I would like to have seen more of Crouch's representative Christology, hinted at in remarks about "leaders who balance the *community's* vulnerability with their own *representative* authority" and the call "to become like him [Jesus]" in growing vulnerability (127, 171; italics original). As the latter comment concludes Crouch's deepest dialogue with Scripture here, in 1–2 Corinthians (whose original recipients were influenced by the authoritarian appeal of the Greco-Roman patronage networks, not just the "leaders who claimed spiritual power and backed it up with impressive personal appearances" that Crouch acknowledges, 168), some further development of Christ as our saving representative—or of how it is that we re-present him, as witnesses to the authorities around and above us—might have strengthened Crouch's work.

Finally, as Crouch himself often models vulnerability here—e.g., by noting the personal failures that go understandably unmentioned when he is introduced as an accomplished speaker—I hope readers will welcome more vulnerability on my part than a book review format usually allows. So far as my two recently adopted preschoolers are aware, their only involvement with this book is that they observed, as I was reading it, the cover illustration of an elephant carrying a bird on his back: the book, I explained, was about the strong elephant helping his friend the bird by giving him a ride, so that the latter could rest his wings. But of course my boys were on my mind for much of my reading time, and not just because Crouch begins to discuss 2x2 charts by illustrating the problems of linear, zero-sum thinking with examples of approaches to parenting (i.e., warmth versus firmness, 14–16) and returns to parenting for later illustrations as well. Rather, his appeal to bear burdens of visible authority and hidden vulnerability tugs at my soul while my wife and I coax our sons to eat, sleep, and settle into our family. I assume that questions of how to nurture and protect (without overprotecting) one's children are (or should be) universal among parents; but I am finding such questions particularly urgent, even unsettling, as an *adoptive* parent. Nurtured though they were by their foster parents, these boys bring vulnerabilities with them that show up in unpredictable, half-hidden, peekaboo ways every day; so every day presents a new challenge—a joyful challenge, yes, but a messy one—in how to toddle in step with their small and sometimes stumbling feet, blending authority and vulnerability in such a way that they can flourish. In this, *Strong and Weak* is a source of help, in ways that will remain true long after our boys have forgotten about the elephant's attempt to help his smaller companion.

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Introducing World Religions: A Christian Engagement. Charles E. Farhadian. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015. ISBN: 9780801032349. Pp. xxi + 600. $49.99 (USD).

Despite assumptions held by many in the West of the inevitability of secularization, religion shows no signs whatsoever of vanishing. In fact, recent statistics published by the Pew Research Center reveal that more than eight-in-ten people worldwide identify with a religion. Further, the major religions of the world are actually growing. The need for Christians to acquire at least a basic grasp of the global religious landscape is more important than ever, especially as patterns of immigration increase North America's religious diversity, and as rates of conversion and population growth are redistributing religious influence from the northern to the southern hemisphere. In recent years there have been several excellent resources published to introduce other religions (and how to study them) to Christian students and non-specialists. Interestingly, publishers in the evangelical tradition are responsible for some of the best specimens of this "world religions in Christian perspective" genre: e.g., Terry Muck and Francis Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions* (Baker Academic, 2007); Irving Hexham, *Understanding*

World Religions (Zondervan, 2011); and the recent *Handbook of Religion*, also from Baker Academic.[1] Charles Farhadian's new book is a noteworthy addition to this field, introducing the world's eighth largest religions—Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Taoism/Confucianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—while a concluding chapter treats several new religious movements that have grown from the soil of world religions. Farhadian prefaces his study with a chapter on "The Persistence of Religion" that sets out the case for why Christians should study other religions, offering a succinct account of the origins of the discipline of religious studies through figures like Friedrich Max-Müller and James Frazer, and some of the more influential theories of religion (e.g., Freud, Durkheim, Marx, Geertz, Eliade).

Farhadian, who teaches world religions and Christian mission at Westmont College in California, has an affinity for the classic European *religionsgeschichtliche Schule*, which sought to study a religion within a matrix of geography, culture and human psychology. Yet a debt is obvious as well to the comparative approach modeled by Eliade and others who discerned common structures or patterns among religions, even as it resisted reducing the phenomenon of religion to a mere by-product of historical or cultural processes. In approximately fifty-page segments Farhardian sketches each world religion's historical origins and development, defining beliefs and practices, cultural and social legacy, and interaction with other religions. Sidebars provide citations from sacred texts and writers to let students hear each religion's distinctive voice, while additional inserts into the narrative guide students toward points of similarity and dissimilarity between religions. A strength of *Introducing World Religions* is its acknowledgment of the discrepancy between how religions formally define themselves through text, symbol, and tradition and how they are actually practiced—religion is "messy," Farhadian notes on several occasions. As such, the discipline of religious studies has to account for a religion's popular manifestations rather than just its official representations. Further, Farhardian rightly argues that one of the biggest challenges in studying world religions (as opposed to indigenous religions) is to account for the tension between the universal and particular, i.e., that universal texts and traditions do not exist in pristine form, but are always appropriated by particular cultures and ethnicities, urban or rural, with localized social concerns or intellectual dilemmas that shape their understanding of such texts and traditions. Appropriately, then, Farhadian recommends a multi-disciplinary approach to the "messiness" of religion, including social sciences as well as philosophy, history, and philology.

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[1] Terry Muck, Harold Netland, Gerald McDermott, eds., *Handbook of Religion: A Christian Engagement with Traditions, Teachings, and Practices* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), reviewed by this reviewer in CTR 3.2.

Introducing World Religions is enhanced by many images of sacred buildings and figures such as the Taj Mahal and Gandhi, as well as the myriad ways in which religion is embodied in everyday life, like a family meal, a sacred landscape, or a style of clothing. Such images are not merely cosmetic but essential to Farhadian's aim of pressing students to a greater recognition of religion's ubiquity. Western students who bracket religion as something private and personal will be challenged to reconsider their presumptions about religion's place in global societies by such images. Similarly, a haunting picture of a young girl executed by the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia allows Farhadian the opportunity to gently encourage readers from devoutly Christian backgrounds to think beyond the simplistic "right or wrong" paradigm of religion, reflecting instead on how people around the world use religion to survive.

> Countless individuals, communities, and nations have endured unthinkable tragedies, forcing them to consider the role of religion in maintaining one's identity, and to find the sources within one's religion to make sense of tragedy or deprivation. Likewise, how do religions provide the source for happiness, contentment, and joy even in the midst of disappointments? Religions involve our human behaviors and emotions, so let us not forget the pervasive psychological context related to religions (13–14).

The book's subtitle is significant: *A Christian Engagement*. Farhadian writes from a perspective that is winsomely, yet unapologetically, Christian, and has written this textbook for a broadly Christian readership. But what does he mean by a *Christian* engagement with world religions? First, that it is neither desirable nor possible for Christians to suppress their faith commitments for a supposedly objective study of religion. Indeed, an as-fair-as-possible understanding of other religions can be best achieved by recognizing (against many modern theories of religion) the essentially religious nature of humankind as taught by the Christian tradition, and cultivating Christian virtues of patience, humility, and kindness as we grant room to persons of other religions to explain their faith. Farhadian makes a convincing case for a Christian hospitality in studying religion, drawing on years of experience with students who initially try to "pigeonhole" other religions, usually from a western intellectual grid that is not always compatible with non-western religions. Second, Farhadian believes that studying other religions or participating in inter-religious dialogue can enable Christians to recover aspects of our own tradition that have been forgotten and neglected. In an age of digital noise, can Buddhism remind Christians of our own tradition's attention to mindfulness and meditation? Can the Aryan imposition of the Vedic tradition on conquered peoples of the Indus Valley (c. 1500 BCE), which is a constitutive element of Hinduism, inform discussions of Christianity's historic relationship with political power? In outlining the holistic worldview of Taoism, where art, literature, architecture, medicine, and even corporeity are integrated, Farhadian wonders in a sidebar if any Christian civilization has achieved the same. Jainism's attentiveness to the sacredness of all life permits opportunity for Christians to clarify our understanding of God's creation as sacred yet not divine; conflicts in Islam and Sikhism over orthodoxy, heterodoxy, and canonization prompt obvious comparisons with the Christian tradition. Third, Farhadian is convinced that while Jesus Christ is the Truth, truth can be found in other religions, so the study of other religions can both expand and challenge Christians' theological and spiritual commitments. Apart from sketching the views of Barth, Rahner, and Hick on divine truth in non-Christian religions as representative opinions on this contested matter, the author does not offer a theological justification for his own perspective, which is regrettable, given that many students will be curious precisely at this point.

Throughout, Farhadian insists that Christianity *is* a religion—which may be controversial with some readers. He takes issue with both the popular adage that Christianity is "a relationship, not a religion" and Barth's broadside against religion as the antithesis of the gift of divine revelation. This first view—often encountered among evangelical students—not only neglects the fact that a personal relationship with Jesus is still "religious" (in the sense that the relationship is embedded in broader social, cultural, intellectual, and psychological currents); it presumes that adherents of other religions cannot enjoy the same fervor and affection for the divine that Christians do. As to the second view, while Farhadian appreciates Barth's theological intentions, "the fact remains that Christianity exhibits general characteristics similar to those of other religious traditions. And why cannot Christianity be both *religion* and *revelation*?" (26; italics original).

Toward the end, Farhadian suggests that the church's dilemma is no longer Tertullian's "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?", but "What has New York to do with Mecca?" or "What has Jerusalem to do with Varanasi?" For helping Christian students and non-specialists to think through such questions, it is difficult to conceive of a better textbook. Farhadian has not only mastered the primary material and secondary scholarship on world religions, he is a gifted and committed teacher who writes with clarity, simplicity, and a sensitivity to many of the prejudices and concerns that Christian students may have as they approach the study of religion. Along with the images, maps, charts, and sidebars that encourage comparison and dialogue with other religions, *Introducing World Religions* offers additional features to professors who choose the book as a class text. An instructor's manual can be accessed via the publisher's website that includes a sample syllabus, discussion questions, mobile-friendly flash cards for students' use, and introductory videos to each chapter from the author. The text itself has been formatted for easy importing or uploading. Such excellent features should help give *Introducing World Religions* the wide exposure and classroom use it deserves.

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You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit. James K. A. Smith. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2016. ISBN: 9781587433801. Pp. xii + 210. $19.99 (USD).

You Are What You Love by James K. A. Smith focuses on the matter of Christian discipleship. There are many classic works on discipleship and/or spiritual formation; Thomas à Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ* and Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *The Cost of Discipleship* come immediately to mind, but more recent authors have made their mark as well, including Richard Foster, Dallas Willard, Eugene Peterson, Henri Nouwen, and N. T. Wright. So what does Smith offer that is new in a field already saturated by such worthy works? Frankly, I did not find that he broke any new ground. Yet, I do not think he would view such an evaluation as reproach.

One of Smith's gifts is as a summarizer and popularizer of more difficult works. A good example is his recent book *How (Not) to be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (Eerdmans, 2014), an interpretive lens on the Canadian philosopher's massive *A Secular Age* (Harvard University Press, 2007), as well as a practical guide to Christian living within such an age. *You Are What You Love* is also indebted to Robert Webber, whose work, as Smith acknowledges, has "had a significant impact on me at a crucial phase of my life, and in many ways I'm simply writing in his wake. This little book is a dinghy bobbing along behind the ship of Webber's 'ancient-future' corpus" (193). For those who have read Webber, the idea that a lack of novelty might amount to praise for Smith will be understandable.

That said, Smith brings his own considerable skill as a professional philosopher and able cultural critic to the table here. *You Are What You Love* is in fact a condensed version of his more ambitious and scholarly project, the *Cultural Liturgies* trilogy on the theology of culture: *Desiring the Kingdom*, *Imagining the Kingdom* (both of which have received high praise), and a third volume which has yet to be published. It is also worth noting that Smith is an engaging writer who seems to have his finger on the pulse of millennials.

At its core the book is about worship, for "worship is the heart of discipleship" (25). And while worship is significantly what takes place on Sunday morning, it cannot be reduced to this; in fact, it's central to Smith's thesis that all of life is worship of one thing or another. I think these few lines from Wallace, as quoted by Smith, drive much of Smith's argument: "In the day-to-day trenches of adult life, there is no such thing as atheism. There is no such thing as not worshipping. Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship. And an outstanding reason for choosing some sort of god or spiritual-type thing to worship—be it JC or Allah, be it Yahweh or the Wiccan mother-goddess or the Four Noble Truths or some infrangible set of ethical principles—is that pretty much anything else you worship will eat you alive" (23).

Smith's argument is largely in opposition—though sometimes in an unbalanced way—to views of discipleship that focus primarily on the mind. A key question he poses is this: "Do you ever experience a gap between what you *know* and what you *do*?" (5; italics original). He's trying to tap into postmodern sentiments (he is, after all, first and foremost a philosopher of postmodern French thought) that express a tiredness with the Cartesian heritage and what he calls "thinking-thingism" (from Descartes's *res cogitans*). This entails offering a fresh (actually, as Smith acknowledges, an old, Augustinian) theological anthropology that understands humans as lovers at their core, rather than knowers. Descartes thought of humans as "brains-on-a-stick," whereas Augustine (and Jesus for that matter) was more interested in appealing to the human heart, "[b]ecause the heart is the existential chamber of our *love*, and it is our loves that orient us toward some ultimate end or *telos*" (9; italics original). Such a premise, however, has significant implications for discipleship: much of what shapes us for good or evil will be at the level of subconscious desire. In fact, in what is probably his most original chapter, entitled, "You Might Not Love What You Think: Learning to Read 'Secular' Liturgies," Smith offers an exegesis of cultural liturgical sites (the shopping mall is his primary example) that shape our loves—often without us ever being aware of it. "The mall is a religious site, not because it is theological but because it is liturgical. Its spiritual significance (and threat) isn't found in its 'ideas' or its 'messages' but in its rituals. The mall doesn't care what you *think*, but it is very much interested in what you *love*. Victoria's secret is that she's actually after your heart" (41; italics original).

I think Smith would agree with Woody Allen (and, Google informs me, Selena Gomez) that "the heart wants what it wants," but none of this means that our (fallen) nature and desires have the last word on our destiny. In fact, the good news is that there is something called virtue, which Smith, following Aristotle and Aquinas, calls "second nature." In this sense, Smith argues, "character is destiny," and "your character is the web of dispositions you've acquired (virtues and vices) that work as automaticities, disposing you to act in certain ways" (36). Here, then, is the missing link in the process of discipleship: if worship is at the heart of discipleship, and worship is a matter of orienting our loves to a particular end or *telos*, then the way we do so is through character-forming habits. In the same way that one learns to play the piano, or shoot a basketball, or drive a car—by conscious practice that matures into unconscious response—so the spiritual life is largely a matter of acquiring spiritual habits that mature into virtuous living. These habits shape our hearts and orient our loves toward God's kingdom. Alas, it is here that Smith fails to give sufficient credit to the mind: the move from fallen nature to second nature, i.e., virtue, requires the work of the mind in directing the will toward a particular *telos*. (This is why Smith writes books—to convince the minds of his readers that the kingdom of God is a worthy end, and that spiritual habits are the best possible means to that end.) He does not deny this, and even briefly notes the ongoing value of thinking (6), but his approach could be balanced more explicitly.

The rest of the book (chapters 3–7) is a guide to how this might look on Sunday morning, at home, and at work. Many, if not all, of his suggestions harken back to ancient (and well-known) Christian practices: corporate confession (he has a deep appreciation for the Book of Common Prayer), prayer and song, preaching and offering, baptism and Communion. These chapters are a rich resource and have great practical import for pastors, teachers, and parents. But why, we might wonder, should we learn from ancient Christians rather than developing our own practices? The answer he offers, beyond the obvious fact that these practices are "shaped by the biblical story" (78), is that "[b]ecause the rituals and liturgies of their [ancient] surrounding culture were much more overt—for example, their civic political spaces were unabashedly temples, whereas ours traffic under euphemisms (stadiums, capitols, universities)—early Christians were more intentional about and conscious of the practices they adopted for worship" (79). It is in this sense, then, that Smith can claim his "argument is the very opposite of novel; it's ancient: the church's worship is the heart of discipleship" (68). Especially counter-cultural is his suggestion that these practices should be repetitive. Rather than a sign of inauthenticity (a great sin in an expressivist age), he thinks repetition in worship and prayer is vital for growth in the same way that scales are for the pianist, or batting practice for the baseball player: repetition builds neural and muscular pathways that make performance look easy.

Since vol. 3 of Smith's *Cultural Liturgies* trilogy, entitled *Awaiting the King: Reforming Public Theology*, is to be published in Spring 2017, *You Are What You Love* might well serve as an entryway into this series, and into conversation about the implications of Smith's larger project for discipleship, worship, education, and cultural-political engagement. If nothing else, *You Are What You Love* will encourage its readers to take a liturgical audit of their lives, and in so doing to strategically implement character-forming habits that might reorient their loves toward the kingdom of God.

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CANADIAN EVANGELICAL THEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

CTR Scope

The *CTR* gratefully accepts articles, books review requests, and book review submissions from potential contributors and publishers. Contributions to the *CTR* are especially welcomed in areas such as theological exegesis of selected biblical texts; concerns of theological method and the role of Scripture in theology and ethics; the history of reception or history of interpretation of biblical texts; hermeneutical challenges in theological exegesis; and major review essays interacting with key books, contemporary or classical. We are also happy to provide publishers with prepublication reviews of their submitted material upon request.

Submissions should be of academic quality and should generally conform to the standards laid out within *The SBL Handbook of Style for Biblical Studies and Related Disciplines: Second Edition* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), supplemented by the *Chicago Manual of Style: Sixteenth Edition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010). All submissions will be evaluated through blind review, edited, and potentially shortened for suitability for *CTR* publication. Although the *CTR* editor makes every effort to promptly acknowledge all submissions, it is important to note that the initial review process generally takes a minimum of three months.

Submission Requirements

- Only typed English language submissions will be accepted for publication. Authors have the choice of consistent American, British, or Canadian English spelling. However, American style punctuation should be used.
- Article submissions should be made by e-mail attachment in either *.doc or *.rtf format, and can be sent to the *CTR* Editor-in-Chief, Christopher Zoccali: czoccali@gmail.com. Book review submissions should be made in the same fashion, and can be sent to the *CTR* Book Review Editor, Matthew Forrest Lowe: lowe.matthew.forrest@gmail.com.
- Essays should generally not exceed 10,000 words, including notes. The preference of book reviews is 800–1200 words.
- Submissions should include a cover page that includes the title of the essay, the author's name and affiliation, and an abstract of no more than 250 words. The abstract should also appear on the first page of the main text of the essay.
- The main text of the essay should be double spaced and in 12 point font, with no additional spacing between paragraphs or sections. Footnotes should be unindented (except in the case of a subsequent paragraph[s] contained in the note, in which the first sentence should be indented), single spaced and in 10 point font, with a single blank space separating each note. "Ibid" should be used for repeat sources in consecutive notes. Indented quotations should be single spaced. Margins of at least 1 in. are to be left on all edges of the paper.
- Headings and Sub-headings should be left-aligned. First-level headings should be in bold, with each main word capitalized. Second-level headings should be in italics only, with only the first word capitalized.

- Submissions should contain footnotes rather than endnotes. The format of footnotes should conform to *The SBL Handbook of Style*. Bibliographies or reference lists are not accepted.
- Words to be printed in italics (e.g., titles of books and periodicals, foreign words) should be italicized in the essay. Words and letters to be printed in caps should appear in caps in the essay. Letters to be printed in small caps (e.g., BCE, CE; MS, MSS) should appear in that fashion in the essay.
- Quotations of five or more lines in any language should appear as a separate indented paragraph, and without opening and closing quotation marks. Respect for accuracy in verbatim quotations demands that the spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and abbreviations of the original be reproduced exactly, even if they differ from the style of this journal. Should a quotation contain an error, this may be indicated by [sic] or [?], at the author's discretion. As with all matters of grammar, the author should take care to use ellipses correctly.
- Citations and abbreviations of ancient texts, as well as commonly used journals, periodicals, reference works, and serials should conform to *The SBL Handbook of Style* (note that the full title of all secondary sources should appear in footnotes). When quoting biblical texts, full chapter and verse numbers should be given. All digits should be linked by means of an en-dash (e.g., Phil 3:1–3; 1 Tim 2:8–3:13; Chr 9–11; Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God,* 244–47).
- Authors have the choice to either transliterate or use true fonts for Greek or Hebrew terms. Please use the fonts available on the SBL website (http://www.sbl-site.org/educational/biblicalfonts.aspx). These fonts are free, publicly available, and suitable for either Macs or PCs. Greek should be accented, but Hebrew should be unpointed unless the pointing is vital to the sense. If terms are transliterated, the conventions provided in *The SBL Handbook of Style* should be followed.
- Whether or not one transliterates, an English translation should normally accompany at least the first occurrence of any ancient language word. Quotations from other languages (e.g., German, French) should be translated if in the main text; the original may be reproduced in a footnote if it is important.
- The submission should not include any reference to the author, whether in the body of the essay or in its footnotes (for example, statements such as "See my essay...," or "As I have argued in..."). Should the essay be accepted for publication, such references, if strongly preferred by the author, may be included in the final draft at the discretion of the editor.
- When applicable, except when linking digits, em-dashes (—) without spaces should be used in all text.
- Reviews should include a brief overview of the main arguments and themes of the material reviewed, as well as a substantive and descriptive evaluation of the reviewed content.
- On other issues of style, contributors should closely consult *The SBL Handbook of Style*.

CANADIAN EVANGELICAL THEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

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Send form, with enclosed payment (cheque payable to "Canadian Evangelical Theological Association"), to:

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