THE DISCURSIVE BODY:
A THEOLOGICAL ACCOUNT OF LANGUAGE AND REVELATION IN CONVERSATION WITH JOHN WEBSTER AND CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR THEORY

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of

Harding School of Theology

Memphis, Tennessee

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

By

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May 2021

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Acknowledgements

My thanks to Drs. Mark Powell, Lance Hawley, and Brad East for their help with this project. Dr. Powell's supervision and comments were invaluable, and he was magnanimous enough to put up with my utter disregard for deadlines. Over the course of my time at HST, Dr. Hawley honed my skill at imaginative close reading of texts, as well as in cognitive linguistics and conceptual metaphor theory; and Dr. East not only agreed to serve as a reader, but graciously allowed me to read the manuscript of his forthcoming book, which treats John Webster's theology of Scripture from an ecclesiological perspective.

I would like to express my tremendous gratitude to Shelby Lynne and joy Reinbold for their friendship, willingness to discuss theology by text message without warning, and all-around delightfulness. Shelby also allowed me to read some pre-publication manuscripts of hers which, though not directly incorporated into this thesis, were nevertheless profoundly significant for its inception.

To my mother, Christine Parker, and to her partners at PorchSwing Ministries, it is my hope that this project validates your stories and provides theological resources to make your work of healing and establishing justice a little easier.

And, of course, to my lovely spouse Molly, my dear companion in all seasons: I'm sorry I haven't finished washing the dishes yet. You've taught me quite a lot about what it means to experience God by taking joy in the world, and for that I cannot repay you. This thesis is dedicated to you, with all my love.

A novelist's business is lying…

The weather bureau will tell you what next Tuesday will be like, and the Rand Corporation will tell you what the twenty-first century will be like. I don't recommend that you turn to the writers of fiction for such information. It's none of their business. All they're trying to do is tell you what they're like, and what you're like—what's going on—what the weather is now, today, this moment, the rain, the sunlight, look! Open your eyes; listen, listen. That is what the novelists say. But they don't tell you what you will see and hear. All they can tell you is what they have seen and heard, in their time in this world, a third of it spent in sleep and dreaming, another third of it spent in telling lies…

The Truth is a matter of the imagination…

—From *The Left Hand of Darkness*, by Ursula K. Le Guin

Introduction

The motivation for this thesis is twofold. First, biblical scholars are all too frequently unable to articulate the theological import of their work and so a wealth of textual and historical resources about Scripture remains un-utilized in theology. The Bible as a book is thereby separated from Scripture as a theological entity. Second, theologians–especially those interested in theological hermeneutics—often ignore the textual and historical realities of the Bible, thus severing Scripture from the text of the Bible. This thesis will attempt to articulate a theology of Scripture that takes into account the cultural and linguistic realities of the Bible and provides a means of properly locating the textual and historical dynamics of the Bible as Holy Scripture and thus avoids divorcing Scripture from the Bible.

John Webster's work on the doctrine of Scripture is widely recognized as some of the best in recent years, adeptly describing the location and function of Scripture in the economy of God's saving actions in and for the world. However, Webster was first and foremost a dogmatic theologian, and as such his work occasionally tends toward abstraction; or, perhaps better, tends away from concretizing itself.[1] Webster conscientiously avoids dealing with particular biblical texts or with "the text" as a concept throughout his major works on Scripture. Despite his attention to *what* Scripture

[1] Brad East, "John Webster, Theologian Proper," *Anglican Theological Review* 99, no. 2 (Spring 2017), 345-349.

is he declines to propose *how* Scripture is what it is.[2]

The purpose of the present thesis is to investigate one concrete way in which the Bible as a textual artifact functions sacramentally as Holy Scripture, by drawing on Webster's theological framework and on the findings of cognitive linguistic research, particularly Conceptual Metaphor Theory. Webster is highly concerned with the nature and action of God in and through language and text; Conceptual Metaphor Theory is a highly detailed description of human nature and actions in and through language and text. This thesis will bring the two together to provide theological account of metaphor in the context of the Bible as Holy Scripture.

Direction of the Study

This thesis arises from the conviction that any adequate doctrine of Scripture should incorporate both the fact of the Bible's textuality and the textual/linguistic phenomena it demonstrates. A theological account of the Scripture which ignores, denies, contradicts, or cannot account for the actual nature and content of the Bible itself is, it would seem by definition, not a theological account of Christian Scripture. It may be an excellent theology of language or of reading, writing, and textuality, or it may be an excellent hermeneutic, but the doctrine of Scripture cannot be developed apart from the Bible itself.

Webster was keenly aware of this, even though he himself did not work out a

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[2] John Webster, *The Domain of the Word: Scripture and Theological Reason* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2012), 3-5; John Webster, *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1.

"dogmatics of textuality." His primary concern, however, was that epistemological and textual theories often drive theological reflection, when such theories should actually be driven by theological accounts of the ontology of Scripture.[3] Webster's theology will be the focus of chapter one.

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (hereafter CMT), though only around 50 years old, has risen to some prominence, not only in linguistics proper, but also in the field of biblical studies.[4] It has not, however, received a similar treatment in theology. This is unfortunate for several reasons. First, the epistemological and philosophical import of CMT has been recognized and addressed by linguists and philosophers of language from the very beginning.[5] Since theology is by its nature a metaphorical endeavor, the insights of CMT should be taken into account in theology. Second, when theology does take stock of its own metaphorical nature it often uses theories of metaphor which exhibit

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[3] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 5-6.

[4] This is particularly noticeable in the recent proliferation of dissertations and monographs in Biblical studies (especially Old Testament studies) making use of CMT. Despite the welcome abundance of these sorts of works, they are not concerned with bibliological or theological-hermeneutical applications of CMT. *Inter alia*, see, Lance Hawley, *Metaphor Competition in the Book of Job* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017); William E. W. Robinson, *Metaphor, Morality, and the Spirit in Romans 8:1-17* (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2017); Bonnie Howe, *Because You Bear This Name: Conceptual Metaphor and the Moral Meaning of 1 Peter* (Leiden: Brill, 2006); Matthew R. Schlimm, *From Fratricide to Forgiveness: The Language and Ethics of Anger in Genesis* (Winona Lake, IA: Eisenbrauns, 2011); Johan de Joode, *Metaphorical Landscapes and the Theology of the Book of Job: An Analysis of Job's Spatial Metaphors* (Leiden: Brill, 2019); Aleksander Gomola, *Conceptual Blending in Early Christian Discourse: A Cognitive Linguistic Analysis of Pastoral Metaphors in Patristic Literature* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2018).

[5] The entire second half of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (1980; repr., Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003), is dedicated to the epistemological implications of CMT.

significant explanatory inadequacies.[6] Not only does CMT offer solutions to these lacunae which theology should take into account, it also provides a deeper account of meaning making in which metaphor is not a distortion of or secondary to real or true meaning. Chapter two will provide an overview of cognitive linguistics, locate CMT within that field, and discuss some of the obstacles—both real and supposed—that CMT poses for doctrines of divine revelation.

The challenge of this project is that of concrete textual agency: who does what in the text and in what way? It is one thing to specify God's relationship to Scripture; it is another thing to propose a theory of the relationship between a text and a human reader. It is a third thing entirely to propose how these two are related. Rather than simply using Webster's dogmatics to fill in theological gaps in CMT or using CMT to fill in linguistic gaps in Webster's thought, this thesis will seek to produce a synthetic account encompassing both in a theologically productive way. This synthesis will take place beginning with the *analogia entis*, which will be laid out in chapter three.

It is perhaps odd to speak of synthesizing the thought of a Reformed theologian like Webster with the analogy of being. However, Webster himself addressed the topic and articulated an understanding of the *analogia entis* which he found theologically compelling and which he related to his other work, despite the fact that some of that work

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[6] A glaring example of this can be found in Janet Martin Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Press,), 81-82 , in which she demonstrates a failed understanding of Lakoff and Johnson's initial proposal for CMT, which she essentially reduces to a variation on the etymological fallacy. She describes it as, "…concerning the victimization of thought by language," which is the precise opposite of Lakoff and Johnson's claim that language is an expression of thought-level processes. Her reduction of CMT to a theory of *words and their origins* rather than of linguistic cognition conditioned by concrete experiences indicates Soskice's failure to grasp CMT's emphasis on the embodied nature of mind as a structuring and generative feature of the human mind which surfaces in many ways, one of which is language. Soskice is not to blame for missing out on nuances to CMT developed more clearly by later metaphor theorists, but to mis-categorize Lakoff and Johnson's work so thoroughly is a significant error.

never explicitly deals with the *analogia entis*.[7] The connection between the classical articulation of the *analogia entis* and Wesbter's thought is one of coherence more than explication.

However, Webster provides a recognizably Reformed take on the analogy of being by re-articulating the idea of creaturely participation in the divine as a function of God's sovereign will, rather than a function of the structure of Being or the calculus of infinity.[8] Creatures are created, sustained, and redeemed out of "God's good pleasure."[9] Furthermore, Webster's work on Scripture often utilizes language similar to his language regarding the analogy of being and God's perfection (which will be evident in chapter one.)

The use of the *analogia entis* to correlate CMT and John Webster's dogmatics of Scripture is therefore consistent with Webster's own work. It is also consistent with certain key features of CMT such as the principle of unidirectionality, which holds that metaphorical mappings obtain from concrete domains to abstract domains and not vice versa.[10] Furthermore, the relationship between the analogy of being and metaphorical language is not unexplored territory, though CMT has not been applied as the operative theory of metaphor in such explorations.

Perhaps the most significant binding point between Webster's theology of

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[7] John Webster, "Perfection and Participation," in *The Analogy of Being: Invention of the Anti-Christ or the Wisdom of God?* ed. Thomas Joseph White (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011).

[8] Webster, "Perfection and Participation," 386.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Zoltán Kövecses, *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 7. This thesis will not base its arguments on correlation between CMT and Webster's doctrine of Scripture. That sort of method has its uses, but does not often lead to a genuine integration or mutual account.

Scripture, CMT, and the *analogia entis* is the idea of creaturely physicality, materiality, or embodiment.[11] A central tenet of CMT is that linguistic cognition is driven by experiential phenomena; language arises from the reality of physical bodies in physical spaces.[12] If this is the case then physical bodies are in some sense or to some degree revelatory of God. The "revelatory body" is theologically viable within both Webster's thought and the tradition of the *analogia entis*, and it is this theology of the body that will be explored in chapter four.[13]

The nature and dynamics of revelatory embodiment will be explored, appropriately enough, by deploying metaphors for the body, specifically metaphors taken from queer theology and theologies of sexuality. These metaphors discuss bodily realities in terms of the body itself and so are especially fitting for this sort of use. The *analogia entis* will be configured in terms of touching surfaces using the work of Linn Marie Tonstad (with input from Marcella Althaus-Reid), and Audre Lorde's articulation of the nature of the erotic will be utilized alongside Rowan Williams's and Sebastian Moore's

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[11] This is not to be confused with incarnation. Embodiment is the *state of being* a body, that is, being made of physical matter as a feature of one's nature. Incarnation is the *act of becoming* materially embodied. Webster makes clear that the Bible is embodied not incarnated; the Bible has always only existed as a creaturely phenomenon which is sanctified by the Spirit. See Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 27-28.

[12] George Lakoff and Mark Turner, *More than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 133-135, makes very clear that CMT is not exhaustively descriptive of all language processing and development. Not *everything* is metaphor—syntax, for instance—but in terms of semantic content, there is a good chance that metaphor is involved at any given point. And while syntax itself is not metaphor, it is conceptualized metaphorically.

[13] The phrase "revelatory body" is taken from the title of Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Revelatory Body: Theology as Inductive Art* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015).

theologies of sexual desire to show how the body perceives the divine.[14]

Webster's emphasis on the economics of Scripture's creaturely reality within God's actions in and for the world opens nicely onto CMT's central premise that embodiment drives language and cognition. Both are bound together in the reality of God by the *analogia entis* and the idea of creaturely participation in or sanctification into the reality of God which enables creatures to experience God in their physical bodies and to express those experiences verbally.

The hermeneutical implications of this embodied doctrine of revelation will be explored in chapter five. This case study will serve as a sort of hermeneutical proving ground for the theories developed in the first several chapters of the thesis. The case study will examine the metaphorical marriage between YHWH and Zion in Hosea, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Lamentations. At various points in these books, the exile is conceptualized metaphorically as YHWH punishing his wife, and these punishments are often graphically violent and sexual in nature. A theological account of metaphor as revelatory must be able to take such texts into account.

Assumptions and Delimitations

This thesis is fundamentally about the relationship between revelation and language. It is not an attempt at a comprehensive doctrine of Scripture in every aspect, a

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[14] Linn Marie Tonstad, *God and Difference: The Trinity, Sexuality, and the Transformation of Finitude* (London: Routledge, 2016).

Audre Lorde, "The Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power," in *Sexuality and the Sacred: Sources for Theological Reflection*, 2nd ed., ed. Marvin M. Ellison and Kelly Brown Douglas (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 73-77.

Williams's and Moore's essays are both found in *Theology and Sexuality: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, ed. Eugene F. Rogers, Jr., (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002).

comprehensive hermeneutical framework, or an epistemology of religion. Not everything in the Bible is metaphor, not every instance of revelation is necessarily metaphorical, and there are certain instances of knowledge that are not metaphors. All of these are outside the scope of this thesis.

This thesis will focus on the dynamic of the individual experience of God, rather than the communal. It is of course the case that the Bible is the product of human communities, but this is not a study in ecclesiology or reception history. Likewise, the Christological aspects of revelation, bibliology, and hermeneutics will be almost entirely sidelined. Therefore, this thesis will be largely unconcerned with providing an account of special revelation, but will focus on general revelation in human language and its perception insofar as the Bible is a linguistic artifact.

A portion of this thesis will involve a bibliological appropriation of the *analogia entis*. Rather than re-litigate the debates between Przywara and Barth (among others), this thesis will assume the validity and theological fruitfulness of the analogy of being as articulated in the works of Erich Przywara and as addressed by John Webster. This will allow the thesis to proceed directly to theological integration without getting bogged down in 20th Century theological conflicts.

Conceptual Metaphor Theory is an empirically researched, reasonably well-defined theory of human linguistic cognition. It is not, however, without its critics or its weak points. This thesis will not attempt to defend CMT against traditional theories; the validity of CMT on the whole will be assumed throughout. Furthermore, though there are places where CMT and traditional theories are in profound agreement, traditional theories

will not be discussed in any great detail.

In the case study in chapter five, reference will be made to YHWH when speaking of the text and to God elsewhere. This should not be taken as an indication that YHWH is other than the triune God. Rather, it serves as a means of distinguishing textual dynamics from their interpretive results, as well as differentiating between Israel-Judah's gendered understanding of deity and the non-gendered, non-sexed understanding assumed throughout this thesis.

Conclusion

This thesis will provide a theological and linguistic account of how human language participates in divine revelation through Holy Scripture. Webster's theology of Scripture is linguistically underspecified and CMT is theologically unspecified, yet both are ideally suited to working in concert. A cognitive-linguistic theory of revelation will retain divine agency in and through the text without diminishing human agency by situating human linguistic and cognitive processes within the divine economy.

Such a theory will emphasize the role of the embodied mind in perceiving both God and the world and translating that perception into cognition and language. This entire process is revelatory because it is there, in the form of the body, that God meets and sanctifies creation. After all, if the incarnation goes to show anything it is that matter, minds, and bodies are a proper and purposeful dwelling place for God.

Chapter One
The Domain of the Word: John Webster's Doctrine of Scripture

Of John Webster's many contributions to contemporary theology, perhaps none is more timely and significant than his work on the doctrine of Scripture. While many contemporary theologians approach the theology of Scripture as essentially hermeneutics, Webster insists that hermeneutics remain secondary to bibliology and that bibliology, like all theological subjects, be understood *sub specie divinitatis*.[1] It is therefore impossible to speak of Webster's doctrine of Scripture without also speaking of his doctrine of God.

This chapter will briefly lay out Webster's trinitarian theology as the background for his doctrinal considerations of the divine economy before examining his doctrine of Scripture as a particular element of God's external works. This chapter, drawing on Webster's unwaveringly meticulous definitions, will provide the basic theological vocabulary and framework for the remainder of this study.

Deus non est in Genere: God's Immanent Life

"Who is the God, the enactment of whose utter sufficiency as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit issues in his creative, reconciling, and perfecting works towards his

[1] Webster was, in fact, somewhat wary of hermeneutics. For instance, in John Webster, *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 86-87, he explains that he prefers to use the term *reading* instead of *interpretation* because the latter is too laden with hermeneutical baggage. In John Webster, *The Domain of the Word: Scripture and Theological Reason* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2012), 3-5, he argues that the central problem with contemporary disputes over hermeneutics is that they proceed directly to hermeneutics without first establishing a solid foundation in theology proper and in bibliology. See John Webster, *Word and Church: Essays in Christian Dogmatics* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 47-86, for Webster's attempt to move from bibliology to hermeneutics.

creatures?"[2] This, for Webster, is the fundamental and initial question of all theology. Across a wide variety of topics, Webster's considerations and articulations routinely begin here, with the doctrine of the perfection of the Triune God.[3] The question itself frames the method: consideration of the Trinity is prior to and informs all other areas of theological inquiry and dogmatic description.[4]

God's life as Trinity is properly understood according to the explicative or heuristic sequence, "essence—persons—processions."[5] The primary attribute of the Triune God's essence is perfection, which Webster understands in terms of divine self-sufficiency and plenitude.[6] All other attributes of God are in some sense correlate to perfection, such as *holiness*, which Webster understands as the relational modality of

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[2] John Webster, *God Without Measure: Working Papers in Christian Theology*, vol. 1, *God and the Works of God* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 13.

[3] Quite literally every chapter in both volumes of *God Without Measure* begins by reminding readers that the topic at hand must first be understood in terms of the immanent trinity and then explored in relation to its original trinitarian shape.

[4] In Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 3, he writes: "Christian theology is a work of regenerate intelligence, awakened and illuminated by divine instruction to consider a twofold object. This object is, first, God in himself in the unsurpassable perfection of his inner being and work as Father, Son, and Spirit and in his outer operations, and, second and by derivation, all other things relative to him."

[5] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 86.

[6] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 13-14; John Webster, "Perfection and Participation," in *The Analogy of Being: Invention of the Antichrist or the Wisdom of God?*, ed. Thomas Joseph White (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 380-382.

John Webster, *Holiness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 31-39, discusses the nature of divine attributes and the relations between different attributes. His formulation is with quoting at length. Webster writes, "Theological talk of he divine attributes is thus not primarily a matter of categorization but of confession; the attributes of God are conceptual glosses on God's name, indicators of God's identity… when theology enumerates a range of different attributes of God, it is not denoting different realities within the divine being; rather, each of the attributes designates the totality of the being of God under some particular aspect…the enumeration of divine attributes is simply a designation of God's simple essence."

perfection.[7] The term *perfection* is chosen as a way of intentionally highlighting the doxological nature of Christian theology's approach to divine perfection. Divine perfection is not simply a logically necessary metaphysical principle or a contrastive statement about created and uncreated beings; rather, it is the term designating, "God's wholly realized triune life in himself, which is infinitely full and infinitely loving, gracious, and creative."[8]

Webster also places significant emphasis on divine freedom as a corollary of perfection, which he further elaborates in terms of aseity, ubiquity, and immensity. Aseity indicates that the external creative and communicative acts of God are utterly free and gracious, emphasizing and explicating the *self* in *self-sufficient*.[9] Insisting the doctrine of

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[7] Webster, *Holiness*, 31-52. On p. 39 Webster writes that "…holiness is a predicate of the personal being, action, and relation of the triune God, of God's concrete execution of of his simplicity." On p. 41 he writes, "Holiness is a mode of God's activity; talk of God's holiness identifies the manner of his relation to us…Talk of God's holiness denotes the majesty and singular purity which the triune God is in himself and with which he acts towards and in the lives of his creatures…" Describing holiness as a corollary of perfection does not indicate a logical priority or a phenomenological order of perception, but expresses Webster's insistence that theology begin with the considering the immanent trinity.

In John Webster, *Confessing God: Essays in Christian Dogmatics II*, (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016),116, he writes: "God's holiness is the majestic incomparability, difference and purity which he is in himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and which is manifest and operative in the economy of his works in the love with which he elects, reconciles and perfects human partners for fellowship with himself" (italics removed).

[8] Webster, "Perfection and Participation," 379.

Cf. the comments in Terrence Penelhum, "Divine Necessity," in *The Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Basil Mitchell, Oxford Readings in Philosophy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 179-190, who examines Kant's observation that "existence" is not a quality from an analytic point of view and shows that the idea of God as *causa sui* is incoherent—a conviction shared by Webster, see *God Without Measure I*, 14-15, 22-23—but whose conceptual scheme is nevertheless unable to cope with that very recognition (as shown by his misunderstanding of Aquinas). The possibility that being itself is not univocal for God and creatures does not even occur to Penelhum.

[9] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 18-27.

Divine aseity and impassability have passed out of vogue in much recent theology, but this is largely due to a confusion of terms whereby *aseity* comes to mean *aloofness* and *impassable* comes to mean *uncaring* or even *incapable of caring*. For Webster, divine aseity and impassability are simply divine freedom seen from another angle. God's care for God's creatures is not responsive—and therefore beholden to something other than God—but prevenient.

For in-depth metaphysical exploration of divine *apatheia* see David Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 155-167; and David Bentley Hart, "Impassability as Transcendence," in *The Hidden and the Manifest: Essays in Theology and Metaphysics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 167-190.

divine aseity is inadequate unless it is trinitarian, Webster casts aseity as, "the eternal fullness of the loving relations of Father, Son, and Spirit."[10] God's freedom is not a passive freedom, but active, not a lack but in infinite fullness. God's freedom does not entail a *freedom from* and so does not indicate that God is dependent on any exteriority. Rather than being primarily an absence of outside interference, contingency, or obligation, aseity is the self-sufficient life of God as triune love—Webster even suggests that the term *in-seity* might be more appropriate than *a-seity*.[11]

Similarly, ubiquity and immensity are the modes of God's infinity, emphasizing and further specifying the term *sufficient* in *self-sufficient*.[12] Immensity is "the triune God himself in the plenitude of his being, in which he is unhindered by any spatial constraint."[13] It is the fact that God is unconditioned by space or time. Likewise, ubiquity or omnipresence is, in Webster's account, more than simply the characteristic of everywhere-presence or a metaphysical claim about the nature of infinity. Rather, it is God's "entire and constant presence in and to all things."[14] Immensity and ubiquity are in some sense two sides of the same coin: God transcends the world and yet is unceasingly present to the world.

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[10] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 23.

[11] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 27.

[12] Webster, *Confessing God*, 92-103.

[13] Webster, *Confessing God*, 92.

[14] Webster, *Confessing God*, 99.

Opera Dei Personalia: The Triune God

Throughout his consideration of the attributes of God's essence, Webster is continuously aware of the necessity both of conceiving them in terms of triunity and of specifically framing them in terms of the three divine persons. Several times Webster lays out a basic understanding of the personal life of God the Trinity: the Father generates the Son eternally, communicating the divine essence to the Son, and together the Father and the Son breathe the Spirit.[15] These relationships are not reversible, but they are mutually definitive. The Father is the Father of the Son; the Son is the Son of the Father.[16] The Father and the Son are those who breathe the Spirit; the Spirit is the one breathed by the Father and the Son.[17] Thus, "No one person is continuous with the Godhead in its entirety because no person possesses the hypostatic character of the other two. Put differently: each person possesses all that is the divine essence, but not all that is in the three persons of the essence."[18]

The divine essence is three persons in two processions (or emanations): the Father sends (or generates) the Son and both Father and Son together breathe the Spirit.[19] The

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[15] Webster, "Perfection and Participation," 382-384. In Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 90, he writes: "the Father acts *a nullo*, the Son acts *a patre*, and the Spirit acts *ab utroque*—though not, of course, at the cost of the common aseity in which each person is and acts."

[16] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 31, states, "By this act [of begetting the Son] (along with the act of spiration which he undertakes with the son) the Father is identified in his hypostatic or personal character (*character hypostaticus sive personalis*)."

[17] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 31; Webster, "Perfection and Participation," 384.

[18] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 88. Cf. Marcella Althaus-Reid's comment that "The Trinitarian doctrine expresses the material reality of the intimate reunion where God is not expected to coincide with Godself," in Marcella Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God* (London: Routledge, 2003), 54.

[19] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 89; Webster, "Perfection and Participation," 382-384. Throughout his works, Webster uses both *procession* and *emanation* to speak of inner-trinitarian relations and both *send* and *generate* to speak of the Father's action with regard to the "origin" of the Son.

divine persons are not portions of a divisible divine essence, nor are they perspectival aspects of a divine monad. Rather, "… God's unity is not unity *tout court* but triunity."[20] God's one-ness is three-ness and *vice versa*. The relationality of the divine persons must not be understood as stating or implying the existence of any "ontological hiatus" between the Father, Son, and Spirit.[21] The acts of begetting/being begotten and breathing/being breathed are not instances of coming-to-be.[22] Nor do these relations of origin and order introduce or imply hierarchy within the Godhead.[23] Webster summarizes: "The triune God is one simple indivisible divine essence in an irreducible threefold personal modification."[24] By the same token, "Personal modification and divine simplicity are not inversely but directly proportional."[25]

There cannot be any understanding of the perfection or self-sufficiency of the

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[20] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 87.

[21] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 32-33.

[22] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 87-88; Webster, "Perfection and Participation," 384.

[23] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 36-37, 90, 152-153; Webster, "Perfection and Participation," 384. This is something of a departure from his good friend and colleague Colin Gunton, who did entertain the notion that the Son was in some sense subordinate to the Father as a means of eliminating what he perceived to be a functional identicalness among the persons of the Godhead encouraged by modern theology. See Colin Gunton, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit: Essays Toward a Fully Trinitarian Theology* (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2003), 67.

For the purposes of this study, Webster's repeated claims against subordination will be taken at face value, but this should not be understood as eliding potential deeper issues at play. For example, Tonstad, *God and Difference*, 10, 189-210, argues that the simple assertion that the Son and Spirit are not subordinate "even though" (a phrase borrowed from Schleiermacher) they are generated is insufficient because the actual "topographies" of the Trinity are still conceived of in ways that necessarily entail subordination—in much the same way that the assertion that "Father" and "Son" do not imply gender belies a deeper, gendered understanding of the Godhead.

By way of a further example in terms of Webster's thought, the assertion in Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 153, that "the Son is not more the Son by virtue of his obedience to the Father's appointment of him to the office of redeemer," still implies subordination since the Father is able authoritatively to appoint the Son to the mission of Christ. Nevertheless, this study will assume that Webster is earnest in his denial of inner-trinitarian subordination.

[24] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 87.

[25] Ibid.

divine essence apart from God's triunity. The inner-trinitarian relations of the Father, Son, and Spirit are neither prior nor subsequent to the divine essence, its perfection, and its attributes, but are synonymous with it.[26] God's perfection, love, aseity, infinity, holiness, omnipotence, and so forth are "conceptual glosses upon God's name" as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.[27] God is perfect as trinity, transcendent and free as trinity, holy and omnipotent as trinity. God is love as God is trinity.

Opera Dei ad Extra: The Divine Economy

The divine essence and persons do not simply subsist but are active. The love of the triune God is expressive and communicative.[28] From the perfection and plenitude of God's immanent life as Trinity come the external works of creation, reconciliation, sanctification, and perfection. Scripture, as a creaturely reality, is located within the comprehensive work of God in and for the world which is an expression of the immanent life of God the Trinity.[29] The nature and function of Scripture must therefore be understood as a specific instance of the relationship of God to God's creatures.[30]

The divine economy is the entirety of creaturely being viewed as a purposeful and

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[26] Webster, "Perfection and Participation," 382. Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 88-89, discusses the relation of attributes and persons. Attributes (here called "notions") of trinitarian persons cannot be separate from personal and triune essence, or else the unity of God would be compromised; neither can they be entirely collapsed into one another.

[27] Webster, *Holiness*, 37.

[28] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 7-8; Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 110; Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 14.

[29] John Webster, *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 8-9.

[30] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 3.

purposive external action of God. Webster writes: "When we speak of the divine economy, we say that finite beings and acts (including textual and intellectual acts) are willed, governed, and directed by God, who is their prime and final cause."[31] This is not to say that God micromanages the cosmos, that creatures have no agency, or that every event—whether good or evil—is directly caused by God.[32] Rather, the act of creating is indistinguishable from the act of sustaining. The gift of life is given at every moment.[33]

"God is himself, and from himself God gives himself."[34] This separation between the inner trinitarian acts (*actio*) of subsistence and the external acts (*factio*) of creation, reconciliation, and redemption does not imply a break in God's being.[35] The God who creates is identical with the God who is, but creating and being are not identical.[36] In other words, God is not determined or defined by the act of creation, but creation is entirely determined by God since it flows from the fullness of God's abundant being as

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[31] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 7. The invocation of divine will is not to be understood as a reduction of God to an agent selecting actions from a set of possible actions. In Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 93, he writes: "The notion of the divine will has to be stripped of connotations of arbitrariness, so that we do not think of creation as a mere spasmodic exercise of God's power not anchored in the divine ethos."

[32] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 111-112, drawing on Aquinas, argues that divine omni-causality does not cancel out creaturely causality or agency because the creaturely capacity for causation is directly communicated to creatures as a feature of their likeness to the creator. "In short, to attribute all created effects to God as omni-causal is not to rob creatures of their proper action, because what God in his perfect wisdom, power and goodness causes is creatures who are themselves causes."

[33] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 93.

[34] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 19. Cf. Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 110; Webster, "Perfection and Participation," 392-394.

[35] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 102-103, draws the distinction between these terms from Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, II. 1.4.

[36] Cf. the observation in Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans. Joseph Donceel (New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 1970), 22, that "The 'economic' trinity is the 'immanent' trinity and the 'immanent' trinity is the 'economic' trinity."

trinity.[37] The act of creation is therefore utterly free, self-sufficient, and communicative.[38] Moreover, the differentiation of inner and outer divine actions preserves the divine perfection and freedom: God does not need to create to be fully God but wills creation as an act of sovereign love.[39]

The upshot of all this is that the initiation of the divine economy—the unceasing yet instantaneous act of creation—is *ex nihilo*. It involves not merely the physical fashioning of creatures, but "the introduction of being entirely."[40] The difference between God and creation is infinite and incomprehensible and yet still surpassed by God's majesty.[41] "By divine love, the 'infinite distance' which 'cannot be crossed'—the distance between being and nothing—*has* been crossed."[42]

The divine economy can thus be described as providential. Providence, for Webster, goes beyond mere deterministic or mechanical predestination, as if God actively

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[37] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 94-98, discusses the relationship of the external and internal acts of God with respect to the three persons of the Godhead. On the one hand, "*opera ad extra sunt indivisa*," but on the other hand, "*opera Dei ad intra sunt divisa*." The challenge then is how to hold these in tension. Webster insists that the action *creatio ex nihilo* is a work of the undivided trinity, to be "attributed absolutely to the one divine essence": "Divine works in respect of creatures may not be assigned severally to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as to quasi-independent agents." However, because the transitive acts of God are a direct result of the inner works of God, it is also possible to say that God the Father creates through God the Son by the power of God the Spirit.

[38] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 92-94.

[39] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 103-104.

[40] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 92, drawing on Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a.45.1, "*emanatio totius esse*."

[41] In Webster, "Perfection and Participation," 394, he notes that "Ephesians ought to at least register the question whether God's goodness is such that he is beyond ontological difference." Cf. the comments by David Bentley Hart that "*even being*…is *only analogous* between [God] and his creation," in David Bentley Hart, "The Destiny of Christian Metaphysics: Reflections on the Analogia Entis," in *The Analogy of Being: Invention of the Antichrist or the Wisdom of God?*, ed. Thomas Joseph White (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 397.

[42] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 93, citing Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia.45.2 obj. 4, ad 4.

chooses each creaturely occurrence and action from a set of possibilities. Rather, God's providence is precisely what the word itself means: God provides for creatures. Providence is the assurance that God's infinite love, "outbids any and all evil," and so evil has no place in the divine economy and will be thoroughly, reliably, and entirely rooted out.[43] Because God creates *ex nihilo* as an act of perfect, self-sufficient love, the true freedom and dignity of creatures is in their being directed toward and taken up into the triune God's embrace through the divine economy of creation, self-communication, reconciliation, and sanctification. Far from implying a degradation of creatures, *creatio ex nihilo* vouchsafes their fundamental goodness by indicating that being is bestowed as a freely-given gift.[44]

Webster also describes the divine economy in forthrightly trinitarian terms, as is to be expected. Two realities must be borne in mind: 1) creation is properly an act of the simple, undivided divine essence because "in the economy, the Trinity acts indivisibly," and 2) God as trinity creates as trinity because "common activity is not indistinguishable activity."[45] Webster is clear that these two propositions are not contradictory because "economic differentiation is modal, not real."[46] He appeals to the prepositional nature of discourse about the economic persons of the trinity to reinforce the essential mutuality

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[43] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 127. See also Webster, *Confessing God*, 195-214, especially the comment on p. 199 that "hope is not simply a correlate of the divine futurity or the coming of God; it is, rather, a disposition which is related to the entirety of God's dealings with his creature, past, present and future."

[44] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 108-113. Indeed, since all creaturely being and goodness is *per participationem* in the absolute being and goodness of God bestowed as a free gift, the true referent of creaturely dignity is not the creature at all, but God's whose dignity is infinite.

[45] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 94.

[46] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 95.

and undivided personal agency of the triune God. The relations entailed in the classic articulation—the Father creates *through* the Son *by* the Spirit—cannot be gainsaid.[47] The result is that economic acts may be appropriated to a particular person eminently but not exclusively: "appropriation is not by individuation."[48]

How then to expand upon the claim that the Father creates though the Son by the Spirit? First, creation may be attributed eminently to the Father. As that person of the Godhead who is un-generated and generates the Son and Spirit, the Father is the one who undertakes the creation of the world. This is not because the Son and the Spirit are powerless to act—the Father does not create without the Son and the Spirit—but simply because the Father is the *fons deitatis* and so is also the fount of all being. The act of granting being is thus appropriate to God the Father.[49]

The Son is the exemplar and the efficient cause of creation. Webster frames this in terms of the phrases *in him* and *through him*. As the *logos*, the Son is the reason and wisdom that constitute the superstructure of the created order. The Son is also the efficient cause of creation, which is the meaning of "through whom all things were made." Webster is clear that this "instrumental" role of the Son in creation is not a distancing of the Father from creation, but an activity proper to the Son as the "firstborn of all creation."[50] This is the binding point between Christ the eternal Son and Jesus the Word Incarnate: as the one through whom creation takes place, the Son is properly the

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[47] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 90, 151.

[48] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 95.

[49] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 95-96.

[50] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 96-97.

one who redeems.[51]

The Spirit is the person of the Godhead whose task is properly to perfect creation. As "the Lord, the giver of life," the Spirit brings creatures to the consummation of the good which is theirs in the love of God. The Spirit is thus the guarantor of the completion and full actuality of creation.[52] Moreover, the Spirit grants agency to creatures: "the Spirit so moves creatures…that they come to have and exercise a movement of their own."[53] In granting agency, the Spirit does not cancel or override the agency of creatures, but enlivens it and directs it toward its proper end.

The economic acts of God are the work of the undivided Trinity. They may also be described as the proper works of the three persons according to the formula that "the Father is its fount, the Son its medium, and the Spirit its terminus."[54] Since the relation between the Father, Son, and Spirit are mutual, the economic acts of the Trinity are also mutually defining.

Scripture Within the Divine Economy

Various definitional terms may be applied to understand the status and role of Scripture within the divine economy. The two terms most often predicated of Scripture are *revelation* and *inspiration*, to which Webster adds *sanctification*. These terms do not exhaust Webster's thoughts or writings on Scripture, but they do serve as convenient

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[51] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 52, 96.

[52] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 97-98.

[53] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 97.

[54] Webster, *God With our Measure I*, 52.

starting points for exploring Webster's bibliology proper.

Webster defines revelation as, "The self-representation of the Triune God, the free work of sovereign mercy in which God wills, establishes, and perfects saving fellowship with himself in which humankind comes to know, love, and fear him above all things."[55] Webster explores each phrase of this definition in detail, and several key features can be discerned.

First, God is both the content and the agent of revelation. "Revelation, therefore is identical with God's triune being in its active self-presence."[56] Revelation is more than cognitive content about God: it is the knowledge-giving, communion-forming modality of the divine economy.[57] Revelation is active rather than passive, the purposeful presence of God to God's creatures which "conditions and determines that reality in its entirety."[58] Revelation is not an event, but a process, an ongoing action of God toward creatures. Revelation, therefore, is not identified with or confined to the Bible.[59]

Second, revelation is free and unconditioned (a "free work of sovereign mercy"). As God is totally and abundantly free—unconditioned and uncompelled by creation—so God's revelation is free and unconditioned because revelation is inseparable from

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[55] John Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 13.

[56] Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 14.

[57] Cf. William J. Abraham, *Crossing the Threshold of Divine Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 58-61, who expands on the notion of revelation as more than direct communication of cognitive content. He gives the apt example of teaching: it is one thing to know that someone is a teacher because they said so, but it is a different thing entirely to know someone is a teacher because you have been their student. Revelation is likewise something made known in doing.

[58] Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 14.

[59] Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 16-17. Cf. the comments in Darren Sarisky, "The Ontology of Scripture and the Ethics of Interpretation in the Theology of John Webster," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 21, no. 1 (January 2019), 63-64.

creation.[60] Revelation, therefore, cannot be anything other than a pure expression of God's true nature.[61] This is a statement about the *content* of revelation not its form. The content of divine revelation is God and this content is vouchsafed to us by God's perfection and transcendence, which entails a total lack of interference in the communicative presence of God—though human writers and readers are fully capable of misperceiving or misunderstanding this self-revelation.[62] This is not a cop-out or a no true scotsman fallacy where anything can be discounted as revelation by comparison with some central *kerygma* constructed *a posteriori*. Rather, it is the double recognition that creation is *ex nihilo* and that God is sovereign despite human fallenness.

Third, revelation is soteriological. "Scripture is an auxiliary in the economy of salvation, and the end of that economy is *fellowship*."[63] Because revelation is a component within the divine economy it shares the purpose of establishing and maintaining communion between God and creatures that is common to God's transitive acts. The purpose of Scripture is not merely to impart cognitive content about God, but to draw readers deeper into the mystery of communion with God. This process involves both mortification—as evil is defeated in the economy of salvation and sin is put to death—and vivification—as "God works to quicken the forms of created life, and to move

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[60] For Webster the identification of revelation with creation is a result of revelation *not* being identified with God's essence. Divine communication is a transitive action of God undertaken freely, not a "necessary" part of the triune God's immanent life. Sarisky, "The Ontology of Scripture," 63, clarifies that this is a way of maintaining the proper distinction between God's acts that are inherent in the divine nature and those undertaken freely, as revelation is.

[61] Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 14-15. See the discussion of the *analogia entis* with regard to Scripture in chapter 3 below.

[62] Webster, *Word and Church*, 46, 76-86.

[63] Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 70.

creatures to self-movement toward their perfection."[64]

Webster uses the term *sanctification* to refer to the process wherein creaturely realities are employed in God's self-revelation. All creatures are constituents of the divine economy and the divine economy is revelatory, but sanctification refers to the purposeful election and use of creaturely realities for expressly revelatory (and therefore salvific) ends.[65] "Sanctification is a work of the Holy Spirit which realizes created nature in fulfillment of the eternal divine will set forth in the Son."[66] With regard to the Bible, sanctification involves divine superintendence of the entire history and process of the Bible: the events described, the lives of people and the places they live, the lives of the authors and editors, the processes of writing and editing, the acts of reading and interpreting.[67] By virtue of God's superintending, sanctifying action, the history of the Bible is more than the "natural" history of human language and textuality, not less.[68]

The textual modality of sanctification is inspiration, a modality that involves not only the content of Scripture but its verbal form.[69] Inspiration, therefore, is not a property localized in the text itself but a "divine movement."[70] Since inspiration must be

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[64] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 7. See also, Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 27; John Webster, *God Without Measure*, vol. 2, *Virtue and Intellect* (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2016), 103-121; Webster, *Word and Church,* 71-86.

[65] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 14; Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 17, 26. Webster describes sanctification as a "middle term" between providence—the ordering of all creation to divine ends—and inspiration—the specifically verbal aspects of sanctification and revelation.

[66] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 15.

[67] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 15; Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 29-30.

[68] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 14-16; Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 26-28; Webster, *Word and Church*, 73.

[69] Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 30, 38. On p. 38 Webster is unequivocal: "Inspiration involves *words*" (italics original).

[70] Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 36.

understood within the broader concept of revelation, inspiration must also be understood not as event but as ongoing action.[71] God does not bestow inspiration on texts; God works through texts. As with sanctification, divine agency in the inspiration of Scripture does not mean that God cancels or overrides human processes of authoring and editing the text of the Bible.

Rather than eliminating Paul the human author, inspiration "indicates the kind of author which Paul is in the field of the Spirit's saving address."[72] The fact that inspiration involves the Spirit's oversight of the words of the Bible themselves does not mean that the Spirit dictates words to human writers. Rather it indicates "the ordering and formation of culture, tradition, occasion, and author," and as such includes both textual production and textual reception.[73] Thus, inspiration, like sanctification, extends beyond the text itself into the present world of textual effects, reading, and interpretation.

Before moving on, a few key comments are in order by way of comparison to common usage of the word *inspiration*. First, Webster explicitly objects to the notion that inspiration implies biblical infallibility.[74] Rather than terms such as *perfect* or *infallible*, Webster prefers to speak of Scripture as *sufficient*: "Scripture is enough."[75] The Bible is suitable for the task set before it because it is formed and guided to the completion of that

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[71] Ibid.

[72] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 17.

[73] Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 39.

[74] Webster, *Word and Church*, 74.

[75] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 18 (italics removed). This is one spot where Webster's Reformedness comes through. He continues: "Scripture is *enough*. This is because Scripture is what God desires to teach…The children of Adam do not know what they need to know…they must simply receive what has been given, in all its apparent incompleteness and limitation."

task by the triune God.

Webster himself sets the stage for this connection, writing: "We do not, as it were, stare at the Bible, stupefied by it…a sufficient Scripture is one which at the hands of God suffices to instruct creatures about how he will conduct them from delusion into saving knowledge."[76] Thus, the sufficiency of Scripture does not mean that everything in Scripture is the perfect paradigm and law for all of human life—after all, both Testaments allow and even legislate various systems of oppression including slavery. It means that within the divine economy Scripture will not fail to be the medium of God's self-revelation.[77]

In keeping with Webster's unwavering focus on the triune God as the one with reference to whom all theology must be undertaken, he describes the appropriations of the trinitarian persons with regard to Scripture. Unfortunately, he did not live to complete his planned multivolume systematic theology, so the explicitly trinitarian shape of his bibliology is somewhat fragmentary. Still, a few comments can be made.

The transitive act of creation is properly understood as an act of the undivided divine essence (*opera ad extra sunt indivisa*) in which the persons of the trinity act

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[76] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 19.

[77] Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1976), 30-32, gives the example of his grandmother who refused to read the letters of Paul. Her refusal is based on the experience as an enslaved Black person hearing white preachers justify slavery and admonish slaves to be subservient using Paul's writings. To insist that the words of Paul must be anything other than a cause of pain for her would be a gross injustice and is not required by any of the doctrinal considerations in this chapter. A Paul-less Bible was sufficient for Thurman's grandmother and there is no reason to hold that this fact is not just as much a result of God's sovereign love as any other instance of individual encounter with the Bible. And what is more, if sanctification and inspiration extend beyond the front and back covers of the Bible, there is no reason not to hold that this rejection of Paul for these reasons is a sanctified and inspired decision. While Webster might have suggested that not everything in Paul should be thrown out, the reading offered here is consistent with his published thought. In Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 48, he writes that "one criterion for the appropriateness of an interpretive strategy…will be whether it conforms to or enables the interpreter's participation in the reality of reconciliation."

according to their proper "modalities." So too the acts of revelation, sanctification, and inspiration: "As Father, God is the personal will or origin of [God's] self-presence; as Son, God actualizes his presence, upholding it and establishing it against all opposition; as Holy Spirit, God perfects that self-presence by making it real and effective in and to the history of humankind."[78] The Father sends; the Son reveals; and the Spirit illuminates.

In specifically textual terms, Webster places Christology at the head of his bibliological considerations.[79] "Holy Scripture and its interpretation are elements in the domain of the Word of God," the particular realm within the divine economy that is appropriated to the Son.[80] The "priority" of the Son is not the result of ontological primacy, but of the intimate connection between the Son and human life. Webster's Christological starting point focuses his comments on the roles of the Father and the Spirit in Scripture. "In fulfillment of the eternal purpose of the Father, and by sending the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, the Son sheds abroad the knowledge of himself and all things in relation to himself."[81] Because trinitarian relations are mutually descriptive and the transitive acts of God are undertaken by the simple divine essence, the Son's

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[78] Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 14.

[79] For an excellent summary of this move in Webster's thought (by way of comparison with Jenson and Pannenberg) and an analysis of the resulting ideas, see Fred Sanders, "Holy Scripture under the Auspices of the Holy Trinity: On John Webster's Trinitarian Doctrine of Scripture," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 21, no. 1 (January 2019), 4-23. Sanders identifies Webster's motivation in this regard as a desire to articulate a doctrine of Scripture which can legitimately support a full-fledged systematic theology.

[80] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 3.

[81] Ibid.

"knowledge [about] himself" is not exclusive of the Father and the Spirit.[82] So the Son reveals the Father and the Spirit superintends (illuminates) that revelation.

The resurrection thus comes to play a significant role in Webster's doctrine of Scripture as the event of the Son's exaltation as the Lord of creation. Scripture is located within the domain of the Word, and the Word is risen—that is, Jesus Christ lives.[83] The resurrection is the way into trinitarian reflection on the nature of Scripture because it is "part of the material definition of God's aseity," which is the relational modality of God's perfection.[84] From this vantage, "as the risen Christ lives, so he reveals," because the resurrection is not an event which could have been otherwise.[85] As the Father raises the Son, the Son makes known the Father, and the Spirit vouchsafes knowledge of the risen Son to creation.

Texts as Creaturely Realities in God's Service: Hermeneutics

This study is not primarily one of hermeneutics, but of bibliology. That said, hermeneutics is a principle goal of the doctrine of Scripture and a critical proving ground for theological claims about the Bible, so a few comments on Webster's hermeneutics are in order.

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[82] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 33-36, makes similar moves with regard to the resurrection. Jesus rising from the dead is not the definitive action of the Godhead, but a continuation of the nature and economy of God.

[83] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 37.

[84] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 35.

[85] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 38.

Webster's commitment to divine agency in Scripture does not lead him to deny the reality or the importance of the Bible's textual nature. In fact, Webster is quite insistent throughout his writings that divine agency does not cancel or eliminate or replace human agency, but that it animates, illuminates, directs, and perfects human agency—in short, that divine agency sanctifies human agency.[86] This understanding of agency in and through the text of Scripture means that Webster can affirm the revelatory nature of the Bible without also diminishing the fact of the Bible's humanness. Holy Scripture is both irreducibly divine and irreducibly human.[87] Webster's insistence on this point is grounded in his expansive yet precise understanding of divine agency and providence.[88]

For Webster, the goal of all Scriptural reading or interpreting has as its goal saving communion with God in Christ by the power of the Spirit.[89] Methodological considerations are secondary to this reality. However, methodological considerations are also secondary to the reality that the history of the economy of Scripture is the history of texts, their origins and receptions, and the very act of reading in the present. These realities must be adequately explored as they are constituent elements in the sanctifying

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[86] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 12-19; Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 26-30; Webster, *Word and Church*, 71-76.

[87] Webster, *Word and Church*, 72-73. Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 30, is quite forceful on this point, writing, "Once again, the rule is: sanctification *establishes* and does not abolish creatureliness" (italics original).

[88] On which, see above.

[89] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 60, says, "The end of reading Holy Scripture is to know of the mind of God who is its primary author and interpreter; all other intellectual acts in relation to this are instrumental." This statement should be understood in light of Webster's frequent other comments that knowledge is primarily salvific.

work of God in the form of the Bible.[90] Theological interpretation is not simply reading Scripture to arrive at doctrinal conclusions or formulate confessional statements, but reading Scripture with the understanding that it is a part of God's saving grace toward creatures.[91]

Method, then, is determined under the rule that "God's Word outbids falsehood and issues an empowering summons to reason."[92] The "empowering summons to reason" here means that historical-critical methods cannot simply be ruled out as opposed to the true work or nature of Scripture; the human mind is opened to critical thought and reason in the act of reading Scripture, not closed off from it or "stupefied" by it.[93]

Webster expresses some disdain for certain projects in theological hermeneutics on this basis, and out of a conviction that they are essentially docetic.[94] He argues that visions of theological hermeneutics which express a *prima facie* distrust of historical-critical study and privilege "pre-modern" exegetical methods over "modern" ones are lacking in theological imagination.[95] Moreover, he argues that the transfer of biblical studies outside of the theological guild into the realm of literary studies or historical criticism could in fact be viewed as a providential means of securing the preservation of

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[90] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 27; Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 70-71.

[91] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 27, 30.

[92] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 22.

[93] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 19, 47, 56-60.

[94] Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 20-21.

[95] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 29.

the biblical text.[96]

Literary and historical-critical hermeneutical methods are in fact expressly appropriate to the Bible because the text of Scripture is a sign (*signum* rather than *res*).[97] The issue with the deployment of these methods is not inherent in the methods themselves, but is a result of their improper use. That is, the methods are secondary to the theological framework and inner disposition of the interpreter. Readers of Scripture are called not only to understand the Bible's place in the divine economy, but to understand its role as an instrument of Christ's instruction. Readers are to be "pupils in the school of Christ" and to approach the text to be instructed in the ways of God.[98] Accordingly, the proper method is the one which facilitates the reader's full and proper participation in the entire extent of the economy of Scripture—from the establishment of saving relation with God to the inculcation of humility, mercy, and other virtues to the enlivening of the rational intellect.[99]

Some Points of Critique and a Point of Expansion

The hermeneutical material above is a little hollow or unsubstantial with regard to the actual, real-world experience of reading. Webster's account of hermeneutics rarely

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[96] Ibid. In his most sharp-tongued remark about "theological hermeneutics" as a school of thought, he remarks that the negative results of theologically inadequate reading are probably largely the fault of theology itself for failing to face the human realities of the text explored by critical scholars. This is not to say that Webster is sympathetic to biblical studies that reduces the text into the sphere of the merely human, but that he does not begrudge that school of thought for the failure of its interlocutors to respond adequately.

[97] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 29.

[98] Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 101-106.

[99] In this last respect in particular, historical-critical methods can be seen as effective and appropriate.

moves away from discussing hermeneutics in relation to God into hermeneutics in relation to human activity. In that regard, Darren Sarisky (appreciatively) critiques Webster's bibliology as eliding the creaturely reality of the Bible in favor of its divine reality.[100] It is true that Webster errs in this direction on numerous occasions, despite his frequent assertions that divine agency does not cancel creaturely agency.[101] Part of this may simply be Webster's conviction that theology had sold out to hermeneutics and textual theory and his corresponding mission to set things straight. Or perhaps it is rooted in a recognition that his training and expertise lay outside of hermeneutical theory. Still, Webster's bibliology is strikingly underspecified with regard to the creaturely processes of Scripture.[102] Most pointedly, Webster seems unable to say what the real value of critical Biblical scholarship is, though he is reluctant to write off the entire enterprise.[103] Though he refuses to allow talk of the Bible as infallible, he is also unable or unwilling to discuss the ramifications of this refusal.[104] This is rather unfortunate since, as Brad East points out, Webster's theological claims about the nature of Scripture would not have to

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[100] Sarisky, "The Ontology of Scripture," 68-70.

[101] Ibid.

[102] Sarisky, "The Ontology of Scripture," 70. Cf. Brad East, "John Webster, Theologian Proper," *Anglican Theological Review* 99, no. 2 (January 2017), 376-377.

Sarisky and I disagree on the related point of how much Webster's thought allows for the use of extant historical-critical methods. Sarisky claims that Webster's thought essentially rules them out because they cannot produce the proper stance toward the text within the reader. This seems like a lack of understanding of the actual practice of those methods. Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 30, writes that ultimately hermeneutics is proved or disproved in its actual practice, and there are plenty of examples of critical, even superficially "antagonistic" readings of the Bible producing positive spiritual results.

[103] And mercifully so. The recent advent of "theological interpretation of Scripture" as a specific school of thought or practice has begotten more than its fair share of poorly-thought-out calumny against the guild and enterprise of biblical studies. Webster, at least, has the sense and the good taste to recognize that schools in other fields know what they are doing and why, rather than telling them how they ought to do their jobs. See Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 26-30.

[104] See notes 74, 75, and 76 above.

be altered in order to accommodate a robust theological account of the historical-critical enterprise.[105]

Nevertheless, this reticence may also be a virtue. For example, rather than allow the idea of scriptural clarity to lapse into a fundamentalist literalism about the text itself, Webster locates clarity in the work of the Spirit over time and in the life of the church.[106] Clarity is not "linguistic or semantic transparency," not a property inherent in the text itself, but the result of the Spirit's illumination in the lives of the community constituted by the reading of God's word.[107] By not specifying the mode of creaturely activity in the clarity of Scripture, Webster leaves open the possibility for various accounts which may be compatible with his broader theology.

It is precisely this open-ended-ness that this study takes advantage of. Webster's theological vision is robust, detailed, "God-intoxicated," and generous.[108] Rooted in the immanent life of the triune God, it directs all other areas of inquiry back to their ultimate source and ground. Where his anthropological vision of Scripture remains less than complete, he still provides sufficient theological framing to allow the creaturely role in the process of Scripture to be discussed in terms consistent with his theological vision.

Finally, the biggest lacuna in Webster's thought is the place of Israel and the

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[105] Brad East, *The Church's Book: Theology of Scripture in Ecclesial Context* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, forthcoming), 177-182.

[106] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 23.

[107] Ibid. This study largely brackets ecclesiological considerations. For a much more detailed account of Webster's bibliology vis-à-vis ecclesiology, see East, *The Church's Book*, 98-182

[108] See Katherine Sonderegger, "The God-Intoxicated Theology of a Modern Theologian," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 1, no. 1 (January 2019), 25-43.

Hebrew Bible in general.[109] In some ways this it not especially surprising. R. Kendall Soulen has demonstrated the ways in which Christian supersessionism is the "flaw in the heart of the crystal" beginning as early as the second century.[110] The scheme of "Christian divinity without Jewish flesh" runs from the church fathers to the reformers to Barth and on into the twenty-first century, connecting all of Webster's major interlocutors throughout his career.[111] Though Webster steadfastly maintains that the entire history of the Bible is within the scope of divine sanctification and inspiration, one occasionally gets the impression that "the Bible" is shorthand for "the New Testament," especially in Webster's discussion of the Christology of Scripture.

Conclusion

John Webster's doctrine of Scripture—which is itself an expression of his trinitarian doctrine—is both expansive and richly detailed. This combination makes his theology robust enough end generous enough to be integrated with other theories and schools of thought. In particular, Webster's hermeneutical underspecification is a fitting space to be explored further because he provides an excellent outline to be filled in. The key components of Webster's doctrine of Scripture for this thesis are:

1. The Bible is a component of the divine economy, the free outward work of the triune God which creates, reconciles, and perfects creatures. This economy is entirely *ex nihilo*, neither required of God nor determinative of God's nature.
2. The Bible reveals God but is not itself revelation; through the text of Scripture

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[109] Cf. Brad East, "John Webster," 345-349.

[110] R. Kendall Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996). This phrase comes specifically from the title of ch. 2.

[111] The phrase is taken from the title of ch. 3 of Soulen, *God of Israel*.

God makes God's communion-forming self-presence known.

3. The entire process of Scripture—the lives and cultures of the authors and readers, the actual events of writing and reading, the transmission, preservation, and translation of the text of the Bible, the preaching of the word in the community of the saints—is sanctified and illuminated by divine actions such that it serves as a mediator of God's presence to readers.
4. Sanctification means that entire process of Scripture is not solely human, but is not less than human and so analysis of the creaturely realities of the Bible is warranted. Furthermore, God will not fail to use these human process to reveal Godself.

Though this thesis will in due course depart from Webster's Reformed perspective, these observations and categories will serve as the essential framework for understanding the nature of the Bible as Holy Scripture.

The next chapter will lay out recent developments in the field of cognitive linguistics, specifically in Conceptual Metaphor Theory. Since the Bible is a linguistic entity, a theory of language is in some sense necessary to understanding it fully, the priority of theology notwithstanding. Cognitive linguistics is especially well-suited to Webster's doctrine of Scripture because it resists—structurally if not always purposefully—the artificial delineations between linguistic form and content, much the way Webster's bibliology resists the docetic separation of the Bible as a text from Holy Scripture as a theological reality.

Chapter Two
Domains and Words: Conceptual Metaphor Theory

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (hereafter CMT) is a cognitive-linguistic approach to understanding and analyzing metaphor which was first proposed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their 1980 book *Metaphors We Live By*.[1] As a cognitive-linguistic theory—as, in fact, one of the central and foundational theories in cognitive linguistics—CMT regards human language as a function and feature of human cognition in general rather than a discrete capability of the brain. This entails three broad commitments or presuppositions: 1) language is based on usage not independent formal rules, 2) language is the result of non-linguistic cognitive abilities such as sensorimotor perception, and 3) all elements of language are meaningful.[2] Within this general framework CMT posits that metaphoric operations are not simply rhetorical flourishes or vivid descriptions, but that

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[1] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (1980; repr. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

[2] Ewa Dąbrowska and Dagmar Divjak, "Introduction," in *Cognitive Linguistics*, vol. 1, *Foundations of Language* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2019), 1; Vyvyan Evans, *Cognitive Linguistics: A Complete Guide* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 2019), 25-41; George Lakoff and Mark Turner, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 78-81. For a good introduction to classical syntactic analysis in an avowedly Chomskyan vein, see Adrian Akmajian, et al., *Linguistics: An Introduction to Language and Communication*, 7th ed. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017), 143-213.

The third point may seem obvious. However, it is a major departure from classic descriptive theories. Formal features such as syntax and morphology are not always recognized as being inherently meaningful, and are generally sharply separated from studies of meaning. Syntax is a good example. In standard accounts, variations in syntax—such as the difference between *I ran into the man I saw at the store again* and *The man I saw at the store? I ran into him again*—are generally considered semantically equivalent because they are considered two separate surface structures expressing the same deep structure. The motivation for selecting one instead of the other is rarely considered, and when it is taken up the possibility that the two may not in fact be semantically identical is essentially never considered. In a cognitive account, the difference between the two would generally be considered one not merely of word order but one of meaning, as well. The first construction *I ran into the man I saw at the store again* is more difficult to process, contains more ambiguities, and emphasizes different aspects of the situation of encountering a stranger again than the second. In fact the particular theory of Cognitive Grammar, as developed by Ronald Langacker, is centered around the claim that "grammar is meaningful." See Ronald W. Langacker, *Cognitive Grammar: A Basic Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 3.

they are in fact a cognitive function which is sometimes expressed through language.[3]

This chapter will first lay out some basic terms in cognitive linguistics before describing the specific claims of CMT. Because of its clear and direct relation to actual linguistic expressions, CMT is uniquely well-suited to demonstrate the embodied nature of thought and language. After demonstrating through the example of CMT that language and thought are in fact embodied, this chapter will consider some implications of embodiment for bibliology and discuss the philosophical and theological limitations of current proposals in cognitive linguistics.[4]

Some Background in Cognitive Linguistics

The terminology of cognitive linguistics is often somewhat imprecise, due to the nature of the phenomena under study and the claims being put forth. After all, even cognitive linguists do not have objective, direct access to the phenomenal world of others. Nevertheless, there are common terms whose definitions can be approximated and which form the basis of cognitive linguistic theory. Key terms include: concept, domain, construal, and category. There is some inevitable overlap among these terms, but generally they define separate aspects and operations of meaning-making in human

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[3] For traditional, language-focused accounts of metaphor, see Max Black, *Models and Metaphors* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1966); I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936); Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth, TX: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 45-69; and Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies in the Creation of Meaning in Language*, trans. Robert Czerny, Kathleen McLaughlin, and John Costello (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977). Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 45-69, differentiates between metaphor and symbol—between the "act of predication" and the "surplus of signification"—but he considers them entirely separate phenomena and is clear that metaphor is a purely linguistic occurrence.

[4] The following standard typographical conventions will be used when discussing CMT. Domains and concepts are indicated by the use of SMALL CAPS. Asterisks (*) mark ungrammatical or dispreferred sentences or constructions. Double arrows (>>) indicate metaphorical correspondences.

cognition.

Concepts and domains are in some sense mutually determinative. Functional understandings, rather than formal definitions, will be helpful here. A concept is a segmental feature of cognition, any discrete unit of experience that is coherently structured in the mind.[5] Concepts include both superficial or basic information as well as rich knowledge about the segment of experience they represent in the mind.[6] They can be thought of as the content-units of linguistic cognition. Domains are essentially organized constellations of concepts and can be understood as the function-active units of cognition.[7] Domains arise because concepts are constellated in order to serve as the basis of cognitive functions such as metaphor.

In CMT, the porous nature of concepts and domains is accounted for by using the phrase *conceptual domain*. This term indicates that domains are the features of cognition that are utilized in cognitive functions, but that these functions utilize the content of domains: in other words, the concepts within that domain. It also indicates that concepts and domains are not fixed in the mind, but that their construction and use in cognitive

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[5] Evans, *Cognitive Linguistics*, 14; Zoltán Kövecses, *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 324; Langacker, *Cognitive Grammar*, 44-54.

[6] Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 127-133. Rich knowledge is in-depth experiential knowledge, one's "detailed and everyday understanding of the world." JOURNEY, for example, not only contains specific journeys one has taken, one's favorite destinations, and people one commonly journeys with, but can also include knowledge of road construction, traffic laws and signs, footpath etiquette, the physics of bicycles, and other people's stories about their own journeys. This example also highlights the essential fluidity of concepts and domains.

[7] Evans, *Cognitive Linguistics*, 14.

Langacker, *Cognitive Grammar*, 44-47, describes what are here called concepts and domains, but he uses the terms domain and matrix instead. In Langacker's account, a domain is any unit of cognitive content and a matrix is a set of correlated domains active in cognitive function and meaning. This is similar to the account of Idealized Cognitive Models found in George Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 68-76, 118-135.

functioning is pragmatic and based on the ways in which they are construed in a given scenario.

Concepts and domains are not static cognitive structures and what is a domain in one case may be a concept in another.[8] This level of definitional pragmatism is a result of the functional quality of cognition itself. Conception and domain-level organization take place largely in real time, and are therefore usage-based, adaptable, and plastic.[9] For instance, MOUNTAIN is a concept within the domain GEOGRAPHIC FEATURE, and CLIMBING is a concept within the domain MOUNTAIN. Furthermore, MOUNTAIN can also be a concept within the domain CLIMBING. The difference between MOUNTAIN within the domain CLIMBING and CLIMBING within the domain MOUNTAIN is the way in which these concepts and domains are construed.

Construal is the ability to understand or conceive of the same situation in various ways.[10] A classic example of construal is the question of whether the glass is half full or half empty. The glass itself and the amount of liquid in it are the same, but the single glass and its content may be construed in opposite ways.[11] Likewise a single concept may

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[8] For this reason, Langacker, *Cognitive Grammar*, 46-47, prefers the term *conception* to *concept*, arguing that it occupies a middle ground between *concept* and *conceptualization* and thus demonstrates the way in which concepts can be analyzed discretely but are still real-time processes.

[9] This is because of the link between perception and conception. Sensory input occurs in real time and therefore must be processed in real time. Language, despite its cognitive aspects, is fundamentally a sensory phenomenon grounded in physical interactions such as hearing or reading. See Evans, *Cognitive Linguistics*, 56-95, 96-125; Langacker, *Cognitive Grammar*, 31-43; and Laura J. Speed, David P. Vinson, and Gabriella Vigliocco, "Representing Meaning," in *Cognitive Linguistics*, vol. 1, *Foundations of Language*, Ewa Dąbrowksa and Dagmar Divjak, eds. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2019), 227-232.

On real-time aspects of metaphor in particular, see Raymond W. Gibbs, "Metaphor," in *Cognitive Linguistics*, vol. 1, *Foundations of Language*, Ewa Dąbrowksa and Dagmar Divjak, eds. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2019), 209-214; Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 40-42, 285-302.

[10] Evans, *Cognitive Linguistics*, 353-354; Langacker, *Cognitive Grammar*, 55; Ronald W. Langacker, "Construal," in in *Cognitive Linguistics*, vol. 1, *Foundations of Language*, Ewa Dąbrowksa and Dagmar Divjak, eds. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2019), 140.

[11] Langacker, *Cognitive Grammar*, 44, fig. 2.5 visually illustrates these two construals.

be construed across multiple domains, a single domain may be construed in terms of different concepts depending on the scenario, and what is a concept in one construal may be a domain in another.

Construal can be analyzed in several ways. The figure-ground relationship is one of the more commonly invoked phenomena used to illustrate construal. In a figure-ground relationship, one part of an environment is construed as standing out against the rest of the environment as a distinct entity. Evans gives the example of the sentences *The bike is near the house* and **The house is near the bike*.[12] The second sentence, though grammatically correct and semantically valid, scans improperly because of the way the English preposition *near* typically construes the figure-ground relationship between smaller and larger elements.

In the case of MOUNTAIN and CLIMBING, MOUNTAIN may be construed as the domain containing the concept CLIMBING. Climbing is one thing to do on a mountain. This domain could also include concepts such as SNOWCAP, TREE-LINE, CREVASSE, TRAIL, GOAT, LION, MOSS, RIVER, and so on. CLIMBING could also be the domain in which MOUNTAIN is construed. In addition to mountains, trees, staircases, ladders, walls, and in fact almost anything with a perceptible degree of verticality can be climbed.

Construal and categorization are inseparable cognitive functions. A category is a set of elements or entities perceived or construed as having one or more features in common or as being otherwise equivalent for some purpose.[13] Categorization is the

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[12] Evans, *Cognitive Linguistics*, 67. In standard linguistic notation, the asterisk (*) denotes sentences which are dispreferred for some reason.

[13] Langacker, *Cognitive Grammar*, 17.

ability to recognize elements as belonging to a category, as well as to perform other operations within a category such as sorting, labeling, and relating them to other categories.[14] Categories arise because elements are construed as being similar in some fashion, and elements are construed as similar because they are categorized that way.

Categorization is one way of correlating concepts (and metaphor is another way). The ability to think of a manila envelope, a handmade ceramic vase, the range of things one can see, and a picture frame as types of containers involves construing them as belonging to the category CONTAINER. But a manila envelope can be construed as belonging to the category CONTAINER only because that category already exists, and CONTAINER can only be a category because various entities are already construed within it.

Categorization is not necessarily conceptualization because concepts are not formed based on similarities or correspondences. For the same reason, domains are not necessarily categories. However, as is often the case in cognitive linguistics, the terms often overlap and some domains might also be categories containing similar concepts.[15] In the case of CLIMBING as a concept within the domain MOUNTAIN, the relationship is not one of categorization: there is not a perceptual similarity between mountains and

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[14] Evans, *Cognitive Linguistics*, 267.

Michael Ramscar and Robert Port, "Categorization (Without Categories)," in *Cognitive Linguistics*, vol. 1, *Foundations of Language*, Ewa Dąbrowksa and Dagmar Divjak, eds. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2019), 87-91, raise some concerns about the treatment of categorization in cognitive linguistics, but ultimately their proposals seem to be in keeping with the broader currents of research into categories. For instance, they define a category as "a set of items with a common label" rather than in terms of similar features, but this definition is based on their previous discussion about the pragmatic nature of categories.

[15] Langacker, *Cognitive Grammar*, 17-18, makes a fairly strict distinction between categories and domains. Metaphor theorists typically hold that categorization is a hierarchical function of domains and their relationship to concepts. See Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*, 58-76, 91-114.

climbing. But MANILA ENVELOPE can be a concept within the category CONTAINER, which is also a fairly common domain in conceptual metaphors.

The coincidences of meaning between all these terms are the result of the usage-based nature of cognitive phenomena. Conceptualization, domain-formation, construal, and categorization are some of the ways the mind makes sense of its environment and generates meaning. Words activate and express these cognitive functions pragmatically.[16] The word *mountain* activates the concept MOUNTAIN and the knowledge associated with the concept, but MOUNTAIN can also be activated by the word *climbing*, or by *summit*, *Kilimanjaro*, *piton*, or *base camp*. The word *mountain* may also activate any of those terms as concepts themselves. KILIMANJARO may be construed as a concept in the category MOUNTAIN, and as a word it might activate that category as a domain. *Piton* and *base camp* would not cause the same activations, though they would be included as concepts within the domain MOUNTAIN. The exigencies of the ways cognitive and linguistic events and functions are instantiated in real-time use determine how these relationships play out.[17]

Linguistic Metaphor

As a cognitive linguistic endeavor, CMT attempts to "look inside the black box" to understand what sorts of mental functions and operations underlie language. This is not

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[16] For discussions of the relationship between actual discourse and cognitive linguistic theory, see Langacker, *Cognitive Grammar*, 457-499; Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 285-304; Speed, Vincent, and Vigliocco, "Representing Meaning," 221-244; Arie Verhagen, "Grammar and Cooperative Communication," in *Cognitive Linguistics*, vol. 1, *Foundations of Language*, Ewa Dąbrowksa and Dagmar Divjak, eds. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2019), 271-294.

[17] The terminology of "linguistic events" comes from Langacker, *Cognitive Grammar*, 457.

a total departure from traditional linguistics, which typically takes Ferdinand de Saussure's distinction between *la langue* (language itself) and *la parole* (language as put to use) as axiomatic. In both cognitive and traditional approaches, spoken language is taken as the surface expression of a much deeper set of phenomena.

According to cognitive linguistics, words both activate and express concepts and domains and the functions in which those are involved. The same is true of metaphor. Metaphorical linguistic expressions both activate and represent underlying conceptual metaphors. Sentences like *He blew his top, She's a little under the weather*, and *It's difficult to put into words* are the linguistic expressions of metaphors that occur pre-verbally.[18]

None of these linguistic expressions are in any way unusual. They do not strike the hearer/reader as especially poetic, literary, or unusual, and they may not even register as non-literal in normal conversation. The sentence *It's difficult to put into words* feels like a perfectly literal description of communication difficulties. Except that words are not actually containers into which meanings are put and so the expression is not literal.[19] It feels literal because it is a linguistic expression of a conceptual metaphor that construes language in terms of containers and their contents.[20]

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[18] Respectively: ANGER IS A HOT FLUID IN A CONTAINER, BAD IS DOWN, and LINGUISTIC EXPRESSIONS ARE CONTAINERS FOR MEANING.

"Pre-verbally" does not mean subconscious, as there is experimental evidence that metaphorical understanding occurs in real time. See note 8 above.

[19] Processes for identifying occurrences of metaphoric linguistic expressions can be found in Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 4-6; and Gibbs, "Metaphor," 201-204.

[20] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 29-32 discusses container metaphors in detail.

Conceptual Metaphor

Metaphor is the cognitive operation of understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain.[21] In a conceptual metaphor, a more abstract domain —the *target* domain—is mapped onto a more concrete domain—the *source* domain; that is, the more abstract domain is understood in terms of the more concrete domain.[22] *Understand* and *understanding* are roughly synonymous with *construe* and *construal*, and these will be used interchangeably when discussing metaphor.[23] The differential or asymmetry in the concreteness of domains in metaphor is crucial: the more a domain is directly linked to sensorimotor input at the physical level, the better it is understood because physical input is the first, fundamental layer of experience and cognition. By mapping a more immediately physical domain onto a less directly apprehended (and thus less well-understood) one, metaphor allows the creation, manipulation, and

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[21] Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 4; Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 4-6. The use of the phrase *conceptual domain* rather than simply *concept* or *domain* is discussed above. Hereafter, the term *metaphor* should be understood to mean *conceptual metaphor* specifically.

[22] Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 4, 17-31.

Langacker, *Cognitive Grammar*, 44-45, prefers the terms *basic* and *nonbasic*. A basic domain is not analyzable in terms of other domains. The domain SPACE, for instance, is nonbasic since it does not incorporate any other domains. On the other hand, the domain FULL is nonbasic since it incorporates such domains as CONTAINER, SPACE, and (contrastively) EMPTY. Basic domains, in Langacker's account, are not actually conceptualizations but "realms of experiential potential," which can be conceptualized into nonbasic domains. Lakoff and Turner, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 57-58, in keeping with the neural theory of metaphor, defines *concrete* in terms of direct sensorimotor input and *abstract* in terms of subjective experience. This dichotomy ultimately creates its own problems.

Instead of using terms like basic and nonbasic or including baggage specifically from neural metaphor theories, I have opted to retain the terms *target* and *source* and to define them constrastively. The main issue is the asymmetrical embodiment of the target and source, and so defining them as more or less concrete or abstract allows questions of what counts as a concrete or abstract concept to be bypassed. The domains LIFE and JOURNEY are arguably both abstract concepts since a JOURNEY is not a discrete sensorimotor experience but a succession of them construed as composing a specific domain. However, it is more concrete than LIFE, and this asymmetry is part of the basis for the metaphor LIFE (target) IS A JOURNEY (source).

[23] Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 7-10.

Note that *metaphor* and *construal* are not synonymous even though construal is a part of metaphor. Construing the concept CLIMBING within the domain MOUNTAIN is not a metaphorical operation. Construing significant, positive life experiences as reaching the top of a mountain is, however, a metaphorical operation with various metaphorical components such as LIFE IS A JOURNEY and GOOD IS UP.

communication of vast amounts of information and knowledge.

Metaphors may be classified according to their function. There are, broadly, three functional types of metaphor: ontological, orientational, and structural.[24] These are essentially heuristic categories not precise definitions, and actual metaphors often occupy more than one category.[25]

Ontological metaphors are exemplified by substance and container metaphors such as EVENTS ARE LOCATIONS or EMOTIONS ARE SUBSTANCES or VISUAL FIELDS ARE CONTAINERS.[26] As the name implies, these metaphors are used to shift the ontological status of a conceptual domain.[27] Generality is a key feature here: ontological metaphors do not entail a rich knowledge of either the source or target domain. The metaphor EMOTIONS ARE SUBSTANCES does not specify what that substance is, it only transfers the ontological status of SUBSTANCE onto the entity of EMOTION. For example, it is possible to speak of *my fear* or *his rage*, despite the fact that fear and rage are subjective experiences not physical objects.[28]

A related function of ontological metaphors is to allow the construction of structural metaphors and complex metaphor systems.[29] For example, once emotions have been granted the ontological status of substances, they can be conceptualized as specific substances via structural metaphors such as ANGER IS A HOT FLUID IN A CONTAINER,

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[24] Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 37; Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 14-21, 25-32.

[25] Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 37.

[26] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 30.

[27] Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 38; Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 25-29.

[28] This example comes from Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 39.

[29] Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 38-40; Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 25.

which entails a much richer knowledge of both domains. Because metaphor is an embodied phenomenon, the first step in creating abstract meaning is to convert more abstract domains into more concrete ones by shifting the ontological status of the abstract domain.

Ontological metaphors should not be confused with metonymy, which is a genuine substitution rather than a mapping. In metonymy, a constituent concept within a domain is substituted for the domain itself, or an entire domain may be substituted for a constituent concept. Thus, metonymy is a one-domain operation whereas metaphor involves two domains.[30] For example, in the sentence *I'm learning to play Rachmaninov*, RACHMANINOV is substituted for THE PIANO COMPOSITIONS OF RACHMANINOV or even RACHMANINOV'S *RHAPSODY ON A THEME OF PAGANINI*, which are construed within the domain SERGEI RACHMANINOV.

Orientational metaphors serve two primary functions. First, they ensure metaphorical coherence across multiple domains and within larger metaphor systems.[31] Second, they provide a means of conveying evaluative and epistemic information.[32] The metaphor GOOD IS UP not only allows for the metaphorical encoding of emotional reactions or moral determinations, but also helps guarantee that metaphors involving the

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[30] This is the definition defended in Köveces, *Metaphor*, 171-177; and Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 35-40, and I take it to be broadly correct. Antonio Barcelona, "Metonymy," in *Cognitive Linguistics*, vol. 1, *Foundations of Language*, Ewa Dąbrowksa and Dagmar Divjak, eds. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2019),167-174, discusses alternative understandings such as the proposal that metonymy is a domain-highlighting operation that alters the construal of an already-constructed domain by shifting the figure-ground relationship between the domain and a component concept of that domain. This seems to be a valid proposal, but it is a narrow specification of the broader definition in Kövecses and in Lakoff and Johnson rather than a competing explanation.

[31] Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 40; Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 14-21.

[32] Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 40.

domains *good* or *up* are coherent with one another. This metaphor works in concert with the metaphor BAD IS DOWN to ensure a consistent binary opposition which underlies other metaphors and provides consistency. The expressions *I'm on top of the world* and *He's feeling a little under the weather* are consistent with one another because of the underlying orientational structure of the metaphors they instantiate.

Orientational metaphors are perhaps the area in which embodiment is most obvious. Up and down are immediately available as sensory input through the inner ear and the muscular and visual feedback systems, while goodness and badness are so abstract as to be almost undefinable. But by mapping GOOD and BAD onto UP and DOWN, the abstract domains are re-construed in terms of a more immediate perceptual reality.

Structural metaphors are the most prominent type of metaphor. Most metaphors that are explicitly recognized as such are structural.[33] LIFE IS A JOURNEY is a structural metaphor because it explicitly encodes rich knowledge about the source domain.[34] A given feature of rich knowledge may or may not be rendered explicit in any given

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[33] In poetry, for instance, turns of phrase that immediately scan as metaphors are almost always structural, so structural metaphors are what most people think of when they think of metaphors. In Song of Songs, almost any time the lovers describe one another the description takes the form of a structural metaphor.

[34] Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 37.

When this knowledge is linguistically realized it is called *metaphorical entailment*. Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 130, gives the example of *she gave him a kiss*. Objects that are given can usually be kept, as in the expression *She gave him a headache and he still has it*, but the similar expression **She gave him a kiss and he still has it* might not scan properly. Superficially they are the same sentence with different direct objects, so why does the first scan while the second does not? The standard explanation lies in the level of rich knowledge entailed in these expressions. The sentence *She gave him a headache and he still has it* is an instantiation of the metaphor CAUSING A STATE IS GIVING AN OBJECT, while the phrase **She gave him a kiss and he still has it* is a dispreferred instance of CAUSING AN EVENT IS GIVING AN OBJECT. Inherent in the domain EVENT is the understanding that events are momentary rather than lasting, which is part of what distinguishes them from processes, which are temporally distributed. So the metaphor CAUSING AN EVENT IS GIVING AN OBJECT entails that the object given is not one that can be kept.

linguistic expression, but it is demonstrably active nonetheless.[35] Structural metaphors allow abstract concepts to be understood and interacted with.

LIFE IS A JOURNEY demonstrates how structural metaphors work to transfer organizational features and rich knowledge of source domains onto target domains. Some of the mappings between LIFE and JOURNEY in this metaphor include:

1. Birth >> the point of departure / the act of setting off
2. Death >> the destination / the act of arrival
3. Experiencing difficulties >> encountering obstacles
4. Major decisions and choices >> turns or forks in the road
5. Family, friends, etc. >> companions along the way

Not all of these mappings are activated in every single linguistic expression of LIFE IS A JOURNEY, but they are all connected as entailments of the single metaphor. For instance, *He got a head start* explicitly activates the mapping *birth >> the point of departure* / *the act of setting off*, while the others are latent. Nor is this list exhaustive of all mappings, because metaphors are an on-line process and so take place interactively.

Structural metaphors are constellations of other metaphors and their mappings and entailments. LIFE IS A JOURNEY involves the ontological metaphor TIME IS A STATIONARY MEDIUM THROUGH WHICH WE MOVE. First-person movement entails a front-back construal of time so that the passage of time is oriented metaphorically as THE FUTURE IS

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[35] Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 289-298; Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 87-96.

This is an example of the invariance principle, which governs the ways in which mappings occur. This principle holds that the mappings between the target and source domains must be coherent with the properties of the target domain. That is, the set of potential mappings from the source domain are limited by the entailments of the target domain. Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 131-132, gives the example of LIFE IS A JOURNEY, where the source domain JOURNEY allows backtracking, turning around, and going back to take another way, but the target domain LIFE entails unalterable chronological succession. Expressions such as *He turned back and took another path* are not generally understood as being metaphorical because this particular mapping is blocked. The construction of metaphors is also limited by the factor of sensory concreteness in the source domain, which is discussed below in the material about embodiment and neural theories of metaphor.

FORWARD and THE PAST IS BACKWARD. Expressions such as *We're ready to put all that behind us and face the future* demonstrate this orientation. LIFE IS A JOURNEY also serves as a basis for more specific structural metaphors like DEATH IS ARRIVAL (as in *He's gone home to God*) or ACCOMPLISHING A GOAL IS SURMOUNTING AN OBSTACLE (as in *She's overcome so much to be here today*).

Metaphor and the Creation of Meaning

Metaphors take complicated or ineffable realities and render them more easily understood by transferring the knowledge and properties of other, more concretely understood realties onto them. This transfer of understanding constitutes the actual creation of meaning and new knowledge.[36] In fact, it is likely that some things are never understood on their own terms, that is, without being metaphorically structured.

There is no inherent reason LIFE should be structured in terms of a journey. Life might just as well be understood in terms of a dance or a symphony. However, even in proposing the metaphor LIFE IS A DANCE, the fact that LIFE IS A JOURNEY represents understanding and not mere description affects the way in which DANCE would be construed. For example, there is nothing inherent in DANCE that entails a beginning and ending, but mappings such as *birth >> beginning to dance* easily present themselves. The

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[36] Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 79-86; Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We live By*, 115-125.
Specific epistemological questions about what exactly knowledge is in light of CMT are bracketed from this study, but they are discussed at length in Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 156-184. For now, it is sufficient to observe that metaphors create meaning on the basis of other meanings and that these meanings are by default true despite the fact that, in terms of formal semantics, they are often counterfactual. Since LIFE IS A JOURNEY is a conventional metaphor (meaning it is an organic part of the English language rather than a purposeful construction) it is by its very nature true, to the extent that it does in fact form the basis of comprehension and communication. Neural theories even claim that it is true because it represents neuronal activities in the brain (on which, see below).

directionality entailed by the domain JOURNEY is also likely to be mapped onto DANCE in such a metaphor, even though dancing often involves a lack of directionality.[37]

It appears that LIFE IS A JOURNEY actively structures the understanding of life to the extent that even alternative understandings of LIFE are tacitly structured in terms of JOURNEY.[38] This, despite the fact that life need not inherently be understood in terms of a journey. While it is possible to experience the entirety of a journey in a span of time conducive to conscious awareness of the entire thing as a discrete entity—such as running down the street to the post office—this is simply not possible with life, which remains ineffable apart from metaphorical understandings.[39]

Other examples of alternative knowledge systems created by alternative metaphors include the reversed (with respect to English) front-back temporal orientation of LIFE IS A JOURNEY in Aymara, and the Mandarin conceptualization of TIME along both the horizontal and vertical axes. In experiments where subjects were asked to arrange a series of events into chronological order, the group of native English speakers exclusively produced horizontal timelines, while the group of native Mandarin speakers produced

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[37] While dances do "begin" and "end" these are not inherent features of dancing, but are usually imported from the fact that pieces of music have beginnings and endings. It is entirely possible to conceive of an infinite dance, and such a conception would not require restructuring or re-construing the domain DANCE or its entailments.

[38] The perceived similarity between life and journey is created by the metaphor, *contra* traditional theories in which similarity is the basis for metaphor. In CMT, similarity is created, but metaphors arise from correlation or co-occurrence. See Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 147-155.

Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 5, performs a similar exercise to this example, converting the metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR to ARGUMENT IS DANCE.

[39] In the language of construal, running down the street to the post office is a figure against the ground of the domain LIFE. Since life is the ground of all other figures it remains ineffable in terms of itself. The metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY renders LIFE a figure—a discrete and therefore comprehensible entity—and thus allows it to be understood.

both horizontal and vertical timelines with earlier events at the top.[40] This accords with the metaphorical construal of TIME in those languages. In English, events can be in front of or behind other events, but not on top or below them as is the case in Mandarin metaphors. Even the advent of new forms of transportation technology changes the entailments of the JOURNEY domain and so opens new possibilities for metaphorical understanding and expressions.[41] The metaphor creates the meaning, not *vice versa*.

However, metaphors are not entirely arbitrary. Life might be understood metaphorically in terms of several other domains, but it is generally not understood in terms of any domain. It is hypothetically possible to speak of LIFE IS A DANCE, LIFE IS A WAR, LIFE IS A JOURNEY, LIFE IS A PIECE OF MUSIC, LIFE IS CONVERSATION, and so on, but metaphors like LIFE IS A NON-POROUS SURFACE or LIFE IS BEING STRUCK BY LIGHTNING are much less likely to occur, and if they were to be used in conversation the resulting sentences would be difficult to parse out.[42] Moreover, within any given metaphor, not every possible mapping actually occurs.[43] The fact that metaphors create knowledge

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[40] On Aymara, see Evans, *Cognitive Linguistics*, 119-120. I would argue that Biblical Hebrew operates in a similar way based on the meanings of √אחר and √טרם which seem to correlate futurity with "behind" and pastness with "in front." This makes sense on the basis that we have memory of the past and therefore can "see" it, whereas the future is "unseen" but "approaches" us like someone walking up from behind.

On Mandarin, see Evans, *Cognitive Linguistics*, 120-122; Gibbs, "Metaphor," 210; Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 42. Lera Boroditsky, "Does Language Shape Thought? Mandarin and English Speaker's Conceptions of Time," *Cognitive Psychology* 43 (2001), 1-22; and Dedre Gentner, Mutsumi Imai, and Lera Bodoritsky, "As Time Goes By: Evidence for Two Systems in Processing Space → Time Metaphors," *Language and Cognitive Processes* 17, no. 5 (2002), 537-565, provide experimental verification that time is understood in terms of spatial orientation and that this understanding is active in conversation.

[41] Tom Cochrane's song "Life is a Highway" is a good example of a modern elaboration of LIFE IS A JOURNEY.

[42] Note that these examples are not technically impossible, merely dispreferred.

[43] See note 34 above and 43 below.

without being arbitrary is explained by their basis in experience.[44]

Metaphor and Embodiment

Metaphor is inextricably linked to physical experience because it is grounded in direct sensorimotor input.[45] Metaphor thus occurs first and foremost at the level of the body. Conceptualization, construal, categorization, and metaphor are all ways of making sense of perceptual—that is, physically encountered—phenomena and so are grounded in those phenomena. In ontological metaphors, common source domains like SUBSTANCE and LOCATION derive from real-world experiences of things and places. Orientational domains like UP and DOWN, IN and OUT, LIGHT and DARK, HOT and COLD, are all the result of complex interactions between bodies and the world (including other bodies). To be human is to be a body and so to encounter the world through the body.

Cognitive linguistics typically employs the term *embodiment* specifically to indicate the fundamental inseparability of mind and body. This inseparability can be understood in various ways, from an eliminative monism to a highly sophisticated "cognitive sociolinguistics."[46] However, perhaps the most influential definition is that given by George Lakoff:

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[44] I find this to be a much more satisfactory explanation for metaphor selection than the invariance principle cited in note 34 above. It is also more consistent overall both with the claims of CMT regarding embodiment and metaphor creation and with the reality that unexpected or unconventional metaphors do occur in language use. The question is not whether a given metaphor is allowed or not (which is a very Chomskyan way of phrasing things) but how to account for the metaphors that do happen.

[45] Kövecses, *Metaphor*,77-105; Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 19-21, 56-86.

[46] Benjamin Bergen, "Embodiment," in *Cognitive Linguistics*, vol. 1, *Foundations of Language*, Ewa Dąbrowksa and Dagmar Divjak, eds. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2019), 13, identifies eight significantly attested understandings of embodiment with increasing specificity.

> Thought is embodied, that is, the structures used to put together our conceptual system grow out of bodily experience and and make sense in terms of it; moreover, the core of our conceptual systems is directly grounded in perception, body movement, and experience of a physical and social character.[47]

Similarly, Lakoff and Johnson write that "no metaphor can be comprehended or even adequately represented independently of its experiential basis."[48]

Metaphors both arise from the world and provide the means of comprehending it.[49] Like other cognitive operations such as conception and construal, metaphors are both mental artifacts stable enough to facilitate meaningful communication and on-line processes that take place in real time. Accumulated physical, social, and cultural experiences generate metaphorical understandings which then persist and form the basis for communication.[50] As mentioned above, some things simply cannot be understood on their own terms or comprehended directly and so they must be converted into comprehensible concepts for use in cognitive functioning and linguistic communication.

This process depends on the correlational and interactional properties of embodied reality. For example, the metaphor MORE IS UP is based on the correlation between the amount of a substance and the space that substance occupies, as in the case of pouring a liquid into a container, stacking books, or raking leaves into a pile.[51] In each

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[47] Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*, xiv.

[48] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 19.

[49] Kövecses, *Metaphor*, Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 77-86.

[50] Evans, *Cognitive Linguistics*, 201-206; Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 79-86, 215-229; Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We live By*, 61-68, 87-96; Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 128.

[51] Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 80.
Metaphor and inference are thus closely related, but instead of understanding metaphor as a kind of inference, it is preferable to understand inference as a component of metaphor. Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 66, uses the term *inference* in a manner roughly synonymous with the way *mapping* or *correspondence* have been used in this chapter.

of these examples, addition entails a change in vertical space and so the two are understood in terms of each other. Once this metaphor is established at the level of the body, it is used to understand other realities that are not so directly engaged, such as time or intensity. This process then expands outward into the sorts of complex metaphorical systems discussed above.

Neural theories of metaphor postulate that correlation and interaction form the basis of metaphor not only conceptually, but also neurologically. In brief: because neurons fire in response to stimuli and in so doing cause other neurons to fire, metaphor takes place when the neuronal networks for sensorimotor experience cause the neuronal networks for subjective experience to fire.[52] The correlation and co-occurrence of neuronal network activity happens because in infancy and childhood the distinction between sensorimotor input and subjective experience is not recognized. Thus, metaphors become engrained at the neurological level even after differentiation between the inner world of subjective experience and the outer world of perceptual input is made.[53]

The three-class analytic system used above is collapsed into a two-class system in neural theories. Rather than ontological, orientational, and structural metaphors, neural theories posit primary and complex metaphors. A primary metaphor is one in which the source domain is a direct sensorimotor input or experience, while a complex metaphor is

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[52] Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 45-59.

[53] Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 48-49.

a constellation of basic metaphors.[54] For instance, LIFE IS A JOURNEY is a complex metaphor depending on primary metaphors such as TIME IS MOTION and STATES OF BEING ARE LOCATIONS. Motion and locality both directly induce neurological responses and are caused by neurological activities and so they (and other neurobiological realities) form the basis for the understanding of higher order, abstract concepts such as LIFE.[55]

Metaphor is therefore not entirely arbitrary since it is based on and limited by one necessarily finite experience. On the other hand, it is not rigid or determinate but is an adaptive and plastic means of making sense of experience. Experience shapes the brain and body, and the brain and body structure the perception of experience.

However, embodiment raises its own sorts of problems. For instance, how is the correlation between the world "out there" and the concepts, domains, and metaphors "in here" to be understood? A common explanatory device is conditioning: repeated physical stimuli lead to the formation of cognitive features as responses. There can be little doubt that this is a component of how embodiment, the mind, and language are connected, but it is inadequate as the sole explanatory mechanism.[56] After all, the "sameness" of a single

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[54] Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 54-55.

This is a neurological inflection of an originally non-neurological theory of primary metaphor put forth by Joseph Grady in his 1997 dissertation. Grady's initial proposal was an attempt to explore metaphorical coherence and entailments in greater depth, to which end he posited that primary metaphors form the basis for compound metaphors. See Joseph Grady, "Foundations of Meaning: Primary Metaphors and Primary Scenes," PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley (1997).

[55] Even seemingly basic concepts like MEANING are metaphorically structured. MEANING, for instance, it almost always understood via conduit and container metaphors. Even the idea of metaphor itself is metaphorically structured.

[56] R. Harold Baayen and Michael Ramscar, "Abstraction, Storage, and Naive Discrimination Learning," in *Cognitive Linguistics*, vol. 1, *Foundations of Language* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2019), 126-135, discusses the complex role of conditioning in language learning. Ramscar's work in particular (see also the citation in note 5 below) is frequently based on computer models. These are reliable for exploring how theories would play out given certain inputs and operating conditions, but they are useless for causal investigations with the result that a lot of their speculations about how phenomena emerge are essentially the tautology that certain phenomena emerge from systems designed to cause them to emerge.

repeated stimulus across its repetitions is not actually a physical feature of that stimulus. Memory as a cognitive device is not adequate to account for the perception of identity across several occurrences of the same stimulus either, since remembering that the same thing occurred prior still assumes the ability to recognize the two different events as the same.[57]

Even neurological explanations founder for precisely the same reasons. The fact that a repeated stimulus generates the same neural response repeatedly does not mean that this repetition will be perceived as repetition. At a purely physical level devoid of interpretation, no event happens (or even could happen) more than once because there is no physical property of "sameness" shared between the events. A repeated stimulus-response pattern in the brain is not two of the same stimulus-response patterns, but two different physical events.[58]

Categorization and construal, the cognitive processes that render reality phenomenal, are often approached as cognitive, psychological, or neurological problems to be sussed out, mental features whose origin in brain activity must be discerned. The material aspects of these processes are fascinating, but often overlooked is the fairly

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[57] Ramscar and Port, "Categories," 93, argues that categories are not actually time-stable. Memory is not as reliable as our intuition tells us it is, largely because of the kinds of cognitive processes discussed in chapter 2 above. That domains interact, concepts can be construed variously, and contexts differ drastically from one linguistic event to another means that memory can easily be overridden or altered after the fact.

[58] Dagmar Divjak and Catherine L. Caldwell-Harris, "Frequency and Entrenchment," in *Cognitive Linguistics*, vol. 1, *Foundations of Language* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2019), 61-86, discusses cognitive linguistic perspectives on repetition (frequency) and the effects of repetition on the brain (entrenchment). The brain's capacity for such activity is simply assumed throughout the discussion and no causal system is sought. On some level this is not surprising for a volume of this nature and even a welcome reprieve from typical pontificating on the meaning of brain structures. On a different level this illustrates the point that certain mental phenomena such as categorization and recognition are prior to the brain itself.

startling reality that they take place at all.[59] After all, categories are not physical properties of entities or even physical entities themselves.[60] The note A-natural (440 Hz) does not possess the property of "A-natural-ness," nor does it fall into a physical category of "entities which are A-natural" or "entities which possess the physical property of A-natural-ness." The fact that air molecules vibrate 440 times per second in response to the physical impetus of a vibrating piano string vibrating at 440 Hz is a physical property, but it is not the note A-natural.

It is straightforward enough that repeated stimuli condition the brain to respond to, perceive, and conceive of same and similar occurrences or entities and that this perceived or functional sameness or similarity is the basis of categorization. The problem is that "same" and "similar" are both categories, just like "red," "hurtful," and "A-natural." The same issue arises with construal. The ability to recognize a repeated stimulus as the same event—as a single *repeated* stimulus—presupposes the concept of sameness in order to construe that particular stimulus as within a category.[61]

This does not mean that categories and construal do not arise from the encounter of the body with the world or that one must become a committed Platonist swimming in a sea of eidetic Forms. Categories are a primary form of making sense of the world, and

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[59] See especially Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 17-20, which gives the claim that "neural beings must categorize" as if it were simply the axiomatic claim that "neural beings do categorize." The modal *must* indicates a purposiveness and teleology that Lakoff and Johnson explicitly rule out.

[60] Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 23-26, make this point by using the example of color concepts which they claim are interactional phenomena co-created by the brain and the world. Why this claim should rule out the existence of transcendental structure manifest in reality—as they claim it does—is entirely beyond me.

[61] Eco, *Kant and the Platypus*, 100-106.

where else is the world to be encountered if not in the body?[62] Rather, the difficulty with reductive accounts of categorization is that categories are logically prior to themselves.

The inward-focused perceptual processes of taking in sensory data about the world are converted by the embodied mind into outward-focused intentionality.[63] This conversion is so striking as to be almost magical or miraculous. The gap (the synapse?) between the physical realities of neuroscience and the subjective realities of consciousness is qualitative rather than quantitative and so cannot be bridged by filling it with neurons and neurotransmitters.[64] It would be a mistake to claim that consciousness is properly a supernatural phenomenon, though, as if there is a cartesian soul or a fregean person merely inhabiting or manipulating the body in a mechanical sense.[65] Consciousness is not a ghost in the machine. Rather, consciousness is preternatural in the

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[62] Langacker, *Cognitive Grammar*, 28-29.

[63] Intentionality is the mind's capacity to be about something other than itself. David Bentley Hart, *The Experience of God: Being, Consciousness, Bliss* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), 191, calls it the mind's "aboutness." The major champion of this notion in modern philosophy, though he draws on Scholastic thought, is Franz Brentano, whose writing on the subject set the stage for Edmund Husserl's phenomenology. See Franz Brentano, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, Routledge Classics Edition (London: Routledge, 2014).

It is common to claim that intentionality is simply an illusion. Really the only response (aside from referencing Brentano's work) is that is it self-evidently not, and we should be grateful that it is real, since otherwise we would be entirely cut off from the world and from each other.

[64] Hart, *Experience of God*, 156-157. Hart here is arguing from the phenomenology of consciousness. The claim that the phenomenology is illusory is, as mentioned above, a useless claim. Equally problematic is the claim that, somehow, fundamentally discrete neurological processes coalesce into an emergent, unitary consciousness. As in the emergent unity of a mosaic or a pointillist painting, such a concept presumes a unitary consciousness to interpret it.

For instance, John Polkinghorne, *Science and the Trinity: The Christian Encounter with Reality* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 82-85, cites chaos theory as indicating that pattern emerges from non-pattern. However, there is a difference between patterns emerging from true chaos and the behavior of strange attractors in chaos theory. First, patterned-ness is a categorical designation and therefore a mental one. Second, chaos theory does not posit true or unlimited chaos (cf. Polkinghorne, *Science and the Trinity*, 78-80).

[65] In this regard, cognitive science has done theology a tremendous favor. Cf. Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 391-414, 440-468. Hart, *Experience of God*, 122-134, also takes aim at Fregean style analytic philosophy, specifically with regard to how Frege construes the nature of being vis-à-vis beings.

fullest sense of the word: it comes before nature, is prior to and informs physicality at a fundamental level.

Far from being reducible to one another, the mind and the body are so thoroughly intertwined as to be indistinguishable.[66] If anything, this is the proper philosophical implication of CMT and its fellow fields of cognitive studies.[67] Nor should this come as a particular surprise from the perspective of theology; neither does it pose a problem for an account of revelation.[68]

Conclusion: The World and the Mind

It is not uncommon to find arguments that because seemingly abstract concepts in philosophy, theology, and metaphysics are in fact extensions and elaborations of primary (that is, sensory-based) metaphors they must therefore be entirely reducible to physical forces at a neurological level. This is frequently understood to imply that consciousness is

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[66] Evans, *Cognitive Linguistics*, 56, writes that "The commonplace view assumes that our three-dimensional world of spatial experience is something objectively given, inherent as a feature of the world 'out there' waiting to be discovered. But on the contrary, our world of spatial experience is, in fact, constructed by the mind/brain, and is constrained by our species-specific embodiment." One wonders what it is about "our species-specific embodiment" that is constraining the shapes the mind can take if not the world out there impinging upon the body. Even if this pronouncement were the sort of thing Evans could know empirically, it would really only be another evidence that the mind and the body are indistinguishable but both very much real.

[67] Not, as Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 127-128, 555-557, has it, that the body exhausts the realities of the mind and so renders it essentially superfluous.

Lakoff and Johnson claim to be physicalists who believe that ultimately there is a physical basis for every observable cognitive phenomenon but also not eliminativists in that they believe that there are things besides physically observable reality. They give the example of phonemes as a linguistic concept as real but explicitly proscribe formal logic as having "no resources for characterizing the human concepts and human reason" of philosophy and metaphysics. Apparently one can have one's cake and eat it, too.

[68] Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 563, makes room for a "spirit" or "soul" that is fundamentally embodied, which they define more or less as dependent on the body, though they immediately deflect by claiming that the dominant religious traditions of the world do not claim that the soul is that sort of thing. Certainly Enlightenment-era deism made such a claim for the soul, but that hardly constitutes as majority consensus.

an illusion—merely a subjective epiphenomenon of evolutionarily advantageous processes —or that, if it is real, it does not provide genuine access to the world.[69] The real world is taken to entail the unreal mind; alternatively the real mind may be taken to entail the unreal world.[70]

Such claims are really neither here nor there. Neural theories of conceptual metaphor are not themselves descriptions of reality "out there," but cognitive-biological descriptions of the means and mechanisms by which the world "out there" is brought "in here" and rendered meaningful. CMT and cognitive linguistics have cleared the air of the dust left over from theories that failed to take the reality of matter itself seriously enough, and for this theology should be grateful. But CMT has not disproven mind (consciousness) or matter (the body and the world).

Lakoff and Johnson, for instance, claim that cognitive studies has shown that reason is not a transcendental property inherent in the nature of the universe or the

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[69] Douglas Hofstadter's work is perhaps the most transparently absurd example of this tendency. Douglas Hofstadter, *I am a Strange Loop* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 101-102, proposes the concept of a strange loop based on Kurt Gödel's incompleteness theorem: a "level-crossing feedback loop" or recursion such that any apparent progress or change results in no progress or change. The infamous question of "the chicken or the egg" is a good example. No solution is possible, but both solutions feel correct. Hofstadter's claim is that conscious is itself a strange loop—a neuro-symbolic illusion of apparently ever increasing abstraction that always turns out to be just the physical recursion of particle interactions in the brain. It seems unsportsmanlike to point out the obviously self-defeating nature of this claim. If abstraction or the mind are unreal, how is it that the unreal mind comes to recognize its own failure to exist?

[70] In fairness to Lakoff and Johnson, they make it clear that they are not physical eliminativists, and hold that the mind and non-physical things such as numbers do exist; see Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosopy in the Flesh*, 114-115. However, this seems to be a case of trying to have your cake and eat it, too. They are unable to present a case for why it should be simultaneously true that the brain is entirely reducible to neurochemistry and that the subjective experiences of neurochemistry are real and reliable. The assertion that these things are real because we need them to function in the world does not in itself hold any actual explanatory power, but is merely the reaffirmation that, even if subjective reality were unreal, we would never be able to tell the difference.

In fact, others in the field of cognitive studies dispute the eliminativist interpretations sampled here. Eco, *Kant and the Platypus*, for instance, challenges such interpretations throughout, especially by defending the reality of *qualia*.

function of a disembodied mind, but that it takes place in the body and its interactions.[71] They argue that the fact of embodied cognition means that it cannot be the case that both 1) there is a world independent of one's understanding of it, and 2) stable knowledge of that world is possible.[72] They explain that metaphysicians are doing no such thing as genuinely examining reality:

> Throughout history it has been virtually impossible for philosophers to do metaphysics without [unconscious] metaphors. For the most part, philosophers engaged in making metaphysical claims are choosing from the cognitive unconscious a set of exiting metaphors that have a consistent ontology. That is, using unconscious everyday metaphors, philosophers seek to make a noncontradictory choice of conceptual entities defined by those metaphors; they then take those entities to be real and systematically draw out the implications of that choice in an attempt to account for our experience using that metaphysics… Metaphysics in philosophy of course is supposed to characterize what is real—literally real. The irony is that such a conception of the real depends upon unconscious metaphors.[73]

Lakoff and Johnson display a disappointing lack of philosophical and metaphysical skill and creativity here. Far from presenting a compelling case for philosophical materialism, these claims are at best the result of latent deism or a cosmic docetic dualism where the divine has no use for the world. They tacitly assume the very thing they claim to dispense with: that "true" truth is separate from the body, that "real"

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[71] Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 4-5.

[72] Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 90.

[73] Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 14.

Of course this does not prevent them from making their own metaphysical claims, such as Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 4: "Reason is not 'universal' in the transcendent sense; that is, it is not part of the structure of the universe. It is universal, however, in that it is a capacity shared universally by all human beings. What allows it to be shared are the commonalities that exist in the ways that our minds are embodied." The trouble here is the issue of how non-reason gives rise to reason.

In a similar vein, Evans, *Cognitive Linguistics*, 56, writes: "The commonplace view assumes that our three-dimensional world of spatial experience is something objectively given, inherent as a feature of reality 'out there' waiting to be discovered. But on the contrary, our world of spatial experience is, in fact, constructed by the mind/brain, and it constrained by our species-specific embodiment." This is a fairly obvious *non sequitur*. The fact that reality is construed in the embodied mind has no bearing on reality itself, nor does the fact of construal necessarily indicate that perception cannot be genuine perception.

reality is somehow separate from the physical world. It is not that theology, philosophy, and metaphysics must give way before the inexorable progress of cognitive studies. Rather, cognitive studies can be reframed within a more robust metaphysics, one which recognizes that integration does not entail elimination.[74]

Frankly, a theologically hygienic response to claims that CMT entails metaphysical eliminativism seems to be "So what?" So what if the mind really is metaphors all the way down? So what if the mind is a product of the world? What else would it be a product of? Creation is made of physical matter; humans are made of matter. Where else but in the material body that encounters the physical world should knowledge of the world be expected to take place? Where else but in the body that encounters God should knowledge of God be expected to take place?

Webster, for one, would almost certainly describe theories of the disembodied mind as docetic: he describes theories of disembodied revelation and inspiration that way

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[74] For accounts of metaphor (including embodiment) and its relation to reality in contemporary theology, see, *inter alia*, David Bentley Hart, *Beauty of the Infinite*, 125-151; B. H. McLean, *Biblical Interpretation and Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Sallie McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993); Sallie McFague, *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1982); Sallie McFague, *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1987); Janet Martin Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985); Janet Martin Soskice, *The Kindness of God: Metaphor, Gender and Religious Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Mary Gerhart and Allan Russell, *Metaphoric Process: The Creation of Scientific and Religious Understanding* (Fort Worth, TX: TCU Press, 1984); George P. Schner, "Metaphors for Theology," in *Theology after Liberalism*, ed. John Webster and George P. Schner (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 3-51; Richard Swinburne, *Revelation: From Metaphor to Analogy*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Carl G. Vaught, *Metaphor, Analogy, and the Place of Places: Where Religion and Philosophy Meet* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2004); Graham Ward, *Barth, Derrida, and the Language of Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Rowan Williams, *The Edge of Words: God and the Habits of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); and Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim that God Speaks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), esp. 189-201.

None of these explicitly deals with CMT, and several are attempts to defend traditional understandings of meaning and truth. However, they demonstrate that theologians are not unaware of the challenges posed by metaphor, and they provide a wide range of possible response to those challenges. McFague's *Body of God* and William's *Edge of Words* are particularly recommended.

on several occasions.[75] God does not simply inject information about Godself into a disembodied human spirit; divine will and action do not override or cancel human will and action. God's interaction with creaturely realities makes creaturely realities more creaturely, not less.

CMT shows that the world and the body work in concert to produce meaning. The body is the place where meaning happens because the body is the place where the world becomes the mind. The mind does not encounter God at a third, neutral location but in the form of the body. This does not diminish the reality of God or of the mind and body, nor does it conflate the embodied mind into God, but relocates them properly with respect to one another. The challenge is, in the next chapter, to articulate how God and the world are related—how the world can be sufficiently "God-shaped" that metaphors can be revelatory without reducing God to the world itself or *vice versa* and how divine action relates to creaturely action.

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[75] Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 20. See also, Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 12-19; Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 26-30; Webster, *Word and Church*, 71-76.

Chapter Three
Analogia Entis

The previous two chapters have provided a Websterian framework for locating and understanding Scripture as a theological reality and a cognitive linguistic framework for locating and approaching Scripture as a textual entity. From Webster come the basic affirmations that Scripture is a creaturely reality sanctified in the form of textual inspiration by divine action to be a means of God's self-revelation. Webster sets aside a space for human textual and cognitive agency, but does not fill it in. Conceptual Metaphor Theory provides an account of human textual agency that can begin to fill that space by demonstrating that language—in particular abstract content—largely arises from sensorimotor perceptions and experiences of the world which are configured for communication and meaning-making by metaphorical operations. The theological issue at hand then is the question of how revelation is involved in this seemingly bottom-up process of linguistic realization.

The answer to this question is that the process is not in fact bottom-up in the sense of a cumulative succession or gradation of ever-decreasing intervals filled in by granular content, as in the case of sense perceptions somehow converted into meaning by "promotion" to abstract status via metaphor. The process is bottom-up in the sense of water welling up from a spring. Rather than challenging the claim that language arises from sense perceptions, a robust metaphysical account of matter, bodies, and sense perceptions will more fully ground language and revelation in bodies by properly locating

bodies with respect to God.[1] Specifically, bodies are located on the opposite side of an infinite qualitative gulf from God—the gulf of non-being from being, creature from creator, immanent from transcendent.

God and the World: The Problem of Being

Existence requires explanation.[2] Finite being is, by definition, becoming—the constant interplay of unrealized essence and instantiated existence, potentiality and actuality, "what one is" and "that one is."[3] The problem is that even an infinite accumulation of flux cannot ground its own existence. The distance between the finite and the infinite is not one of quantity but of quality, of Being-itself. Because an infinite regress of finite causes shunting finite potentiality into finite actuality is logically

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[1] Cf. the comments in Michael Hanby, "Creation as Aesthetic Analogy," in *The Analogy of Being: Invention of the Antichrist or the Wisdom of God?*, ed. Thomas Joseph White (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 363, that the *analogia entis* "supplies what is finally the only adequately non-reductive account of the world as *world*" (italics original). Hanby, however, is much more keen in the rest of his essay to subordinate natural sciences to the precepts of the "divine science"—or at least to bring them more directly under the conceptual tutelage of theology—than I am.

[2] Umberto Eco, *Kant and the Platypus*, 17, remarks "Why is there something rather than nothing? *Because there is*. This is an answer to be taken with the maximum seriousness; it is not a bon mot. The very fact that we can pose the question…means that the condition of every question is that being exists," and later, on p. 19, "There is no need to wonder why there is being; it is a luminous evidence…Being is its own fundamental principle." He then goes on to locate the question of God as logically secondary to the question of being. The impulse to divide the question of being and the question of God into separate questions is natural enough, except that they are the same question.

Erich Przywara, *Analogia Entis: Metaphysics: Original Structure and Universal Rhythm*, ed. John R. Betz and David Bentley Hart (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 119-124 frames this issue in terms of the question of "meta-noetics" vs. "meta-ontics." Ultimately he concludes that the bifurcation of the noetic from the ontic is artificial and so the "meta" of each cannot be genuinely bifurcated. To begin from the meta-noetic is to tacitly assume the meta-ontic since the "act" in the act of knowledge is convertible with being; to begin from the meta-ontic assumes the meta-noetic, since the ontic is perceived by the noetic and is its precondition. So the questions of meta-noetics and meta-ontics, or of *a priori* and *a posteriori* metaphysics (the metaphysics of essence and existence respectively) are in fact a single question which may be approached from various angles, but the question remains singular.

[3] Hart, *Experience of God*, 92. Hart is recognized as one of the preeminent interpreters and defenders of Przywara's *analogia entis* and so he, along with John Betz, will often be cited alongside Przywara below, although the focus is on the latter's articulation of his own metaphysics in his *magnum opus*.

equivalent to nothingness, finite, contingent beings depend for their existence on an infinite source of being that is not susceptible to becoming, in which (or whom) essence and existence are identical and there is no surplus of potentiality in excess of actuality. Such a "being" is beyond being-ness and beings and therefore is the ground of all beings.[4]

The problem of being is thus the problem of the relation of God to the world. God must, of necessity, be transcendent of the world, otherwise God would be susceptible to becoming, thus finite, and thus not the infinite ground and source of all being. A God who is the product of the world is simply another being among beings and therefore just as much in want of an explanation. A God who determines Godself in or through the world is a God in whom essence and existence are not convertible; such a God is finite and so, once again, lacks not only explanatory power but also the power to create and sustain finite realities, which at this point includes Godself.[5]

However, the question poses itself: if God is utterly transcendent of the world, how can God create the world? More to the point, how could God act in the world? Most pressing of all, how could God become incarnate in Jesus Christ? A transcendent God is surely a God impotent to act transitively and thus to create, and any God not transcendent is impotent even to exist. So it seems that, by a certain logic, the world cannot exist

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[4] Hart, *Experience of God*, 100-102.

[5] Robert Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 64, poses the question of why an exhaustive account of the historical economy of divine presence in creation should not be conceived of as an ontological perfection without need for an appeal to an "other" economy of transcendence. Why, that is, should God not *will* or *choose* to determine Godself in creation. Webster, "Perfection and Participation," 385, dispenses with this objection handily: "It is precisely because God is not *liable* to historical contingency—because he has life in and of himself apart from creatures and time—that his commitment in a history can be an ontological perfection." In short, if God determined Godself in history, God would be unable to determine Godself in history.

because of the nature and prior conditions required of its own existence. The logic comes full circle: the problem of the relation between God and the world is the problem of being, and *vice versa.*

The *Analogia Entis*

The logic of the preceding section is self-evidently false. Less self-evident is why, because the reason why is in fact prior to any of the premises of that logic. The logic above collapses the ontological and the ontic into one another and so artificially elides the infinite distance between God and the world. In the first case, that of a transcendent God impotent to relate to God's own creation, this elision is one of negation, wherein Being is predicated of God and the world equivocally.[6] In this scenario, one might say that both God and Christian charity are good, but the word *good* could not mean the same thing in both cases. It would be like saying that God is good and Christian charity is a triangle. The second case is an elision by identity: Being is predicated univocally.[7] To say that God is good and that Christian charity is good means to say that they are precisely the same with regard to goodness as a property. This eliminates any meaningful difference between God and the world by subordinating them both to the property of goodness. There is, however, another option, the only viable option, as it turns out. Not only is the world related to God analogously, Being is itself analogous between the infinite and the finite.[8]

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[6] Hart, "Destiny of Christian Metaphysics," 396; Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 199-201.

[7] Hart, "Destiny of Christian Metaphysics," 396; Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 201-203.

[8] Hart, "Destiny of Christian Metaphysics," 397; Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 234-237; Webster, "Perfection and Participation," 394.

The theologian associated with the transformation of analogy from a somewhat minor formalism of theological language to the principle of metaphysics itself is the Jesuit priest Erich Przywara.[9] Przywara's account of the analogy of being is grounded in two principles, one from Aristotle and one from the Fourth Lateran Council.[10] In a sense, Aristotle's principle of non-contradiction is the philosophical problem of the *analogia entis*, while Lateran IV's rebuke of Joachim de Fiore is the theological impetus for it.

The principle of non-contradiction establishes the necessity of analogy itself. Aristotle writes that "just as the same attribute cannot simultaneously be affirmed and denied of the same subject, neither can one simultaneously take something to be and not to be."[11] In a relationship of identity (what Przywara calls the λογίζεσθαι or "pure logic"), one of the subjects is reduced to the other or both to a third thing and so one or both subjects are claimed both to exist and not to exist.[12] The predication of the same attribute of two subjects is notated as "what is (valid) is (valid)" and the second *is* absorbs the first.[13] Relationships of contradiction (which Przywara calls the διαλογίζεσθαι or "pure

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[9] Unfortunately, Przywara's work is often framed in terms of Barth's rejection of it, since Barth's reputation far exceeds Przywara's and Barth's rhetoric is significantly more confrontational. John Betz, "After Barth: A New Introduction to Erich Przywara's *Analogia Entis*," in *The Analogy of Being: Invention of the Antichrist or the Wisdom of God?*, ed. Thomas Joseph White (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 38-44, attempts to remedy this imbalance by providing a brief overview of Przywara's life and works and standing among his peers.

Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation*, trans. Edward T. Oakes (San Fransisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1992), is the first of many claims that Barth had rejected Przywara's articulation of the *analogia entis* because he had misunderstood it. However, Keith L. Johnson, *Karl Barth and the* Analogia Entis, T & T Clark Studies in Systematic Theology (London: T & T Clark, 2010), challenges this narrative and argues that Barth in fact understood it perfectly well.

[10] Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 198-199, 353-362.

[11] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 4.3.1005b,19-21, 11.5.1061b,36-1062a,20, esp. 1062b, 1-2.

[12] Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 199.

[13] Ibid. This notation is designed to show the fundamental conflation of the ontic "is" and the noetic "valid."

dialectic") are in fact also relationships of identity: negating both terms of a proportion as contradictory assumes the univocity of being between them and therefore also violates the principle that something cannot be taken both to be and not to be.[14] This may take the form of "what is (valid) is not (valid)," where both terms are again related by a single *is* which subsumes them both under the "category" of non-being. Pure dialectic thus claims that existence is non-existence and so violates the principle of non-contradiction.

Analogy (ἀναλογίζεσθαι), by contrast preserves both halves of the principle of non-contradiction. It does not collapse identities into one another, nor does it collapse all being into negation.[15] There are, broadly, two types of analogy. First, the *analogia attibutionis*, in which two things are related to one another by a third thing.[16] Second, the *analogia proportionalis*, in which two proportions are related to one another.[17] Aquinas gives the example of the ways in which the word "healthy" is used of a person, a medicine, and urine as a demonstration of an *analogia attributionis*. Healthy medicine and healthy urine are only "healthy" because they are both in relation to the person, as a cause and a symptom of their health respectively, and so also to one another. On the other hand, an *analogia proportionalis* can be seen in the calmness of the ocean and the stillness of the air. This might be notated as calmness : the ocean :: stillness : the air. In

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[14] Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 201-202.

[15] Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 203-206.

[16] Betz, "After Barth," 47; Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 233.

[17] Betz, "After Barth," 48; Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 234-235; William M. Wright IV and Francis Martin, *Encountering the Living God in Scripture: Theological and Philosophical Principles for Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), 140.

this form there is no *tertium quid*; nothing mediates the relation between the ocean and the air and their calmness and stillness.[18]

Przywara inflects this principle of analogy through Lateran IV's theological dictum that any similarity between God and creatures is always already an even greater difference so that it may be notated as "what is (valid) is not not (valid)."[19] Thus the two terms of the analogy are not subsumed into a third term, an even greater identity encompassing and thus negating both. Neither are they both negated by an even greater negation which is really already an identity. Instead, the two terms are located in the "suspended middle," neither identified nor negated but located "in and beyond" each other.[20] The relation between God and the world must be—could only ever be—one of analogy. That analogy must take place prior to being-as-existence.

The *analogia entis* is an *analogia proportionalis* consisting of two *analogiae attributionis* because "God is not a measure proportionate to what is measured."[21] Initially analogy might take a form such as "God's goodness is to God as creaturely goodness is to creatures" (goodness : God :: goodness : creatures). However, this analogy is actually an *analogia attributionis* disguised as an *analogia proportionalis* because

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[18] Both of these examples come from Betz, "After Barth," 47, following Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, trans. John Patrick Rowan (Notre Dame, IA: Dumb Ox Books, 1995), 317.

[19] Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 231-237.
The Latin text of Lateran IV here reads: "inter creatorem et creaturam non potest similitudo notari, quin inter eos maior sit dissimilitudo notanda." The Derridean phrase *always already* nicely captures the sense of the Latin *quin*. See Heinrich Denzinger and Adolf Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum Definitionum et Declarationum de Rebus Fidel et Morum*, 33rd edition (Barcinone: Herder, 1965), 262, §806.

[20] Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 209.

[21] Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 219, following Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1, q. 13, a.5-13: "Deus non est mensura proportionata mensuratis." Cf. Wright and Martin, *Encountering the Living God*, 140.

goodness is the shared third term between God and creatures. The principle of non-contradiction and its analogical implications are insufficient to account for the God-world relation unless they are inflected not only as an *analogia* but as an *analogia* ***entis*** wherein Being-as-such is only analogous between God and creatures.[22] The *is* in "God's goodness is" is not the same as the *is* in "creaturely goodness is to creatures," and so the *as* of the analogy is distrupted. Thus, the *analogia attributionis* (goodness : God :: goodness : creatures) is overcome by the *analogia proportionalis*.[23] The *is* in "God's goodness is to God" becomes "not not" in the other half of the analogy. God's goodness is to God as creaturely goodness is not not to creatures. Moreover, God is to God-as-being as creatures are not not to creatures-as-beings.

This is all somewhat esoteric (especially with all the double negatives), but the implications are fairly easy to lay out. To say that God is cannot be the same as to say that a creature is because God "is" Being-as-such. Neither can it be the same to say that God is good and that a creature is good because God is goodness-as-such (or any of the transcendentals "as such"). God transcends all categories, including the categories of "being" and "not being."[24] The question *Does God exist?* is invalid, not simply in light of Kant's critique that "existence" is not a property, but because God is prior to even the possibility of existence and non-existence.

The infinite gulf between God and creatures is not overcome in the suspended middle of analogy but neither can it overcome analogy itself. It can only be "spanned," as

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[22] Hart, "Destiny of Christian Metaphysics," 397; Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 236.

[23] Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 235.

[24] Hart, *Experience of God*, 107-108; Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 260-270.

it were, by the divine gift of participation in Godself.[25] God's act of creation, therefore, must not be a one-off or temporal act. Creation is the ceaseless gift of being to creatures. Every instant is "the beginning," and creatures are called forth *ex nihilo* from "non-being" toward the horizon of God's Being-as-such at every instant.[26]

But every instance of coming-to-be is also already an instance of coming-not-to be, since becoming is the proper term of creaturely being. In God, essence and existence are synonyms; act and potency are convertible in God. In creatures essence and existence are not coterminous (creaturely acts instantiate fragments of creaturely potency), but they are co-terminal, arising from and so eventuating in the divine existence-as-essence.[27] God's existence-as-essence is therefore "in-and-beyond" creaturely essence and existence.[28] God determines the world, but the world does not determine God; neither does God determine Godself in determining the world.

The *analogia entis* is therefore not the name of a static principle, heuristic model, or explanatory scheme, but a description of reality; it is the reality of metaphysics-as-such.[29] Creation's being is the rhythmic interplay of divine διάστολη and σύστολη, (Latin: *exitus* and *reditus*)—an eternal oscillation between identity and negation, essence and existence, being and becoming, transcendence and immanence.[30] More properly,

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[25] Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 215-219, 234-236.

[26] Cf. Janet Martin Soskice, "Why *Creatio ex Nihilo* for Theology Today?" in *Creation* ex Nihilo: *Origins, Development, and Contemporary Challenges*, ed. Gary A. Anderson and Markus Bockmuehl (Notre Dame, IA: University of Notre Dame Press, 2018.), 38.

[27] Hart*, Experience of God*, 132-135; Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 208-214, 219-231, 340.

[28] Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 157-160

[29] Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 307. Cf. Johnson, *Karl Barth and the* Analogia Entis, 141-142.

[30] Hart, "Destiny of Christian Metaphysics," 399-401; Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 206-216.

creation's being is identity in-and-beyond negation, essence-in-and-beyond existence, being in-and-beyond becoming, and transcendence in-and-beyond immanence. At each moment God donates being to creatures and at that same moment being returns to God, finding its proper end and home in the infinite horizon of the divine in-and-beyond itself.

John Webster on the *Analogia Entis*

Since this project takes place within the theological framework for revelation and Scripture set out by John Webster, and since Webster was a Reformed Anglican, the appeal to the *analogia entis* to integrate cognitive science and his bibliology needs some justification. Fortunately, Webster explicitly addressed precisely this issue. Despite beginning his career as a fairly devoted Barthian, Webster's later forays into patristic and Scholastic theology convinced him that Barth's rejection of the *analogia entis* was at least somewhat mistaken, and they gave him the means to construct an account of the analogy of being that is recognizably Reformed without disloyalty to the sources on which he draws.[31]

In typical Websterian fashion, he begins from doxology: "The creature's increase neither increases or decreases God, because God's perfect bliss blesses; it is his nature to be ever more fruitful, and so he is Creator of heaven and earth and redeemer of the children of Adam."[32] For Webster, the *analogia entis* begins not with the question of

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[31] Webster, "Perfection and Participation," 394. Cf. East, "John Wesbter,"

[32] Webster, "Perfection and Participation," 394. Cf. Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 369-370.

being, but with the question "Who is this God?"[33] The immediate, doxological response is that this God is perfect, self-sufficient plenitude in the triune modifications of Father, Son, and Spirit.[34] Divine self-sufficiency is, in more metaphysical terms, the perfect coincidence of essence and existence in God. It is not that God is the ground of God's own being; God is Being-itself.[35]

From this unsurprising beginning, Webster breaks from Przywara's account in one significant (but also unsurprising) way. Whereas Przywara defines the *analogia entis* as fundamentally an *analogia negativa*, Webster insists that God's perfection is a "positive, material concept;" rather than indicating what may not be said about God, Webster's analogy indicates what may be said of God.[36] Since the *analogia entis* is primarily doxological rather than metaphysical for Webster, it is the principle that God's perfection, transcendence, aseity, omnipotence, omni-causality, and omni-benevolence can be affirmed assuredly. It is the principle that God vouchsafes Godself to God's creatures.

However, this does not mean that Webster has placed God within the grasp of human reason in a sort of natural theology because he has already framed the relation of God to the world in terms of divine freedom. God's transcendence is God's infinite plentitude is God's aseity, which in Webster's thought is simply the formal principle of

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[33] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 13.

[34] Webster, "Perfection and Plenitude," 380-381.

[35] Webster, "Perfection and Participation," 379.

[36] Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 231-237. Webster, "Perfection and Participation," 381. For Przywara, the analogy of being is not solely negative, but firstly and mostly negative because it is an *analogia proportionalis* across an infinite qualitative span. He writes, "To be sure, there is such a thing as a positive statement concerning God, but it is merely the basis of a negative statement concerning his absolute otherness." Webster is much more willing to allow genuine positive statements in themselves.

God's infinite freedom.[37] So God relates to the world not of necessity, because of some inherent property of God's nature, but on purpose.[38]

Webster's doctrine of divine perfection (transcendence, self-sufficiency, freedom) and his doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* are reciprocal and closely connected to his anthropology. The doctrine of divine transcendence might be misunderstood as debasing creatures on the basis that "a being so radically constituted by another as to be nothing apart from that other is a being evacuated of intrinsic worth."[39] On the contrary, since under the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* and within the suspended middle of the *analogia entis*, creaturely being is infinitely a gift, the creature who receives this gift is thoroughly dignified.[40]

The *Analogia Entis*, Revelation, and Metaphor

The *analogia entis* is the answer to the supposed problem posed by CMT's account of language as arising from the body. Simply put, even the body is not reducible to the body. Even the body is already created in the form of the *analogia entis* and so constantly a gift to itself from God. The *analogia entis* secures the reality of divine

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[37] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 13-14, 23; Webster, "Perfection and Participation," 380-382.

[38] "On purpose" is not to say that God decides deliberatively between creating and not creating, but—in keeping with Przywara's account—that God is fully Godself prior to and regardless of the act of creation. Webster, "Perfection and Participation," 386, 391-393, lays out Webster's understanding of God's "will" not as a gnomic or deliberative will but as the intentionality, the personal inflection of directionality. God's actions are free and so not undertaken by compulsion but they are also not haphazard since essence and existence are coterminous in God. Webster writes, "[God's will] is fathomless generosity…it is personal determination, undeflectable goodness: this will be!"

[39] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 100.

[40] Webster, *God Without Measure II*, 29-47.

revelation, paradoxically, by fixing the body at infinite remove from God and therefore as as the place where God is most immanently to be found.

The *analogia entis* is often described as eliding the distinction between God and creation and demoting God to the status of a being among beings who can be apprehended and comprehended by humans. It seems likely that this is because what the word *analogy* typically brings to mind is Aquinas's reasoning about the possibility of theological language without his attendant reasoning in terms of metaphysics. In brief, if there is perfect correspondence between human predicates and divine reality, God is not God, but merely a being among beings; if, however, there is no correspondence at all between predicates, then divine revelation itself becomes impossible and we are cut off from the source of all being. The analogical turn in a third direction—toward neither univocity nor equivocity—places speech about God on a valid footing.[41] Thus, God is accessible to human perception and comprehension in the structure of reality and so revelation is unnecessary or perhaps an addendum *ex post facto*.

Or so the story often goes. In fact the *analogia entis*, far from placing God within the creature's grasp, places the creature within God's grasp, and this is the form of revelation.[42] The principle of the *maior dissimilitudo* in-and-beyond the *tanta similitudo* derived from Lateran IV vouchsafes the ultimate mystery, ineffability, otherness, and groundlessness of God which are also the ultimate immanence of God to the creature.

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[41] This summary comes from Wright and Martin, *Encountering the Living God*, 138-140. Wright and Martin do not neglect to address Aquinas's metaphysical considerations of analogy, but they work out his metaphysics largely in terms of his linguistics rather than forthrightly, which is a significant weakness.

[42] Hart, *Beauty of the Infinite*, 314-318. Hart here defends the revelatory function of language on the basis of analogy, but in a very different way from what this thesis undertakes. He works out the logic of creation as being "spoken" by God and the location of humans as both the spoken and in some sense the spoken to.

Because God is utterly, definitively transcendent of the world and is therefore not determined by it or through it, divine revelation is both fully divine and fully revelation—divine in the sense that God is the content of revelation and revelation in the sense that God is the agent of revelation. That which is revelation is revelation through and through. God's "active self-presence" is uncorrupted and undiluted in the medium of the world and as such is ultimately trustworthy.[43] The *analogia entis* secures the universal availability of revelation, the capacity to be revealed to because one is, in a sense, already the location of revelation.

Webster is adamant that revelation (and sanctification and inspiration) does not take place via the demolition or cancellation of human agency.[44] This is so because agency and causality are themselves analogous between God and creatures. God, in causing creation to subsist is not forced to predetermine every event within that creation because divine causation is not a mechanistic sort of initial impulse setting a chain of events in motion, but the free gift of being—and thus agency—to creatures *ex nihilo* at every instant.[45] Creaturely agency is free because God's agency is free. God's freedom is the freedom to create free creatures.[46]

The mutual, though analogous, freedom of God and creatures is the basis for revelation and sanctification. Divine causation is the creation of finite beings for purposes

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[43] Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 14.

[44] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 97, 111-113.

[45] Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 228-231; Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 92.

[46] Hart, *Experience of God*, 106-107; Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 220; Webster, *Confessing God*, 221-226. Cf. William J. Abraham, *Divine Agency and Divine Action*, vol. 3, *Systematic Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 160-166.

and creaturely agency is the capacity to accomplish those purposes. This is not to say that God must accomplish God's ends through creatures but that, because the immanent and transitive acts of God are indivisible from one another, all creaturely agency is properly agency toward God's ends and those ends are revelatory, having communion with God as their ultimate horizon.[47]

The next chapter will expand on the implications of this material, but for now the point is that matter, far from being an inert substance, is already a purposive entity, a process as much as a thing—perhaps even more so at the quantum level—that participates in the rhythm of analogical ebb and flow just as much as any other facet of existence.[48] This is not to say that matter is itself conscious, only that mind and matter are suited to one another as constituents of revelation. Because God and the world are related analogically, matter cannot be other than a sanctified reality and so cannot be other than revelatory; the same is true of the mind. The mind cannot be a product of mere nature, because there is no such thing as mere nature. If the mind is fundamentally embodied, so much the better, since both mind and body are already inextricably involved in an economy of transcendence. The mind cannot be reduced to the body and thus eliminated because even the body cannot be reduced to the body.

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[47] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 117-119; Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 70; Webster, "Perfection and Participation," 390-394.

[48] John Polkinghorne, for instance, commonly appeals to the role of quantum information. See Polkinghorne, *Science and the Trinity*, 82-85.

Chapter Four
The Revelatory Body

This chapter will examine the embodied modalities of revelation in light of the foregoing material and will attempt to describe how divine and human agency meet in physical and textual environments.[1] Previous chapters have established a dogmatic framework for conceptualizing revelation (chapter 1), demonstrated the nature of embodied human agency in language and texts (chapter 2), and examined the nature of divine agency in and to the world (chapter 3). This chapter will show how these converge on the space that is the human body and its encounter with the world and God.

The preceding chapters have thus been the prologue to the following observations: 1) the Bible is a creaturely reality within the domain of the Word of God that participates in the communion-establishing economy of divine self-revelation by virtue of being sanctified by the Holy Spirit; 2) human language is inextricable from individual, physical human bodies in their various arrangements—in fact human language and cognition emerge from the body, as demonstrated by conceptual metaphors; 3) in accordance with what is generally called the *analogia entis*, the perfection and transcendence of the triune God means that, as a creaturely reality, the body is a primary, fitting, and trustworthy locus of revelation, sanctification, inspiration, and illumination.

Divine revelation does not trickle down into or drip off the pages of the Bible, but wells up through all of creation where humans-as-bodies, sanctified by the Holy Spirit,

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[1] This phrase is taken from the title of Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Revelatory Body: Theology as Inductive Art* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015).

encounter it and translate it into language. This translation is particularly evident in the process of metaphor, wherein revelation as apprehended by the body is mapped fairly directly onto language. Metaphor in the Bible and in theology is thus not a surplus, distortion, epiphenomenon, or any other sort of secondary defect impinging upon a more "real" or more "true" *kerygma* of revelation. On the contrary, metaphor is one linguistic transcription of the embodied human encounter with God which God directs purposefully toward establishing fellowship between God and creatures.[2]

But the creaturely self is never just the self. The question then is what this disjuncture from the self looks like. The answer has been given already in the form of the *analogia entis*: the self is always already the movement away from the self in the act of finite becoming which is directed toward and impelled by the utterly gratuitous impartation of being to beings by the Triune God who is the infinite source of Being-itself. So the question of the mind and the self's reflective disjuncture becomes the question of how the *analogia entis* is deployed in the form of the body.

This chapter will examine the nature of human agency and perception with respect to Holy Scripture. In some sense, this chapter is approaching the same problems as Webster from the opposite direction. It will depart from Webster's method in that he is

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[2] Since this chapter represents the attempt to move from the theoretical to the concrete, it will draw on resources from queer theologies, particularly the forthrightly (sometimes graphically or uncomfortably) bodily metaphors it often deploys. The use of queer theology and its embrace of bodily discourses is also motivated by the nature of the case study in chapter 5, which concerns gendered and sexed metaphors for God in Hebrew poetry. As chapter 2 established, this is not simply waxing poetic, but one way of translating embodied realities into cognitive content and language. Queer theological metaphors of the sexed body are not the only way to do this, and this chapter will endeavor to asexualize them, but they are constructed intentionally for the purpose of doing theology in the body and so are especially well-suited as starting points for the aims of this chapter. In so deploying sexual and anatomical metaphors, queer theology—and by extension this thesis—is continuing a thoroughly biblical tradition seen in the prophets, the poets, the book of Ruth, and especially in Song of Songs. Cf. David M. Carr, *The Erotic Word: Sexuality, Spirituality, and the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 10.

unconcerned with anthropology or linguistics on their own terms, but it is not a total departure from his theological framework of revelation, sanctification, inspiration, and illumination. These terms will be reconfigured in terms of a theology of the body as a locus of analogical perception.

At a Distance from Oneself: The Analogical Body

Marcella Althaus-Reid and Linn Marie Tonstad argue that a great many understandings of inner-trinitarian relations and divine-human interaction are configured in ways that can be described as "phallic," using a paradigm laid out in Judith Butler's work on genital symbolism in gender theory.[3] These conceptualizations of revelation entail the "penetration" of the human Object by the divine Subject. That is, revelatory change is effected in the human person by a sort of invasion of privacy, wherein the divine makes space for itself within the creature by restructuring the interior topography of the human as the transitive object of revelation. Divine revelation in some sense involves a wounding of the human to whom revelation happens because the divine Subject breaks the surface (integrity, agency) of the Object and displaces or replaces it.[4]

Moreover, in "phallic" accounts of divine transcendence and revelation, this

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[3] Marcella Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology: Theological Perversions in Sex, Gender, and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2000), 102-103; Althaus-Reid, *Queer God*, 10, 17; and Tonstad, *God and Difference*, 133-143, 193-197, 275-277. Tonstad is interacting primarily with Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (London: Routledge, 1993).

The terms "phallic" and "clitoral" are thus not to be taken as direct references to human anatomy but to the forces of "bio-political power" constructed around anatomy as symbol. By configuring transcendence and revelation metaphorically in terms of the body, Althaus-Reid, Tonstad, and Butler are able to call upon knowledge often ignored or suppressed as an epistemic resource yet which is also thoroughly familiar and accessible.

[4] Tonstad, *God and Difference*, 67-68, 193-197. The symbolic construction of the phallus is such that it is capable of taking without giving in return and therefore is capable of wounding or negating the Object.

wounding is definitive of what it means to be a creature. This is because the "divine phallus," so to speak, fills in an innate and necessary void in creaturely being. Creatures are in a sense defective gods, removed from the initial pre-creation state of divine presence into the nullifying abyss of existence. Creatureliness is an original absence or deficiency; to be created is by definition to be wounded.[5] This is not, one should note, the result of sin or the Fall. It is not that creatures have become wounded and in need of restorative divine confrontation; it is that the act of creating is in a sense the act of wounding.

Divine-human interaction, according to the "phallic" model, takes place via what Tonstad calls the "womb-wound," the symbolic space where the Self is by its very nature required to negate itself before the irresistible force of God's will and the human Object is made to lessen itself in order to make room for God's presence.[6] In these sorts of construals of revelation, revelation occurs as a direct intrusion upon and manipulation of the interior components of the human person, a cancellation of the interior agency and integrity of the knowing subject.[7] Divine presence is in fact creaturely absence. God's primary agency cancels humans' secondary agency.

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[5] Tonstad, *God and Difference*, 136.

[6] Tonstad has in mind here theologies of the fifth wound of Christ, whereby the centurion's piercing of Jesus's side on the cross is read as the feminization of the male Christ. While the church fathers and some of the Scholastics often deployed theologies of the fifth wound in order to abolish gender differences among the persons of the Trinity, the equation of "feminine" with "wounded" introduces its own set of theological-anthropological problems. See Tonstad, *God and Difference*, 13, 63-76. Cf. Eugene Rogers, Jr., *After the Spirit: A Constructive Pneumatology from Resources Outside the Modern West* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 111-134.

[7] Cf. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: A Selection*, trans. and ed., G. W. Bromily (New York: Harper, 1961), 37, corresponding to *CD* II, 1, p. 458ff: "Knowledge of this God brings those who partake of it under a claim that is total and unlimited as regards at is divine. It isolates them completely. It confronts them with an exclusive demand that nothing can soften." Any double entendre vis-à-vis the word "soften" brought about by its use in this metaphorical context is entirely coincidental, though that does not necessarily make it un-meaningful.

A "phallic" configuration of revelation compromises not only the integrity and agency of the human person—primary causality and secondary causality are conflated—but also the transcendence (and possibly freedom) of God, who must in some sense be absorbed by the world or receive something from the world in response to revelation in order to truly reveal Godself. This arrangement makes subordination an end in itself, rather than the means to its own overcoming in the glorification of humanity into the life of the Trinity.[8] To borrow Przywara's phrasing into the metaphor, this kind of revelation reveals a God who is not "in-and-beyond" but one in whom "in" and "beyond" fail to coincide. Such a God is transcendent and immanent by turn rather than immanent-because-transcendent.[9]

Tonstad proposes instead that a "clitoral" understanding of revelation preserves both the integrity of the human subject and the agency of God in self-revelation. The divine touch, the surface of God, touches the perceptive and receptive surface of the body and the mind.[10] By reconfiguring the relationship of revealed and revealed-to in terms of sensual touch rather than penetration, God's self-presence and revelation no longer

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[8] Tonstad, *God and Difference,* 232-237.

[9] Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology*, 102-103, even raises the possibility that this immanence despite (rather than because of) transcendence may be by force in some cases or in certain articulations of divine transcendence. Certain aspects of Reformed or Barthian thought come to mind here, as exemplified in by the citation in note 11 above, wherein divine revelation is essentially a confrontation between the human and the divine in which the divine will win out essentially by force rather than by a peaceableness that overcomes all violence. The metaphorical context here may import a degree of sinisterness to this whole concept, one which I believe is not entirely unfounded. Configurations of divine transcendence as overwhelming or irresistible force often issue in ecclesial dynamics that are abusive and damaging.

This is not to deny that God once-and-for-all overcomes or defeats evil. However, God does so only by crossing over a cosmic lacuna of being since evil is not a positive material property of creatures but a deprivation of goodness (and thus, in a very real sense, of being, as well). Cf. Hart, *Beauty of the Infinite*, 346-394; Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 336-347; Tonstad, *God and Difference*, 237-238.

[10] Tonstad, *God and Difference*, 136, 141, 275-277. Note that Tonstad specifically has in mind here oral and digital sex between women, not masturbation. This model still assumes that an outside agent other than the self is involved.

truncate or wound the human recipient of revelation, nor is the divine-human relation one of a Subject acting upon Object, but of two Subjects—two surfaces—touching one another.[11] This does not compromise the first-ness of God or render the divine-human relationship one of equals, nor does it eliminate the reality that human sin can distort the divine-human relationship.[12] Neither does this construal require that creatureliness be defined as a deficiency which must be replaced by divinity or that divine presence entails creaturely absence. Rather, creaturely existence is the gracious gift of being, and divine presence intensifies creatureliness.[13] God's self-presence to creatures is an act of communion and fellowship—of "coming to be with"—rather than union in the sense of "coming to be."[14]

The metaphoric construal of revelation in terms of touching instead of internalizing re-construes revelation in terms of human agency and perception without

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[11] Tonstad, *God and Difference*, 276, writes: "The clitoris symbolizes the economy of surface touch in which intensification and copresence permit ever greater intimacy between those who remain different in their particularity."

Surfaces and interfaces do not entail "surface level" or "shallow" understandings. It is not that the surface is a shell, disconnected from the interior of the Subject, but that the surface is the point at which the difference between two Others can be discerned. The surface is part of the integrated whole of the Subject, just as the sensation of sexual pleasure is perceived integral throughout the body. English metaphors involving surfaces often take as their experiential basis the skin or the surface of water. In the case of skin, the "real" stuff, the meat, bones, and organs is inside and the skin is just a casing. With water, the deeper one goes the more water there is and the more pressure it exerts. So this system involves metaphors like IMPORTANCE IS NECESSITY FOR LIFE, which is true so far as it goes, but of course the skin is also vital for life since it is a significant immune component and the boundary that keeps the inside in, among other things. The surface metaphors in this chapter, particularly because of their initial configuration in terms of clitoral pleasure, are not instances of limited or decreased intimacy, but of intimacy whose frontier has been relocated.

Cf. David Bentley Hart, "The Writing of the Kingdom: Thirty-Three Aphorisms Toward an Eschatology of the Text," in *The Hidden and the Manifest: Essays on Theology and Metaphysics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), 75-82, who locates revelation on textual surfaces, a theme to which this chapter will return.

[12] Tonstad, *God and Difference*, 194-197, 234.

[13] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 15-16; Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 121-122; Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 26-28.

[14] Cf. Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 13-16. As he puts it on p. 28, "sanctification is not transubstantiation."

compromising divine agency or priority. In metaphorical configurations of touching surfaces God remains transcendent in God's immanence—as in Przywara's definition of the "in-and-beyond." Divine agency does not override creaturely agency in this metaphor but animates it, just as Przywara and Webster claim and demonstrate.[15] In such an understanding, submission to divine revelation is understood as accepting the stimulating touch of the God's self-presence, which preserves both God's ontological priority and the inherent dignity that the gracious gift of being accords to creatures, since there is no expectation that God will be stimulated in return.[16]

This does not lessen the impact of divine revelation on the creatures being revealed to or make revelation a matter of collaboration: God's self-presence is something from outside the creature.[17] God is the agent who acts toward creatures and still bestows upon them the gift of sanctity, but this gift is no longer in conflict with creatureliness-as-such. Rather, it is in conflict with sin which is in fact a reduction of proper creatureliness, a return toward the nullity from which God has graciously called forth God's creatures.[18] The stimulating touch of God's revelation restores and intensifies the proper being of those revealed to, calling creatures back to the God who made them

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[15] Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 220, 228-231; Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 12-19; Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 26-30; Webster, *Word and Church*, 71-76.

[16] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 125: "In God, absence of reciprocity is not absence of relation but the ground of limitless relation." Cf. Wesbter, *God Without Measure II*, 34-46.

[17] Webster, *God Without Measure II*, 38-46 discusses at length the relationship between creaturely dignity and divine action. Confronting and abolishing the sinfulness of the creature is not the same thing as abolishing the creatureliness of the creature. Cf. Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 20-22; Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 27.

[18] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 39, writes: "Sin is rejection of the divine gift of life and the divine vocation to fellowship…Sin is disobedience, lack of assent to that which has been given to the creature as the shape of being, and so a contradiction of creatureliness…sin degrades creaturely life."

in the gift of saving fellowship and allowing ever greater communion without ontological collapse. As Tonstad puts it: "The Holy Ghost's sensuality is perhaps best represented by the wind, since its light caress reaches the surface which the divine phallus can only shatter, yet this light touch drives people wild."[19]

Revelation occurs at a place that is no place—at the interface of the world with God, in the interval between transcendence and immanence where the two are indistinguishable. This interface is also the encounter of human bodies with themselves and with the world, including the world of other human bodies. It determines the shape of the body and so determines knowledge in the body and the self-knowledge of the embodied mind. The body is the analogical body.

The Erotic Body

This is all well and good as far as it goes, but what more can be said about actual *perception* in light of the analogical body? In his essay "Sexual Perversion," Thomas Nagel proposes a compelling phenomenology of sexual attraction.[20] Sexual desire involves not only desire, but the desire that one's desire be known and reciprocated. Furthermore, in sexual desire one desires that one's desire itself be desired. One desires and is desired and desires to be desired *and* desires that one's desire to be desired is

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[19] Tonstad, *God and Difference*, 276. Cf. the use of the apparent neologism θεοπνεύστος in 2 Tim 3:16-17 and its translation as *divinitus inspirata* in the Vulgate.

[20] Thomas Nagel, "Sexual Perversion," in *Theology and Sexuality: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, ed. Eugene F. Rogers, Jr., (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 125-136. Nagel is clear that *perverted* is decidedly not a moral term. It refers to the stymied, maladaptive, or misdirected attempt to satisfy a natural desire or appetite. He gives the example of what he calls "gastronomical fetishism," such as a person who, when hungry, ate pictures of food rather than actual food or who satisfied their hunger by touching a souvenir from their favorite restaurant.

desired *and* desires to be desired to desire. And this process continues well beyond what English syntax can capture, until, in phenomenological terms, sexual attraction collapses the Subject and the Object into a single entity that admits of no distinctions between persons or bodies or desires.[21]

In what Nagel calls "sexual perception" the fundamental otherness of the Other becomes the otherness of the Self, and the selfness of the Self becomes the selfness of the Other. The body is placed at a distance from itself by being more fully integrated into both the Self and the Other. Sexual encounter is an instance of differentiation-in-integration, which is to say that it is a microcosm of transcendence-in-immanence.[22] This process is fundamentally and irreducibly embodied. The experience of sexual desire, whether or not it eventuates in sexual intercourse, draws both Selves into their own bodies in the form of the body of the other.[23]

Rowan Williams develops Nagel's phenomenology into a theological configuration of bodies with respect to God.[24] Borrowing from novelist Paul Scott, he terms the results of this "baptism" into one's own body in sexual perception "the body's

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[21] Nagel, "Sexual Perversion," 130-133. He writes: "[Sex] involves a desire that one's partner be aroused by the recognition of one's desire the he or she be aroused."

[22] This is why Althaus-Reid and Tonstad's use of genital metaphors is both legitimate and informative when it comes to conceiving of divine transcendence.

[23] Nagel, "Sexual Perversion," 132. Here he specifically uses the term *immerse* to describe the sense in which "All stages of sexual perception are varieties of identification of a person with his body." Reciprocal bodily perceptions (sexual or otherwise) quite literally baptize one into one's own body. It is not an accident that baptism is a particularly fruitful theological and metaphorical resource. Baptism might be understood as the enactment of a metaphor, not only of death, burial, and resurrection, but of immanence-in-transcendence. The cycle of death-burial-resurrection that in Christ announces bodily the economy of transcendence-in-immanence is accomplished also in baptism. Baptism also figures the motif of subordination as the overcoming of subordination mentioned above.

[24] Rowan Williams, "The Body's Grace," in *Theology and Sexuality: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, ed. Eugene F. Rogers, Jr., (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 310-321.

grace."[25] The body is a graced body because it is capable of being "in-and-beyond" itself in giving pleasure to another.[26] Ultimately, for Williams, discovering the body's grace in ourselves and in others demonstrates in the form of the body that:

> God desires us, *as if we were God*, as if we were that unconditional response to God's giving that God's self makes in the life of the Trinity. We are created so that we may be caught up in this, so that we may grow into the wholehearted love of God by learning that God loves us as God loves God.[27]

However, the arrangement of bodies with respect to one another and to God is not exhausted by the sexual. There is more at stake in the body than just sex. The vast majority of actions bodies can and do undertake are not sexual acts and most human anatomy is (Althaus-Reid and Tonstad's metaphors notwithstanding) not sexual anatomy.[28] In fact, sex is not even necessarily the most free or spontaneous sort of bodily relation since the inherent vulnerability required for it to take place makes it especially susceptible to use as a means of manipulation or control.[29] The configurations of bodies

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[25] Williams, "The Body's Grace, 310-311.

[26] Williams, "The Body's Grace," 313: "We are pleased because we are pleasing."
For Nagel and Williams both, this involves a necessary element of risk and true vulnerability. For Williams, this risk is directly related to the theological question of what our bodies can mean and what we want them to mean. Sexual scenarios that do not involve true risk on all sides "distort or confine the human resourcefulness, the depth or breadth of meaning that [sexual] activity may carry: they involve assuming that sexual activity has less to do with the business of human growth and human integrity than we know it can have." See Nagel, "Sexual Perversion," 133-135; Williams, "The Body's Grace," 313-315.

[27] Williams, "The Body's Grace," 311-312 (italics original).

[28] Freud's claims to the contrary are entirely to be disbelieved. Cf. note 46 below.

[29] Ela Przybyło, *Asexual Erotics: Intimate Readings of Compulsory Sexuality* (Columbus, OH: The Ohio Statue University Press, 2019), 21, contends that sexuality itself is a category or domain of human bodily relations constructed as "a system for categorizing desire that arose as part and parcel of capitalism, modernity, and colonialism. As such, sexuality is a technique of biopower that invents normalcy and deviancy toward forwarding the interests of colonialism, whiteness, wealth, ability and normality…" That is, rather than being simply the default relational state of bodies, human and otherwise, sexuality as an identifier or locus of identity is a "biopolitical" arrangement. This comports quite nicely with the discussion in Williams, "The Body's Grace," 314-316, of Christian sexual ethics as generally seeking to artificially truncate sexual options in ethics as a means of eliminating risk, which he argues results in drastically diminished relational possibilities and, to use Nagel's term, "perversion," even in ethically sanctioned relations.

are not exhausted by sexuality because sexuality itself is but a surface expression of the erotic.[30]

In her 1979 essay "The Uses of the Erotic," Audre Lorde describes the erotic as "a resource within each of us that lies in a deeply female plane, firmly rooted in the power of our unexpressed or unrecognized feeling."[31] In Lorde's conception, the erotic is the core of human emotion and psychology instead of the sexual. Sexuality is included in desire, but eros is deeper and truer than sexual attraction or intercourse.[32] Properly understood, the erotic is a "creative energy," the "measure between the beginning of our

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[30] Tonstad, *God and Difference*, 227-229, takes the imagery of membranes provided by this metaphor and asexualizes it by using Pannenberg's metaphor of unbounded fields and by deploying patristic metaphors of light, especially Gregory Nazianzen's solar alignment metaphor. Tonstad, *God and Difference*, 238-246, also connects "unbounded fields" with the eucharistic notion of the banquet. She writes that within the banquet metaphor "the body's limits do not disappear, but spatial location becomes coinhabitable, and the colocality of different bodies—presence in the same place at the same time—transforms the nature of relationality and community beyond their deformation."

[31] Audre Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power," in *Sexuality and the Sacred: Sources for Theological Reflection*, 2nd ed., ed. Marvin M. Ellison and Kelly Brown Douglas (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010) 73.

The phrase "in a deeply female plane" need not be understood as indicating that the erotic is exclusive to women. Rather, it indicates the systematic suppression of erotic knowledge is a dynamic of the construction of masculinity. It is not that men lack erotic knowledge but that the forces that produce masculinity do so by oppression and suppression of the "feminine," which is not genuinely feminine in its own right but is constructed as the artificial opposite of masculinity. Since the erotic is not only a source of knowledge but is also a deeply rooted source of personal power, it is suppressed so that it may be replaced by masculine control mechanisms. In this sense, the erotic is not inherently feminine, but is construed as feminine by and in service of social and biological power arrangements. See the comments in Przybyło, *Asexual Erotics*, 20-28.

[32] Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic," 74-75, differentiates the erotic in its sexual expression from the pornographic, which she calls "the direct denial of the erotic" because it "represents the suppression of true feeling" by presenting "sensation without feeling." The erotic is the source of sexuality and this connection can be presented in healthy ways, whereas the pornographic, by reversing this order and presenting the sexual as the source of the erotic, is exploitative and oppressive and evacuates the erotic of its power.

On similar grounds Przybyło, *Asexual Erotics*, 24-28, advocates the asexualization of normally sexualized spaces and relationships and the use of asexual configurations of desire (eros) to re-construe intimacies that are often construed in sexual terms because other conceptual grammars have been eliminated in favor of sex (the dynamic Lorde terms "pornographic") as the defining structure of relations. Przybyło, *Asexual Erotics*, 92-99, takes direct aim at Freudian theories of sexuality and particularly of sexual development as denying the fundamental agency of people in relation by forcing a sexual framework onto relations of desire that are deeper or other than sex.

This is the ultimate basis for the project of asexualizing Althaus-Reid and Tonstad's metaphors of transcendence and revelation above by moving into talk of water, banquets, and surfaces more generically.

sense of self, and the chaos of our strongest feelings."[33]

The erotic is a fundamental epistemological resource about ourselves and a wellspring of power to accomplish itself. Lorde frames the epistemological aspect in terms of the phrase *It feels right*.[34] This is not a simple matter of acting on a whim or going with the flow without consideration or of dispensing with ethical reflection. Erotically conceived, *It feels right* is the verbal result of the somatic knowledge that is the core of one's being, a knowledge that is fundamentally pre-verbal and so is experienced rather than spoken.[35] "The erotic is the nurturer or nursemaid of all our deepest knowledge."[36]

The erotic is also a power and this power lies in the capacity for relation which the erotic enables. This includes the relational sense of self-knowledge (being in-and-beyond oneself) and the power that comes from being self-possessed, as well as the power of companionship and kinship (being in-and-beyond others).[37] The erotic is the capacity for joy and for sharing joy, for realizing one's own deepest self in deepening the

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[33] Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic," 74-75.

[34] Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic," 75. "The considered phrase, 'It feels right to me,' acknowledges the strength of the erotic into a true knowledge, for what that means and feels is the first and most powerful guiding light toward any understanding.

[35] Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic," 75, writes: "Another important way in which the erotic connection functions is the open and fearless underlining of my capacity for joy. In the way my body stretches to music and opens in response, hearkening to its deepest rhythms, so every level upon which I sense also opens to the erotically satisfying experience, whether it is dancing, building a bookcase, writing a poem, examining an idea."

Incidentally, if this epistemological framing of *eros* causes trouble with standard epistemological formulations (like "knowledge=justified true belief"), so be it. W. Jay Wood, *Epistemology: Becoming Intellectually Virtuous* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1998), 175-196, discusses the role of emotional awareness in "proper cognitive functioning." Although the erotic should not be reduced to the emotional and despite Wood's occasionally ableist use of autism as a contrastive example, he presents a case for affective awareness as not only valid for epistemology but also as vital.

[36] Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic," 75.

[37] Ibid.

self of another.[38] This ultimately is powerful because it simply cannot be gainsaid. Once joy has entered into life through erotic relation, excising it is seen to be the truncation of the self, the reduction of "in-and-beyond" to either "in" or "beyond."[39]

Sebastian Moore provides a similar account, which can serve as a means of translating this articulation into explicitly theological terms.[40] Desire is not a superficial preference, a casual urge, or a passing thought; desire is the sense of the disconnect between potentiality and actuality, between destiny and reality, between the perfection of human persons in the life of the Godhead and the earthly reality of our present, limited state. In Moore's striking language,

> Real desire, what I really want and have always wanted, is to be more and more myself in the mystery in which I am. It is the relatedness that I am to everything and everyone in the mystery trying to realize itself. Desire is love trying to happen. It is the love that permeates all the universe trying to happen in me. It draws into its fulfilling meaning all the appetites of our physical being.[41]

The erotic—desire, in Moore's phrasing—is the somatic reality of the "in-and-beyond-ness" of creation as it moves and is drawn further and further into the suspended middle where transcendence is immanence and the surfaces of dignity and humanity touch. This is an epistemological claim: God is known primarily in the form of analogical, somatic

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[38] Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic," 75, writes: "The sharing of joy, whether physical, emotional, psychic, or intellectual, forms a bridge between the sharers which can be the basis for understanding much of what is not shared between them, and lessens the threat of their difference." There are distinct resonances of the analogical nature of revelation here. Cf. Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 54-59; Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 110-113.

[39] Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic," 76-77.

[40] Sebastian Moore, "The Crisis of an Ethics Without Desire," in *Theology and Sexuality: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, ed. Eugene F. Rogers, Jr., (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 157-169.

[41] Moore, "Ethics Without Desire," 160.

knowledge.[42]

Such a formulation does not indicate that erotic knowledge is incorruptible or infallible. Lorde and Moore both describe the various ways in which desire can go or be driven awry.[43] In epistemological parlance, the erotic is a reliable belief-producing mechanism, although unlike the *sensus divinitatis*, the *oculus contemplationis*, or even the conscience, the erotic is not primarily operative at the level of active thought but is a somatic awareness.[44] These other senses, processes, and sources of knowledge are actually underwritten by the erotic, which is logically and somatically prior to them.

The erotic should not be conflated with or collapsed into the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit.[45] The illumination of the Spirit directs and perfects erotic knowledge, directing and empowering the erotic body into ever fuller, more intense participation in the infinite eros of the Triune God.[46] In fact, the Spirit makes bodies more bodily. As Eugene Rogers puts it:

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[42] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 124-125, characterizes reason as "a capacity to transcend the immediate" because it is "reflective awareness, through which we entertain intentional relations to situations rather than simply registering them." He elaborates the relationship between reason and transcendence as being drawn to God as the horizon of Being-itself and connects this relationship with divine revelation: "The movement of critical transcendence is not itself the fulfillment of reason's nature, for that movement drives ahead, to reason's ultimate end, which lies wholly beyond itself in apprehension of God and of all things in God." He further connects this with analogical immanence-in-transcendence: "Reason participates in the dying and rising which are the foundation and pattern of redeemed existence" (p. 125).

[43] Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic," 74, 76-77; Moore, "Ethics Without Desire," 158-159, 163-167.

[44] Alvin Plantinga, *Knowledge and Christian Belief* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 30-44, provides a succinct account of the *census divinitatis* and a defense of its status as a source of knowledge. The *oculus contemplationis* is given a similar treatment in Abraham, *Crossing the Threshold*, 58-78.

Both of these are in some senses similar to the account of the erotic given here, but both of these are ultimately concerned with the justification of religious belief. The erotic, by contrast is not primarily a matter of epistemic justification or evaluation, and it may or may not result in any sort of religious belief.

[45] Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic," 75, argues against this sort of identification of one's own innate joy with "marriage…God…afterlife."

[46] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 60-63.

> The Spirit befriends matter…Oil, water, bread, wine, the bodies of human beings to be baptized, married, or ordained: in many and various ways the matter of the world becomes the matter of a sacrament. To think about the Spirit it will not do to think "spiritually": to think about the Spirit you have to think materially.[47]

Conflating the Spirit with the erotic is a reversion to a "phallic" account of divine transcendence and agency in which God impels knowledge and action as a ghost in the machine. It replaces the analogical agency of God as the source of Being-itself with mechanistic agential causation in disguise. The Spirit as the friend—or perhaps the mentor—of the body retains the agency of the erotic body and the truth of its analogical knowledge without circumscribing the epistemological role and agency of God.[48]

The erotic is the bodily knowledge of the difference between what one is and what one is meant to be, of the gulf between existence and essence in creatures. It is, in a manner of speaking, the physical sensation and perception of the *analogia entis*, the point at which the sheer givenness of being—the fundamental, irreducible "there it is" of the world—is most directly perceived or encountered. The erotic body is the analogical body.

The erotic is the space in which the body participates in the divine economy since it is the space from which all other spaces flow. The human surface which the divine touches is somatic and therefore erotic (but not exclusively sexual). The body is, as Luke Timothy Johnson puts it, "the preeminent arena for God's revelation in the world, the medium through which God's holy Spirit is most clearly expressed."[49] The erotic body is the analogical body is the revelatory body.

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[47] Rogers, *After the Spirit*, 56. Cf. Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 59: "God *loves* creaturely nature and their capacities and desires their full use…"

[48] Cf. Rogers, *After the Spirit*, 60-61.

[49] Johnson, *Revelatory Body*, 1.

Conceptual Metaphor as Analogical-Erotic Language

In CMT two conceptual domains are mapped onto one another such that one is understood in terms of the other; the source domain is more directly or thoroughly embodied than the target domain. So for example, in the metaphor ANGER IS A HOT FLUID IN A CONTAINER, the domain ANGER is understood by means of the more directly perceptible domain HOT FLUID IN A CONTAINER. These domains are not merely identified with one another, as no given instance of metaphor exhausts the possibility of metaphor or meaning.[50] However, neither are they entirely separate, as their involvement in metaphor shows. Rather, after the form of the *analogia entis*, they are related initially as an *analogia attributionis* (ANGER : A HOT FLUID IN A CONTAINER :: THE FEELING OF ANGER : THE BODY) wherein the the body is the *tertium quid*, but this first analogy is overcome by the *analogia proportionalis* arising from the fact that anger is not in fact a hot fluid in a container, or any kind of fluid in any kind of container since CONTAINER here is already itself a metaphorical construal. So the result is that ANGER IS NOT NOT A HOT FLUID IN A CONTAINER. ANGER and HOT FLUID IN A CONTAINER are rendered in-and-beyond each other by metaphoric operations.

Metaphor is also erotic in the sense that it is irreducibly somatic; metaphoric operations also render the embodied mind in-and-beyond itself.[51] Because anger takes

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[50] Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 91-105. In this respect CMT and traditional metaphor theories are in accord. See Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 45-69.

[51] Kövecses's work focuses largely on the metaphorical construction of emotions. See Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 107-120; Zoltán Kövecses, *Emotion Concepts* (Berlin: Springer Verlag, 1990), supplemented and updated by Zoltán Kövecses, "Metaphor and Emotion," in *The Cambridge Handbook on Metaphor and Thought*, ed. Raymond W. Gibbs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 380-396. See Gibbs, "Metaphor," 207-209; and Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 63-75, on non-verbal instances of conceptual metaphors.

place in the body, whereas a hot fluid in a container is located outside the body, the metaphor ANGER IS A HOT FLUID IN A CONTAINER displaces anger beyond the body. At precisely the same moment, however, the metaphor provides rich knowledge that allows the mind to understand its own embodied experience of anger, thus more fully integrating the mind into the body. The disunion of the embodied mind from itself is indistinguishable from the union of the embodied mind with itself within the economy of metaphor, just as divine transcendence is indistinguishable from divine immanence in the erotic-analogical economy.[52] This is the condition of consciousness: that the mind fails to coincide with itself.[53]

This sort of metaphoric "transcendence" takes place because, as Przywara has it, the ontic and the noetic are, at the level of analogy, convertible with one another.[54] Metaphor is a linguistic participation in the structure of reality itself, rather than a proof that reality has no structure. Metaphor is an erotic linguistic operation: it is motivated by the bodies disjuncture from (read: transcendence of) itself into other minds and bodies—including from and thus toward God as the source of Being-itself—and the fundamental

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[52] Cf. Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 116-119.

[53] Superficially, it may seem that "transcendence" in metaphor operation is construed in terms Althaus-Reid and Tonstad would refer to as "phallic." If knowledge about the target domain is actually generated by metaphor with the source domain, then it seems that the source domain compromises the internal integrity of the target domain as a sort of "Subject" acting transitively on the target domain as "Object." However, while it is the case that metaphor generates information, metaphor does not generate domains themselves. Domains may be construed in terms of one another, but the two domains are actually distinct in the mind.

Moreover, the invariance principle (when conceived of as a function of embodiment) holds that the target is not simply a passive entity that is colonized, as it were, by the source in the form of metaphor. (See Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 131.) The target does not exist as a null entity prior to receiving metaphorical knowledge, but has schematic properties its own which are not compromised by involvement in metaphor. Even the language used of metaphorical operations hints at this: knowledge is mapped *onto* not *into* domains. The "economy of touch" between two surfaces does not compromise the surfaces, but neither is it artificial, and it has real effects.

[54] Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 119-124.

possibility and yearning for joy that this occasions. It is the linguistic form and expression of the body's suspension in the middle between identity and negation.[55]

Metaphor takes fundamentally pre-verbal, physical, bodily processes and "promotes" them into language by construing reality in its truest term—that of ontic-noetic analogy. Language is one means by which the surfaces of embodied minds are brought together.[56] Like the body and metaphor, language itself takes place where the abstract and the concrete are immanent to one another because they are transcendent of each other. Since it is fundamentally embodied and the body participates in the divine economy in the form of the erotic, conceptual metaphor expressed linguistically is precisely the sort of meaning-making function that should be expected of an embodied mind in a rational universe. Metaphor is revelatory because the body is revelatory.

Metaphor is not embodied in a single human person, though. Metaphors are translated into language, which means they form the basis for communication between persons. As Rowan Williams puts it: "We think with our bodies because we have to learn how to find our way in a world of bodies."[57] Nagel's phenomenology sexual attraction is largely applicable to language, as well. In the act of communication, the Subject and the Object are elided to a significant extent. In speaking one's mind one is the Subject, but, because communication is by definition interactive, the speaking—one might say *revealing*—Subject is also inescapably the Object. So metaphor is triply erotic in the

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[55] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 122-126.

[56] Hart, "Writing of the Kingdom," 79-80.

[57] Rowan Williams, *Being Human: Bodies, Minds, Persons* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2018), viii.

Lordean sense because—in addition to drawing the embodied mind toward God and toward the world —it also draws embodied minds closer together, connecting them to something that is other than and outside themselves while intensifying the self-ness of the embodied mind.

An account of the four major categories for Scripture which Webster provides can now be given in light of CMT, the *analogia entis*, and the preceding considerations of erotic knowledge. In keeping with the aims of this chapter, the focus will be on the anthropological implications of these terms and the ways in which the human realities of language take place under these rubrics.

Revelation

Webster defines revelation as "The self-representation of the Triune God, the free work of sovereign mercy in which God wills, establishes, and perfects saving fellowship with himself in which humankind comes to know, love, and fear him above all things."[58] The fact that the body is somatically aware of revelation in the form of the erotic is not a reduction of revelation to a merely human process because this awareness is inherently analogical: in divine revelation, God crosses the infinite gulf between the divine and the creaturely and thus draws creatures ever closer to God in the "suspended middle."[59] The Triune God presents Godself to embodied humans because no other kind of human exists, and humans are aware of this presentation. Analogical-erotic perception of God is

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[58] Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 14

[59] Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 93.

definitively God's *self*-presentation: human bodies only perceive God because God freely elects to create and to be perceived by God's creation.[60] This perception becomes language largely though metaphorical operations in which the world is perceived in relation to God its source and translated into non-direct, abstract linguistic content which enables communion with God and with other creatures.

Furthermore, it is precisely the Bible's nature as a text that renders it revelatory.[61] As a text, the semiotic act of the Bible is deferred by means of a physical medium upon which signs are imposed.[62] In other words, the text is also a body suspended in the middle between God and creatures, which is, again, precisely as is to be expected. This deferral is incompletely preservative: it retains the words but removes their physical environments. Metaphors retain their linguistic expression, but the conceptual world they make sense of is often diluted by the passage of time. The reconstruction of that world is a component of the process of revelation, not because that world is better or more divine or because those people necessarily had a better understanding of God, but because the "metaphorical archaeology" of a text is another interface where God makes Godself present.[63]

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[60] Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 14.

[61] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 14-15; Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 39;

[62] Hart, "The Writing of the Kingdom," 75-78.

[63] Much as in Nagel's phenomenology of sexual perception, the line between the author and the reader is lost in the act of reading. This does not mean that they cannot be discerned and addressed separately, but that hermeneutical actions are intimate encounters.

Sanctification

"Sanctification is the act of God the Holy Spirit in hallowing creaturely processes, employing them in the service of the taking form of revelation within the history of the creation."[64] Creation as the *ex nihilo* gift of the Triune God takes the shape of reality suited to metaphorical comprehension.[65] The Spirit's sanctifying action is the perfection and fulfillment of these processes, God's action that makes human language and the Bible sufficient and component to the task of revelation. Sanctification therefore includes the form of the *analogia entis*: creatures are always drawn further into the communion of the Trinity as a result of God's *opera ad extra*. In being drawn toward the horizon of the divine they creatures are also drawn into analogical-erotic communion with one another. Metaphor is rendered valid as a linguistic condensate of revelation because God makes it so in the sanctifying donation of being to the world at every instant.

Inspiration

Webster writes: "Talk of inspiration indicates that the generative impulse of the biblical text is not human spontaneity. Scripture *as text* is not in any fundamental sense a fruit of human poetics…"[66] However, this runs the risk of committing a category error. Scripture "as text" is irreducibly a work of creaturely poetics, but it is not only or even foremost a work of creaturely poetics. The inspiration of Scripture derives from God's

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[64] Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 17-18.

[65] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 57: "God so orders rational creatures that there is a creaturely coordinate to [God's] omnipotent and omnipresent divine radiance."

[66] Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 37.

revelatory self-presence, as do human processes in Scripture.[67] Humans do not produce the realities to which Scripture is a witness, but they do receive and transmit them.

Inspiration is the specifically textual modality of sanctification wherein God's revelatory self-presence and sanctifying activity issue forth in language and text.[68] This takes the form of metaphor, whereby the directly apprehended somatic awareness of divine revelation of God as the "maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible" becomes the basis for the conceptual content of human linguistic communication.[69] Inspiration is not a claim that Bible is perfect or that the text is free from all distortion: it is the providential promise that "God's word outbids falsehood and issues an enlivening summons to reason," and the action of the Holy Spirit through which this promise comes to pass in the form of the biblical text.[70]

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[67] Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 31-32, discusses the proper location of inspiration as a derivative of sanctification and revelation.

[68] Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 36-39.

[69]John Webster, "ὑπὸ πνεύματος ἁγίου φερόμενοι ἐλάλησαν ἀπὸ θεοῦ ἄνθρωποι: On the Inspiration of Holy Scripture," in *Conception, Reception, and Spirit: Essays in Honor of Andrew T. Lincoln*, ed. J. Gordon McConville and Lloyd K. Pietersen (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015), 245-247, writes that the Spirit is the source of the actual *verba* of Scripture, not merely the *res*. "[The biblical authors] speak and write. But this speech and writing of theirs is not wholly original to them: it is ἀπὸ θεοῦ." This is not an extrinsic moving or compulsion, but an inner instruction and movement toward the kind of textual product which God the Spirit intends. On p. 249 he writes that "Biblical authorship is not joint authorship" because divine primary and creaturely secondary causality are not in competition. True, they do not compete and creaturely causation does not decrease divine causation, but neither does divine causation decrease human causation. As Webster frequently points out, the Spirit directs, quickens, and empowers creatures and thereby makes them more creaturely, not less.

The specification of metaphor as a modality of this movement and its location in the human body does not constitute a removal of inspiration from the domain of the Spirit's work. The Spirit is the friend of the body, but is also the ontological cause of the body. Thus, calling upon metaphor here is a sort of obverse claim to Webster's repeated assertion that inspiration is about what kind of authors the writers of Scripture are (cf. Webster, "ὑπὸ πνεύματος ἁγίου," 249).

[70] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 20-22.

The claim that inspiration does not rule out textual problems is at odds with Webster's tendency to arrange God, the text, and the reader such that the text and God are never in competition, as it were. However, this is an artificial bifurcation that would seem to violate the principle that the Bible as a text cannot be separated from Scripture as a theological entity. If the Bible is a text, if texts are produced by fallible humans, and if inspiration is not the overriding of human authorship as the efficient cause of Scripture (cf. Webster, "ὑπὸ πνεύματος ἁγίου," 246), then distortion in the text is at least a possibility.

Illumination

The Spirit's activity is not limited to the production of Scripture, but extends to the reception history of the text among the saints and in the church. This reception history is not the history of fixed interpretation in fixed patterns of transmission; the Spirit's illumination is pedagogical.[71] Furthermore, illumination extends beyond the boundaries of the page into the exercise of reason itself.[72] This takes the form of the Spirit befriending the body and instructing it into the triune life of God as mentor, or of the wind of the Spirit touching the erotic body and animating it into ever more intense and ecstatic participation in the triune love of God. As the reader is drawn more deeply into the being of God, their capacity for analogical-erotic perception is increased and refined.

If inspiration is the Spirit's action with respect to the text, illumination is the Spirit's work with respect to the reader, that is, with respect to bodies.[73] Because inspiration and illumination are works of God the Spirit acting toward bodies, they do not take the same form for each and every person. Diverse readings of the Bible are to be expected because diverse readers encounter the text of Scripture in diverse bodies. The Spirit's illumination is not one-size-fits-all and so texts may be illuminated for different readers in different ways or at different times.

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[71] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 62.

[72] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 54-59.

[73] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 50.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that revelation, sanctification, inspiration, and illumination are located primarily in physical matter and most intensely in the human body. The body is an analogical entity—finite, rhythmically oscillating between identity and negation, transcendence and immanence, differentiation from and integration into the life of the triune God—and is endowed with the perceptive ability to account for this fact, which can be called the erotic. Metaphor is the particular cognitive process by which this basic awareness is expanded out into fuller awareness of oneself and God and through which it becomes language and communication. In the text of the Bible, this entire process is textualized and deferred across time, which renders the Bible itself analogical to itself and to God. The Bible is therefore made component to the divine economy as Holy Scripture by being taken up by God and by creatures as a medium of communion and interaction for the good of the creature.

Chapter Five
The Word Made Text: Reading the Bible

This chapter will lay out the hermeneutical application of the previous chapter. What does the encounter of the embodied mind with the embodied text look like, and how does this bring readers into fellowship with God? One of the primary challenges with Webster's theology of Scripture is the halfheartedness of his attention to critical studies of the Bible, so this chapter will explore how critical studies are related to theological reading.[1]

What is the form of textual encounter? A text is a body, receiving and so also granting signs to other bodies. It is apprehended as such by the embodied human reader, which is why the form of textual encounter matters. Hearing the Bible read in the course of the liturgy is different from digitally browsing comparative critical editions in Accordance Bible Software; the King James Version differs from the Common English Bible quite a lot, and the New Testament in Greek is very different from the New Testament in English.[2] All these are superintended by the Holy Spirit's inspiration and illumination and sanctified to be a medium of God's self-presence.

Not only is the Bible itself a body, it is the product of bodies. It is therefore open to comprehension and apprehension as a somatic reality available (but not entirely

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[1] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 29-30, discusses what critical methods *might* do, but declines to comment further than this. Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 106-107, likewise deflects, explaining that his considerations are essentially irrelevant to the question of how to solve exegetical problems. At other times he is somewhat disdainful, even explaining that reading via critical methods is "not to read Scripture in the economy of grace" (Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 105). Cf. East, *Church's Book*, 177-182.

[2] Whether the process of translation results in an entirely different text or whether it is more analogous to switching camera lenses is a matter for another time. Personally, I tend to wonder if the question itself is a little faulty.

transparent) to other somatic realities. The human modality of reading as such, even reading the Bible, is not fundamentally different from any other act of embodied linguistic encounter.[3] At least, reading the Bible is not less than reading, though it may be more. This does not compromise the Bible's ontological status as Holy Scripture, but indicates the fact that human readers encounter the Bible as text and that this textuality is not superfluous.[4]

The Bible and Meaning(s)

Part of the apparent difficulty with Webster's theology of Scripture is that he almost never talks about meaning. He discusses the ontology, teleology, authority, and function of the Bible at great length, but semantics is notably missing from most of his work. In some sense, this should not be taken as a defect, but as a thoroughly healthy omission. The question of the Bible's "meaning" often conflates revelation with semantic content, which may solve certain problems of determinacy but ultimately at much too high a cost.[5] Theologically speaking, semantic content is a secondary concern. Still, it

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[3] This is because divine agency does not render the text of the Bible not a text, but heightens and fulfills its textuality.

[4] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 59-63.

[5] The doctrine of inerrancy is an excellent example. It can be found in its most thoroughly articulated form in International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, "Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy," *JETS* 21, no. 4 (Dec. 1978), 289-296. The Chicago Statement explicitly makes revelation synonymous with the Bible—"We affirm that the written word in its entirety is revelation given by God." This is a difficult enough statement as it stands, except that the Statement lacks any formal definition of revelation and the few informal hints focus entirely on the divine use of words in the past. God becomes a God of the past rather than the living God. The God of the present is essentially the Bible itself which exercises authority as if it were God through the findings of "grammatico-historical exegesis" of the autographic texts which determines the single, precise meaning of the Bible. (Pay no attention to the fact that no such texts exist.) This meaning then stands, as it were, *in persona Dei*. Hermeneutics aside, this is a tragically emaciated theory, and it winds up looking suspiciously deistic. Locating revelation in the text means that God can no longer be encountered in Scripture because Scripture has replaced God. Cf. Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 33.

matters that the Bible is a linguistic phenomenon and therefore one whose fundamental purpose is to communicate meaning.[6] Removing semantics from bibliology amounts to removing the Bible from bibliology.

A solution presents itself by way of comparison to the concept of revelation. If revelation is a process located outside the text itself, one which can take many forms and which may or may not be conscious at any given moment, so is meaning. If revelation is the divine component of encounter with the text of Scripture, then meaning is the human component. Just as revelation occurs in the body, meaning occurs in the body. If the *telos* of revelation is saving fellowship with God, then the *telos* of semantic content is awareness of and intentional participation in this fellowship.[7] In this way the divine and the creaturely, the given and the constructed, the stimulus and the response, are inseparable rather than in conflict. Revelation has priority since it makes meaning possible, but the two cannot be ultimately separated. Neither can they be collapsed into one another, even though they take place in the same somatic and cognitive intervals.

As revelation is not a single thing but a process, so is meaning.[8] As Renita Weems writes, "Meaning takes place in the charged encounter between the socially and politically charged text and the socially and politically conditioned real reader."[9] Meaning is not a single isolatable substance or property of a text, nor is it a thing an author creates

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[6] Webster, *Word and Church*, 68.

[7] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 61-62; Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 15-17.

[8] Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 16.

[9] Renita Weems, "Re-Reading for Liberation: African-American Women and the Bible," in *I Found God in Me: A Womanist Biblical Hermeneutics Reader*, ed. Mitzi J. Smith (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015), 49. Cf Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 62: "Holy Scripture is a text, and its sense is made over time, not infused in a moment; and the making of sense is an exercise of studiousness in the form of exegetical practices."

or that a text imparts to readers. Meaning is the result of pragmatically motivated somatic-linguistic interactions and so is not identical from reader to reader.

This is especially true in terms of metaphor and other cognitive linguistic phenomena. To understand a metaphor involves both on- and off-line knowledge of that metaphor's immediate structure (which domains are source and which are target), the conceptual content of those domains and the internal structure of that content, the entailments of those domains, the mappings that obtain between domains in a conceptual metaphor, the context of the linguistic expression of the metaphor, the content of the words used to activate the metaphor, and the physical aspects of speech acts such as gesture and facial expression.[10] All this—constructed and reconstructed in real time and in partnership with one or more interlocutors—just so that *I'm out of ideas* can mean what it means.[11]

Conceptual metaphor does not exhaust the range of semantic content, either, and not all words mean things in the same way. Even non-metaphorical lexemes require a tremendous amount of cognitive processing power to mean what they mean, and they always take place in a context which determines their meaning, even if they are very

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[10] Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 7-10, 285-304; Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 156-184, 229-237.

[11] This is an instance of the metaphors IDEAS ARE OBJECTS and THE MIND IS A CONTAINER.

Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 183, gives the example of the case "The fog is in front of the mountain." Since mountains do not have fronts or backs, this sentence construes spatial relations in terms of the human body, which demonstrates front-back asymmetry. Thus, while more positivist views of semantics are not entirely wrong to posit that "'The fog is in front of the mountain' IFF the fog is in front of the mountain," such an account leaves out entire dimensions of semantic meaning. In fact, the sentence *The fog is in front of the mountain* cannot be empirically verified because "front-ness" is not a property of the mountain. That there is fog within a certain distance from the mountain's defined baseline can be verified, but "front-ness" is a matter of construal and so cannot be verified or falsified with respect to the world "out there."

specific.[12] The upshot is that "what they mean" is often very difficult to pin down.

A good example is the difference between *there*, *they're*, and *their* in English. In speech the only distinguishing feature of these words is context. Phonetically, they all take the form /ðe͡ɪɚ/ and so there is a sense in which the meaning of these words in conversation lies outside themselves in the syntactic relationships of which they are a part. In print, the discrete meanings of these words is brought out by their spelling, so the context of the linguistic event partially determines meaning. Another good example is the case of the definite article. *The* is a grammar word, and so has no definition as such, but is defined exclusively in terms of what it does within sentences.

The situation gets even more complicated as units of language are strung together into longer discourses.[13] The word *theremin* might seem to have a fairly specific and easy-to-determine meaning (though the word is not only the name of the instrument but also its inventor, so there is not a single discrete meaning), but at the level of the Bible—a discourse constructed of other discourses which themselves contain other discourses—no single or specific semantic meaning is discernible.[14]

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[12] See Langacker, *Cognitive Grammar*, 5-54, for a summary of just how complex semantic content really is. See also Speed, Vinson, and Vigliocco, "Representing Meaning," 221-244.

[13] Langacker, *Cognitive Grammar*, 54, provides the example of giving someone instructions. One might use any of the following expressions, all of which "mean" the same thing in the context. 1) *I want you to put the canned tomatoes on the top shelf of the pantry*; 2) *Put the tomatoes on the top shelf of the pantry*; 3) *Put them on the top shelf*; 4) *Tomatoes, top shelf*; 5) *On the top shelf*; 6) *On top*. Sentences 1) and 6) are not only equally communicative but equally precise, despite the fact that the lexical meaning of *on top* is very different from *I want you to put the canned tomatoes on the top shelf of the pantry*.

[14] This does not mean that the Bible cannot be read as a coherent document. While I have my theological doubts about efforts to read a "grand narrative" from the Bible, it is certainly the case that the books the constitute the Bible are unified, in the very least by the fact that they are in the Bible. Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 17-18, describes the unity of Scripture as a function of its coherence in Christ, and therefore not a property antecedent to or confessed of the Bible but something experienced and revealed in reading it. This is entirely compatible with the fact that there is not a singular semantic reference to which the Bible as a whole is directed, and is in keeping with Webster's depiction of the Bible as always *in via* but not in flux.

In *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson write that "we understand a statement as being true when our understanding of the statement fits our understanding of the situation closely enough for our purposes."[15] Furthermore, the "perception" of meaning "emerges from interaction, from constant negotiation with the environment and other people."[16] This is a concise framing which scales nicely across various levels of language and through different communicative media. The question of meaning and metaphor becomes pragmatic: What is the situation of Scripture? What does it entail for human understanding to fit the situation of Scripture closely enough? How do readers negotiate the text and what is the goal of reading? This is a question Webster is quite prepared to help answer.[17]

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[15] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 179.

[16] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 230.

Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 92, writes that "Reading in the economy of grace is not *poesis* but intelligence directed by and towards God's self-interpreting, perspicuous word." Unfortunately, Webster simply cannot have it both ways. Either the Bible is words or it is not, and if it is words then there is an irreducible level of human *poesis* in both production and reception. This sort of statement is also not entirely coherent with Webster's own thoughts at other points and in later writings, since he is clear that divine *poesis* does not eliminate human *poesis*. Even in the immediately following pages (Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 94-95) he gives meaningful weight to the function of reading. Throughout this thesis, I have been careful to avoid disloyalty to Webster, but here he is disloyal to himself and so I will follow suit by taking this comment as out of step with the majority of Webster's thought. See also the comments in Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 26-30, and the citation from p. 62 in note 9 above.

[17] In what follows I begin with statements by Webster, but I expand them in ways consistent with the findings of this thesis so far. I have endeavored to make sure this does not constitute massive disloyalty to Wesbter's framework, but here I am not restricting myself to claims Webster himself made directly. Coherence and congruity take precedent over citation from here on out.

Part of this will be an effort to save Webster from himself, in a sense, because on the whole I take his bibliological framework to be reasonable and even liberating. As will be quite clear, Webster puts a great deal of emphasis on readers' submission to the text in the attempt to be faithful readers. A significant part of the following material is motivated by the attempt to reconcile those claims with the realities of harm done by those who twist Scripture to their own ends. This is an attempt to clarify Webster's statements in light not only of the foregoing material in this thesis but also in terms of his own doctrine of God as gracious and loving, which occasionally seem out of step with some of his more stringent hermeneutical directives read straight off.

The Hermeneutical Task

First, "the primary hermeneutical directive is thus: in the economy of grace God's word outbids falsehood and issues an empowering summons to reason."[18] This is not a call to simplistic readings of the Bible, but a recognition that the ontology of Scripture requires readers to encounter the Bible as thoroughly as possible. The "empowering summons" of Scripture involves the entirety of the embodied human person because reason itself involves the entire human person. In the medium of the Bible, God meets readers where they are but God does not leave them there. As God is encountered in the body through the medium of the text, God brings the reader further and further into the Trinitarian life and so the reader's embodied mind is ever more enlivened by the divine summons. The eros of divine encounter via the text is intensified by reading just as the eros of relational intimacy is intensified by time spent in another's company.

Second, "Faithful reading of Holy Scripture in the economy of grace is an episode in the history of sin and its overcoming."[19] The sin that is overcome may be that of the reader but it may equally be the sin of another inflicted upon the reader. Just as meaning is communal, so too are sin and falsehood. Sin, like meaning, is not simply a function of actions, but of embodied relations, including systems. Part of the overcoming of sin in the context of Scripture is increased accountability rather than lessened responsibility. Since Scripture is a medium of encounter with God's self-presence, it is a component of the demise of sin in the economy of grace by cultivating virtue and forming communities

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[18] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 22.

[19] Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 87.

beholden to one another in God's presence.

Third, "faithful reading of Holy Scripture in the economy of grace is the work not of masters but of pupils in the school of Christ."[20] Webster further clarifies it by writing that "to read Scripture as one caught up by the reconciling work of God is to abandon mastery of the text, and, instead, to be schooled into docility"[21] This is a tricky statement, but it should be viewed as a safeguard against misuse of Scripture rather than a directive to self-abasement. Being "schooled into docility," does not mean being reduced to merely passive Objects in the face of the divine Subject.[22] It means that as readers are reconciled to God, themselves, and others, they will be set free from harm at the hands of the text and at the hands of others by means of the text and will be empowered to come ever more fully into the healing presence of God without fear. Teachability includes learning what one is and what one is not, and it thus includes openness to having the falsehoods imposed by others and their sins removed and replaced with the knowledge of God's love.

The previous chapter invoked Thomas Nagel's phenomenology of sexual perception and Rowan Williams's theological appropriation of it, and it is relevant again here. Central to Nagel and Williams's proposal is the essential vulnerability required for sexual perception. Instances of sexual encounter that eliminate risk for one or both parties

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[20] Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 101.

[21] Ibid.

[22] This is not a contradiction of Webster, but an expansion upon his original point. I understand his statements in *Holy Scripture*, 101-106 to be directed at certain methods, theorists, or practitioners of critical scholarship rather than at the average reader or the reader who comes to the text afraid or hurt looking for solace. Such a reading is also consistent with his later writings on the topic, such as *Domain of the Word*, 21-22, 53-63, 117-119, and especially 122.

by controlling the other might simply result in unfulfilling intercourse, or they might be instances of particularly heinous crimes.[23] This is to some extent true of reading the Bible, as well. Approaching the text in order to control it and thus eliminate risk to oneself might result in bland reading, or it might result in the failure of the German Evangelical Church to resist the Third Reich.

It is important to differentiate between eliminating risk as a means of control and mitigating risk as a means of harm reduction. It is one thing to establish healthy boundaries, to say "this far and no further," and to safeguard those boundaries against violation. It is another thing entirely to tell someone what their boundaries are or are not or what they may or may not look like. The first is harm reduction; the second is manipulation. God is not averse to harm reduction in encounters with creatures—though in reading Scripture God may work to heal the realities that make harm reduction in God's presence necessary—and does not seek to manipulate them through Scripture.

Healthy boundaries are not out of place when reading the Bible because God is the Comforter and the Giver of Life. This does not mean that reading will be easy, but that it is ultimately for the sake of the reader's good and so will be safe despite difficulties. The sufficiency of Scripture means that one need not experience the entire thing all at once in order to encounter God there and so can take one's time acclimating to the divine encounter.[24] Furthermore, the perspicuity of Scripture, while it does not guarantee that reading will be easy or straightforward, means that readers can encounter

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[23] Nagel,"Sexual Perversion," 133-134; Williams, "The Body's Grace," 313.

[24] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 18-19, 62.

God as they themselves truly are before Scripture—not as they have been told to be or that they are, and not under an outside authority—and still trust that God is present through that reading.[25] The divine touch may be overwhelming, but it is never violating, and readers are called to experience the reality of the living God through Scripture, not to offer themselves as a sacrifice on the altar of the Bible.

Critical methods may go a long way to casting out falsehoods from interpretations of the Bible and this is itself a sanctified and revelatory function of the Spirit's illumination.[26] Likewise, supposedly superior theological methods may not be conducive to an "empowering summons to reason," and may simply be ways of avoiding active engagement with difficult issues.[27] Critical methods are often more conducive to harm-reductive reading because they can be instances of establishing and maintaining healthy boundaries. A reader who has had the Bible used as a weapon against them may insist on a literary or deconstructionist reading for themselves as a way of overcoming the harm done them, and God is fully capable of being present in such endeavors. In this sense critical studies and the scholarly guild of biblical criticism may provide a sort of safe haven, a community (perhaps even a church) in which readers can find help in their

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[25] Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 93-95.

[26] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 62.

[27] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 29.

Often, claims about the superiority of patristic or medieval exegesis are not so much arguments that the methods employed were good, as much as that the methods currently employed are bad. This is frequently the result of the genetic fallacy, whereby the admittedly anti-religious origins of critical study under Spinoza come to mean that all critical studies are by definition anti-religious. A welcome exception to the rule is David Steinmetz, "The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis," *Ex Auditu* 1 (1985), 74-82, which, while still falling prey to what Webster calls "*post tenebrae lux* rhetoric" about the recovery of pre-modern readings, nevertheless actively argues that patristic and medieval readings are simply better readings. However, the dichotomy between "critical" and "pre-critical" is often taken to correspond to "old" and "new," which is not in fact the case as pre-modern exegesis often involved what would today be considered critical activity. See Rebecca Wollenberg, "The Book that Changed: Narratives of Ezran Authorship as Late Antique Biblical Criticism," *JBL* 183, no. 1 (2019), 143-160.

encounters with Scripture.

The primary danger of critical methods is that they can foster the illusion of hermeneutical neutrality. Total hermeneutical neutrality is not desirable or even possible, and the discussion of semantics above goes to show that neutrality is in fact the opposite of meaning. Hermeneutical neutrality and divine revelation are at odds, because God's self-presence is not cognitive content to be apprehended, but fellowship to be enjoyed.[28] Since neutrality is impossible, the attempt to exercise it is an attempt at mitigating hermeneutical risk and so is not permitted of faithful readers. Readers must acknowledge who they are and why they come to the text, especially given the embodied nature of language.

Embodied Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is a bodily enterprise because texts and readers are embodied. The encounter between the text and the reader occurs first at the level of the body and so is perceived first as an erotic encounter. The surface of the text brushes the surface of the embodied mind and the response to this can take any number of forms. Encountering one passage might be like touching a hot stove, while another passage might be more like picking up a warm cup of tea on a cold, windy day. One text may be a balm to the soul, another a double edged sword. A text that is a gentle embrace to one reader may be a slap across the face to another. Visceral and emotional reactions occasioned by the text are not to be written off as "eisegetical," because neither the text itself nor its content is

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[28] Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 16.

revelation as such.[29] Revelation in Scripture is God's self-presence through the text, and God is present to the whole human person. The work of God does not stop with the production of texts, but includes the act of reading, so one's reaction to the text is itself revelatory, sanctified, and illuminated.[30]

This is why reading Scripture properly takes place in diverse contexts. What is comforting to one reader may be convicting and chastening to another. Discerning what constitutes a morally good reading can require time, repeated readings, and not infrequently the sanctified and illuminating input of fellow readers. The same is true of discerning what the proper response to a reading is. Since the community constituted by reading Scripture is a community of accountability before God, the diverse responses within the reading community and among various reading communities are to be taken into account.

There is reason to trust that metaphor is not a distortion of or detraction from divine revelation but a linguistic translation of God's self-communication. Not only are metaphors themselves generally instances of linguistically reified knowledge rather than distortions, a confident and trusting hermeneutics is theologically justified because the Bible is the word of God the Father by the action of the Spirit under the authority of the Son. The sanctification and inspiration of the Bible mean that the text of the Bible is

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[29] Emotional and physical reactions are not entirely separate things, as recent developments in psychology and psychotherapy have shown. Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing Therapy—in which bilateral sensory stimuli condition and facilitate memory access and accompanying physiological responses—in particular shows the deeply integrated nature of the mind and the body from a clinical, rather than linguistic, perspective. See Bessel van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Mind, Brain, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York: Viking Press, 2014). On EMDR, see pp. 250-254.

[30] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 46-49, 59-63. It is important to note that illumination is the proper term here, not inspiration, which is a specifically textual term.

sufficient to bring readers into saving fellowship and perfecting communion with God and that God will not be absent from God's own actions of being present.

While metaphors can be trusted to reveal and communicate, a hermeneutics of trust *in the text itself* is not mandatory or exclusive. This is because neither the path from revelation to text nor from text to understanding is self-evident or simple.[31] Furthermore, the text of the Bible may be weaponized by readers and the act of reading may be distorted by the sin of the reader.[32] Simplistic, fundamentalist, or harmful readings of the Bible cannot be justified or glossed over by appealing to a hermeneutic of trust. In fact, a hermeneutic of suspicion directed toward the Bible is justified by the utter faithfulness of God: because God is trustworthy, readers of the Bible can be assured that any harm they encounter at the hands of the biblical text is not the will of God, and so they are empowered to read that harm out of the text and to trust that such readings are underwritten by the Spirit's illumination.[33] God does not use evil to accomplish God's ends because evil is not a part of God.

In terms of metaphor, this involves recognizing the fact that they might have been otherwise. Embodied encounters are complex things and the ways in which they are converted to conceptual content and language are variable and rhetorically manipulable. This does not mean cutting out metaphors and replacing them with others since metaphors are not simple entities but complex, embodied processes. Simply replacing the source domain will not solve the problem. It does mean recognizing that there is

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[31] Webster, *Word and Church*, 73.

[32] Webster, *Word and Church*, 46.

[33] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 54-58; Webster, *God Without Measure I*, 110-111.

necessarily tension between the embodied experiences textualized in the pages of the Bible and the embodied experiences of readers.

This may all seem rather esoteric in the sense that it does not say very much about hermeneutical praxis and hardly fleshes out the actual realities of accomplishing the tasks set out in the previous section. There do not seem to be any rules for interpretation. That is precisely as it should be, and as Webster would have it. Methodological exclusivism is an instance of readers insisting upon mastery over the text and so resisting open encounter with it. Method derives from reading, not *vice versa*.[34] The question of method is not one of which reading strategy produces the most correct result, the result closest to the "meaning" of a given text because there is really no such thing as *the* meaning of any given text. Methodological choices are determined by the ways in which readers encounter the Bible, the body they bring to that encounter, the bodies that accompany them to it. To that end, as Webster puts it: "We do not need much more by way of prolegomena to exegesis; we do need more exegesis."[35]

Exegetical Case Study: The Personification of Jerusalem and Divine Violence

The connection between the human and the divine is mediated by bodies, and this mediation takes the form of language arising from embodied experience. A particular form of this mediation is metaphor, whereby abstract (less embodied) domains are understood via concrete (more embodied) domains. Thus, divine revelation—the, "self-

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[34] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 45-46.

[35] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 30.

representation of the Triune God,"—takes place in and through human bodies and is brought forth as human language. This revelation is textualized by bodies in community under the rubric of inspiration and so is itself an agent. Readers encounter this textual form and that encounter is itself revelatory because God grants to be present in the reading of Scripture. So far, so good, but can all this go awry?[36] If so, how, and what is to be done and said in response, both with regard to divine revelation and with regard to the human cost of such metaphors?

It would seem that things can, in fact, go awry, and that, *contra* Webster, such distortions are not the result of readerly "resistance to grace."[37] In encountering the text of Scripture, readers may be perfectly willing to receive grace—even craving grace in a Lordean erotic sense—and yet still come away from the text not merely discomfited, but hurt or with traumas reactivated. This is not to say that grace is convertible with immediate comfort or that receiving grace is never a difficult or unwelcome process. It is to say that the Bible is entirely capable of re-enforcing and re-inscribing harm in ways which further that harm (and which perhaps even distance the reader from God, which is surely not a component of grace).

This case study presents an example of how the above model might be employed in one such situation. The situation is the use of metaphors of sexual violence to construe the exile of Judah in theological terms, and this case study will attempt to show how they may be faithfully discounted as accurate depictions of God's nature. The guiding

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[36] "Metaphor Gone Awry" is a section heading in Renita Weems, *Battered Love: Marriage, Sex, and Violence in the Hebrew Prophets*, Overtures to Biblical Theology (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), 104.

[37] Webster*, Holy Scripture*, 106.

theological and hermeneutical principles here are harm reduction for readers who are themselves survivors of the sorts of violence depicted in these texts, a refusal to excuse the violence of these texts, a conviction that simply excising texts from the Bible is at best an emergency measure, and the belief that talk of punishment is often conflated with talk of inflicting suffering. This case study is not intended to be the final or comprehensive word on how metaphors in the Bible are to be understood or interpreted; there is perhaps room for more positive readings than it will undertake.

JERUSALEM IS A WOMAN

The metaphor JERUSALEM IS A WOMAN is itself a specific instance of the broader metaphor system surrounding the basic metaphor A CITY IS A WOMAN. The association of cities with female-ness is a fairly common trope in the ancient Near East and in the Hebrew Bible, though the explicit identification of a city as a woman is not found in the broader ANE literature.[38] That is, while feminine imagery and female deities are commonly associated with ANE cities, the Hebrew Prophets seem to have elaborated and extended this metaphor of their own accord.

The most prevalent linguistic expression of this metaphor in the Hebrew Bible is the use of the title בת ציון in the prophets. This epithet is typically pointed as a construct phrase (*baṯ-ṣiyyôn*), and it may be interpreted grammatically in two ways. In one view, the genitive function of the construct chain is understood as a locative. "Daughter-of-

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[38] F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion: A Study of the City-Lament Genre in the Hebrew Bible*, Biblica et Orientalia 44 (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1993), 75-90; F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, Interpretation (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 50-53; Weems, *Battered Love*, 44-45.

Geographic Name" would thus originally have referred to the goddess worshipped at a particular site.[39] The phrase may thus be translated "Daughter of Zion" but because Israel would not have worshipped a goddess, it is understood as referring poetically to a personified Jerusalem.[40] The second view understands the word בת as a term of status or of endearment, a title rather than a locative, and proponents of this view are divided on whether or not the construct is truly a construct or a genitive.[41]

The understanding of בת as a title is preferable because it comports with a broader range of expressions than a locative use. For example, both בת and the masculine בן are used in construct with things other than geographic names, and a titular view is better able to explain these other uses.[42] Furthermore, the distinction between a city and that city's patron deities is very fine in the ANE, and it is likely that it is simply elided in many cases, regardless of whether this elision is made explicit as metaphor in ANE literature.[43]

At any rate, the point is that this is a fairly cut-and-dry grammatical indication of a personification metaphor. This personification metaphor JERUSALEM IS A WOMAN frequently co-occurs with the metonymy THE CITY FOR ITS INHABITANTS. Jerusalem is personified as the woman Daughter Zion who then stands for the inhabitants of Jerusalem

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[39] F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, "The Syntagma of *Bat* Followed by a Geographical Name in the Hebrew Bible: A Reconsideration of its Meaning and Grammar," *CBQ* 57, no. 3 (July 1995), 451-470.

[40] Dobbs-Allsopp, "The Syntagma of *Bat*," 455-456.

[41] Adele Berlin, *Lamentations*, Old Testament Library (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 10-12.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion*, 75-90; Delbert R. Hillers, *Lamentations: A New Translation with Notes and Introduction*, 2nd ed., AB7A (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 34. But see also, *contra* Dobbs-Allsopp, Berlin, *Lamentations*, 11.

by metonymy. This motif occurs prominently as a means of construing the relationship between YHWH and Israel/Judah as a marriage (JERUSALEM IS YHWH'S WIFE) in the context of the exile, which is often but not always construed as YHWH's punishment (THE EXILE OF JUDAH IS YHWH DISCIPLINING HIS WIFE).[44] It is important here to bear in mind that there is not just one "marriage metaphor," but an entire constellation of metaphors that are extensions and elaborations of the central metaphor of personification.[45] In fact, the metaphor of marital discipline has been somewhat overwrought in the literature.

In Hosea, the metaphor JERUSALEM IS YHWH'S WIFE is traditionally thought to be enacted in the sign-act marriage of Hosea and Gomer because Hosea is faithful but marries an unfaithful spouse. However, it is more likely that Gomer—as an אשׁת זנונים—stands for the nations with whom Israel "prostitutes" herself, while Hosea stands for Israel who takes up with prostutites.[46] Carleen Mandolfo calls Hosea "the *ur*-usage" of the metaphor system surrounding marital violence, since she reads it as chronologically the earliest example of the combined personification, marriage, and punishment

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[44] Carleen Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion Talks Back to the Prophets: A Dialogic Theology of the Book of Lamentations*, Semeia Studies 58 (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2007), 23-24, treats this metaphor as its own construction, but I prefer to place it within the broader system centered around the more basic personification metaphor JERUSALEM IS A WOMAN.

[45] Sharon Moughtin-Mumby, *Sexual and Marital Metaphors in* Hosea*,* Jeremiah*,* Isaiah*, and* Ezekiel, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 22-30, raises objections to the flattening of this metaphorical system into the singular "marriage metaphor." In fact, marriage is an elaboration of two other, more primary metaphors—the personification of YHWH as male and of Israel/Judah/Jerusalem as female. Marriage is a possible entailment of paired male-female personification which may instantiated in the ways each book metaphorically construes this pairing.

[46] Moughtin-Mumby, *Sexual and Marital Metaphors*, 215-2, argues that Hosea's marriage to Gomer does not symbolize the marriage of YHWH to Israel: instead, the fact Gomer is an אשׁת זנונים means the arrangement should be read as representing the fact that Israel has "prostituted" itself away from YHWH with foreign nations. In this case, then, Hosea is metonymic for Israel, not for YHWH.

metaphors.[47] This is the wrong tack. Hosea is potentially the *ur*-usage not of the metaphor ISRAEL IS YHWH'S WIFE but of YHWH'S PUNISHMENT OF ISRAEL IS SEXUAL VIOLENCE. This metaphor may then be elaborated to involve spousal relationships. The metaphor system is then used again in Jeremiah 2, 3, and 13 and in Ezekiel 16 and 23, but in these instances, the nations surrounding Judah are also personified as Zion's lovers who eventually become her assailants, thus making explicit the metaphorical entailment of the domain EXILE OF JUDAH that the exile was a matter international politics.

Within the metaphorical construction YHWH'S PUNISHMENT OF ISRAEL IS SEXUAL VIOLENCE, Zion is subjected to brutalization by her former lovers at YHWH's command and with YHWH's involvement. In fact, it is YHWH himself who will publicly strip Zion naked and invite her former lovers to come and beat, stone, and humiliate her (Jer 13:20-27; Ezek 16:35-63). Lamentations 1:8-10, where Daughter Zion is found sitting in the wake of her assault, and Ezek 23:43-44 confirm that this brutalization is more than the already horrific attacks described elsewhere, but that Zion has been raped.[48] The metaphor JERUSALEM IS A WOMAN is now used to depict the sack of the city

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[47] Weems, *Battered Love*, 45-52, however, reads the interaction of Hosea and Gomer as an attempt at manipulation aimed at solidifying YHWH's claim to have been wronged by his wife and his subsequent right to punish her. This point may stand even if one agrees with Moughtin-Mumby that Hosea and Gomer do not stand for YHWH and Israel.

[48] Dobbs-Allsopp, F. W., and Tod Linafelt. "The Rape of Zion in Thr 1,10," *ZAW* 113, no. 1 (2001), 77-81; Berlin, *Lamentations*, 55.

Lamentations reads "(8) Jerusalem sinned grievously, so she has become a mockery; all who honored her despise her, for they have seen her nakedness; she herself groans, and turns her face away. (9) Her uncleanness was in her skirts; she took no thought of her future; her downfall was appalling, with none to comfort her. 'O Lord, look at my affliction, for the enemy has triumphed!' (10) Enemies have stretched out their hands over all her precious things; she has even seen the nations invade [√בוא, *to come into*] her sanctuary those whom you forbade to enter [√בוא] your congregation."

Ezekiel, using the same verbal root, reads: "Then I said, Ah, she is worn out with adulteries, but they carry on their sexual acts with her. For they have gone in to her as one goes into a whore. Thus they went into Oholah and Oholibah." Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion Talks Back*, 51, points out that Oholah (Samaria) and Oholibah (Jerusalem) were known to be promiscuous before their marriage to YHWH, and so YHWH's motives here might be even more dastardly.

as YHWH disciplining Israel by having her publicly gang raped by her former lovers, the nations. Though YHWH is not necessarily depicted as one of Zion's rapists along with the personified nations, he is not exculpated in the slightest since he ordered, sanctioned, facilitated, and apparently watched the entire thing.[49] Moreover, these passages compound the horror of YHWH's treatment of Zion by blaming the victim. In Jer 2-3; 13:22-27 and Ezek 16:1-29; 23:1-22, YHWH makes it clear that he is punishing Zion for her sins. There is no room for doubt that Zion is violated repeatedly and gruesomely because YHWH is teaching her a lesson, and it is hardly a comfort that YHWH will take Zion back after the spectacle of her punishment (Hos 2:14-23; Jer 3:6-4:4; 33; Ezek 16:59-63).

It is significant that Lamentations is the book which indicates that the sack of Jerusalem is the rape of Zion because nowhere in Lamentations does YHWH speak.[50] Whereas elsewhere YHWH is the one speaking (*in persona vatis*) here Zion speaks and neither she nor the poet-narrator who has found her sitting among the rubble spare any details or let anyone off the hook. Lamentations, by ensuring that Zion tells her side of the story, can be seen as a sort of protest against YHWH and the nations serving as his

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[49] Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion Talks Back*, 44, argues that Jer 13:26 is YHWH's confession that he is among Zion's rapists. This is a plausible, reading, though not definite as it is based on certain assumptions about Hebrew euphemisms and is potentially dispreferred given the entailment structures of the metaphors. In this context, ultimately, the distinction between YHWH and the nations becomes specious, and the moral culpability of YHWH and the nations becomes identical.

[50] It is possible that Lam 4:21-22 are a prophetic interjection, which might indicate that they are YHWH's speech by proxy. Cf. Robin A. Parry, *Lamentations*, Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 142.

If this is the case, they do nothing to address the charges Zion has brought against YHWH. In fact they exacerbate the problem by indicating and rejoicing that Edom is next.

cronies.[51] Lamentations also answers the victim blaming of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, not by insisting that Judah was without sin, but by insisting that no sin could possibly warrant the punishment meted out against Zion (Lam 1:18; 2:20-22).

The immediate theological point of these depictions is fairly clear and often made in the texts themselves: Judah has, despite his loving care, betrayed YHWH by committing idolatry and by allying with foreign nations and so YHWH will punish his people. The covenantal context is indicated by the form of the ריב or covenant lawsuit in Hosea 2 and 4 and Jeremiah 2-3.[52] Diachronically, this metaphor is a case of Israel working out its status before YHWH in the wake of the collapse of the covenant in the exile and coming to grips with how a nation whose patron deity is the supreme creator could have fallen. In the minds of exiled Judah, this clearly must be a case of divine punishment.[53]

These instances cannot simply be written off because they are metaphorical.[54]

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[51] Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion Talks Back*, 2-3.

Moughtin-Mumby, *Sexual and Marital Metaphors*, 75-79, 110-116, 151-155, discusses the ways in which prophetic narratives involving sexual violence often subvert themselves. This is a valuable textual and theological observation, and the subtle testimony to solidarity among battered women is not to be discounted. However, this study has opted not to emphasize these patterns because of a sense that they are too little too late for post-traumatic readers to the extent that they grant legitimacy to the portrayal of God as sexually violent. Moughtin-Mumby herself points out that textual attempts at self-subversion are often unsuccessful (pp. 274-276). Cf. Berlin, *Lamentations*, 7-10.

[52] Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion Talks Back*, 33, 37.

[53] Weems. *Battered Love*, 80-83, writes that, while contemporary readers may not know how to face a God who is complicit in calamities or atrocities such as the exile or the genocide of the Canaanites after the forty years in the desert, it is undeniably the case that Israel-Judah was entirely willing to face and face up to such a deity.

This study has not explored the possibility that perhaps the error in these texts is the very notion that the exile is something YHWH purposefully inflicted upon Israel as punishment, focusing instead on the theological warrant for discounting the validity of imputing sexual violence to God. Nonetheless, such a reading might be possible on the basis of an analogical understanding of divine causation and on a robust hamartiology and redemption that differentiates between inflicting suffering in order to accomplish an end and the natural discomfort that can accompany restorative actions.

[54] J. Cheryl Exum, *Plotted, Shot and Painted: Cultural Representations of Biblical Women*, JSOT Supplements 215 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 119.

From a cognitive standpoint, the fact that gendered violence has worked its way into conceptual metaphor should be quite alarming since it is both a reflection and a reification of the prevalence of this violence.[55] In deploying these metaphors the author has assumed that they would be real enough in the lives of the audience to elicit particular responses, and so the inflection of Jerusalem's personification into a depiction of sexual violence is undertaken on purpose to make a theological point.[56] That is, gendered and sexualized violence can serve as a source domain for understanding divine actions only because it is already a part of the world in which these texts were written.

Even more troubling is that these metaphors are framed as delivered by divine speech to and through the prophets. If only Lamentations deployed these metaphors, the situation might be a little different, though not entirely resolved, but they occur in Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, as well. In these texts, YHWH portrays himself as the wronged husband seeking justice (Hos 2:5-7; Jer 13:24-27; Ezek 23:35), but the actions he claims as his own—deploying sexual violence as a punishment—seem more like those of an abuser, violator, and sex offender. In this case not only is God depicted as violent and abusive, but divine authority is claimed for these metaphors by their location in prophetic

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[55] Weems, *Battered Love*, 40-44, 86-87.

[56] Weems, *Battered Love*, 35-67.

Peggy L. Day, "Yahweh's Broken Marriage as Metaphoric Vehicle in the Hebrew Bible Prophets," in *Sacred Marriages: The Divine-Human Sexual Metaphor from Sumer to Early Christianity*, ed. Martti Nissinen and Risto Uro (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 219-241, argues that YHWH is not portrayed as an abusive spouse because the prophetic usages of this metaphor system do not reflect literal scenarios in the life of Israel (i.e. men did not legally have the right to punish their wives via sexual assault). These metaphors are in some sense disarmed since they are rhetorical devices whose form is intentionally structured by the prophets using them and this authorial structuring does not take the form of spousal abuse. This is simply not how metaphors work. Metaphorical entailments may or may not be explicitly activated in any given scenario, but authorial and rhetorical intention does not govern whether or not they are possible.

discourse and divine address.[57]

These passages issue a hermeneutical and spiritual "call to reason" because they are deeply disturbing and demand a response. Some of them in fact directly demand a response from YHWH himself (Lam 1:12). There is no place whatsoever here for lazy, uninvolved interpretation. However, this statement needs to be carefully qualified: it does not mean that God put these depictions of sexual violence in the Bible to make readers pause and think, like a sort of exegetical brainteaser.

Because evil is not component to God's nature, it stands to reason that something has gone very wrong here in the creaturely realities of the text and their depiction of God. Metaphors come from embodied experiences, and they function within the divine economy of analogy as revelatory conceptual and linguistic features, but they can still be distorted by human sin and embodied systems of human sin. In this case, sexual abuse and gendered violence are sinful components of the world of exilic Judah and this sin twisted some of the metaphors through which they encountered God. Construals of God as sexually violent are therefore to be rejected out of hand.

There is, furthermore, a metaphysical warrant for rejecting these metaphoric decisions: the doctrine that evil, rather than being a substance possessing an essence, is actually a *privatio boni*—a deprivation of goodness and therefore a deprivation of

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[57] Weems, *Battered Love*, 21.

Mark Smith, *The Memoirs of God: History, Memory, and the Experience of the Divine in Ancient Israel*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2004), 131-140, raises the question of biblical text-formation as a means not only of remembering but of forgetting. In this sense, these metaphors may be an explicit instance of projection onto God in the attempt to convert guilt or blame for human actions into divine consequences.

being.[58] From this standpoint, because these texts posit evil behaviors of God, rejecting their claims is not actually a rejection *per se*, but the crossing of an existential lacuna and therefore a sanctified act of healing and regeneration. Since neutrality, including theological neutrality, is not required for faithful reading, such an interpretive move is not eisegetical, but a recognition that revelation is multifarious.

Reading these passages of the Bible becomes an instance in the overcoming of the authors' sins and the structural/systemic sins of gendered violence by the reader's rejection of these metaphorical constructions and the sin whose bodily reality informs them and is caused by them. A morally healthy reader reading these metaphors ought to be repulsed and reviled and to sense viscerally that they are not of God.[59] This rejection is itself a sanctified reality that occurs within the realm of God's self-presence to readers because "our faith is in a God who has come to rescue His creation from the absurdity of sin, the emptiness and waste of death, the forces—whether calculating malevolence or imbecile chance—that shatter living souls; and so we are permitted to hate these things with a perfect hatred."[60]

Nor is rejecting these depictions of God even necessarily an instance of "reading against the text," since Lamentations interrogates these violent depictions of YHWH and

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[58] Aquinas, *Summa*, 1a.48.1; Scott Harrower, *God of all Comfort: A Trinitarian Response to the Horrors of this World*, Studies in Historical and Systematic Theology (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 19-24, 26-31.

[59] Ellen Davis, "Critical Traditioning: Seeking an Inner-Biblical Hermeneutic," in *The Art of Reading Scripture*, ed. Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 179: "Ethical consciousness, informed by prayerful life within the faith community, is a legitimate hermeneutical tool."

[60] David Bentley Hart, *The Doors of the Sea: Where was God in the Tsunami?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 101.

insists that they are evil if they are true. Likewise, it seems unlikely that the prophet Jeremiah set out to teach Israel that God is abusive or sexually violent.[61] The world of gendered and sexualized violence inherent in these texts is not a world which anyone, including contemporary readers, should be made to accept or inhabit.

Here, even the Bible seems to stand in opposition to itself. Hosea 4:14 reads "I will not punish your daughters when they play the whore, nor your daughters-in-law when they commit adultery; for the men themselves go aside with whores, and sacrifice with temple prostitutes; thus a people without understanding comes to ruin (NRSV)."[62] 1 John 1:5 writes that "God is light and in him there is no darkness at all," so there is an inherent tension between these metaphors and other texts; the Bible is unitary not univocal.

The embodied reaction to these metaphors—the urge to do away with them or the fact that they may activate the reader's trauma—is the reaction to sin that readers ought to

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[61] Weems, *Battered Love*, 19-20, argues that the rhetorical effect of victim blaming here is actually intended to be perceived as a relief to the audience by showing that YHWH is not capricious or deranged, but is acting out of a sense of justice over a broken covenant arrangement. However, in Ezek 16:61-63, the refounding of the covenant is actually depicted as a punishment in itself, designed to bring even greater shame on Judah because she has been forgiven of so great an iniquity.

The point of authorial intention should not be overstated. It is a matter of license to read otherwise not an argument that these texts cannot cause or perpetuate harm. Raymond C. Ortlund Jr., *Whoredom: God's Unfaithful Wife in Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), argues that punishment is fitting within the metaphorical framework that Israel is YHWH's wife, writing on p. 182 that "the text itself gives no indication of the prophets' inner motives and attitudes…[the prophets] had no personal interest in advancing a system of male domination." Setting aside Ortlund's rather assumption-laden account of the nature of human marriage in pp. 15-23, this is simply not how metaphor works. If it can be shown that YHWH'S PUNISHMENT OF ISRAEL IS SEXUAL VIOLENCE actually occurs in texts, then it simply is true, regardless of whether or not Jeremiah or Ezekiel would have put it there on purpose. Its implications and effects are cognitive and therefore to some extent unconscious. These texts are taking advantage of a reality, both in the lives of the authors and in the lives of the audience.

[62] The use of the pejorative *whore* to translate Hebrew √זנה is disputed. On the one hand it does convey the sense of degradation inherent in these texts; on the other hand it may not actually reflect the most accurate meaning of the root which can be used of a wide variety of sexual scenarios not limited to sex work. See Gerlinde Baumann, *Love and Violence: Marriage as Metaphor for the Relationship Between YHWH and Israel in the Prophetic Books*, trans. Linda Maloney (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), 43-46; and Wilda C. Gafney, *Womanist Midrash: A Reintroduction to the Women of the Torah and the Throne* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2018) 118-121.

have, and yet the texts remain in the Bible. Insisting on the falsehood of sexually violence depictions of God does not mean that these passages are excised from the Bible or rendered inert detritus aside from revelation or sancitfication, but that they must be read properly despite the various sorts of tensions present in them. This may take the form of reading apophatically: these passages and metaphors portray God as God is not and readers know this in their embodied reactions to the text. In the juxtaposition between God as God is and the textual depiction of God, the reader sees God's true self-presentation more clearly.

These texts are inspired to stand as Holy Scripture in the sense that they are warnings about and case studies in the way sin damages human perception of God. Even the message that God is coming to eradicate Israel's sin is itself distorted through the lens of sin into a portrayal of a violent, abusive God. In reading this way, tension is not resolved simplistically. These texts remain and remain uncomfortable, even harmful and possibly traumatic, but that that harm is not the product of divine action against God's people; instead, it is a result of sin's distortion. In so reading, sin is named as sin and is therefore confronted directly as a reality opposed to God which is ultimately defeated in the divine economy. The somatic knowledge of the wrongness of sexually violent depictions of God is thus not accidental to these texts, but the key to their sanctified, revelatory, and salvific function as Scripture.

Being taught by these texts is an uncomfortable idea, but there are some senses in which it might be done. Being taught by these texts means realizing that there is danger in the divine encounter—not because God is dangerous but because creatures are fallen

and seek to weaponize their relationship with God for oppressive ends. Being taught by these texts means finding oneself set against the realities they depict and the sort of God they imagine just as Godself actually is. Being taught by these texts means realizing that contemporary readers are not the only students who need to receive instruction in the ways of God. In fact, one might learn from these texts that God is faithful to God's people despite what that people might claim about their God. These passages and metaphors might also be an instance where the reader is moved to the recognition of their own complicity in violent or abusive systems and situations through the process of trying to come to grips with these passages. These passages might even teach that God is everlastingly faithful and that restoration and healing is possible for wounded humans.[63]

These last two points, though, are not the purpose of these texts but a potential epiphenomenon. One may read these texts in a subversively redemptive manner as Weems does, taking certain theological points without granting the truth of the metaphor *per se*, but this is not the only option. It must be said that God is fully capable of overcoming sin without compounding it with more sin, and does not need to use evil to accomplish divine goals. God does not need these metaphors to reveal that God is fundamentally opposed to the dynamics they enshrine or to orient creatures in opposition to them. God does not need to use human sexual violence to show that God is unfailingly faithful even in the face of human sin; God simply is unwaveringly faithful. Where evil

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[63] Weems, *Battered Love*, 113-115, is much more willing to entertain this sort of idea than I am, likely because I am approaching these metaphors theologically while she is approaching them much more anthropologically and sociologically. As this chapter has argued, this difference is not one of right vs. wrong, but simply different ways of encountering the Bible and finding God there. Finding human meaning in the Bible is not an invalid use of Scripture any more than not finding theological meaning is, though this thesis has bracketed such concerns.

has been wrought, God is the sovereign Healer and Comforter, the infinite outpouring of love that sets all things right, and so may work to mitigate the evil wrought by creatures by directing it to a better end until its ultimate defeat in the consummation of creation at the eschaton.

Conclusion

The embodied nature of language and revelation means that the Bible must be taken seriously. Reading must be undertaken with great care, spiritual sensitivity, intellectual rigor, and emotional fortitude because human lives and bodies are on the line. Reading in the economy of grace is an exercise in encountering the living God as reconciler, comforter, teacher, and life-giver. This encounter is not frivolous or casual, and neither is it under the control of the reader, but it means that the reader can find their own resurrection and communion with God through the pages of Scripture.

Emotional and physical reactions to the text are themselves a part of how the text serves as the location of God's self-presence. Given the reality of the embodied mind and the nature of the divine economy, it is is entirely fitting that God is present to the entire human person, not merely to some small portion. This in turn means that hermeneutics must take into account such reactions, not necessarily in isolation—not as an exclusivist triumph for reader-response theory—but even in the construction of reading methods.

Conclusion

This study has proposed a model for integrating the mind, the body, and the text of the Bible, and for understanding their place within the divine economy.

Chapter one examines Webster's doctrine of Scripture: the triune God is present through the sanctified creaturely processes of the Bible in a free and gracious act of self-revelation. Webster, however, is largely unwilling to delve into the anthropological aspects of the doctrine of Scripture, and so his robust doctrine of Scripture starts to feel a little hollow in places.

Chapter two examines the claims of CMT to show that the embodied mind converts physical experiences and perceptions into abstract concepts through the vehicle of metaphor. However, cognitive linguists often take their findings in reductionist directions, which is neither necessary or feasible, and so a means of accounting theologically for these findings is needed.

In chapter three, the *analogia entis* was laid out and proposed as the only viable theological model for the relationship between God and the world. The *analogia entis* provides an account of the divine economy which is able to encompass both divine and human causality and therefore to account for both Webster's doctrine of Scripture and the findings of CMT. Within the analogy of being, the natural and the supernatural are simultaneously both entirely discrete and intimately related, and so the embodied mind poses no problem.

Since CMT argues for the embodied nature of the mind, despite its inability to actually account for it, chapter four explores one way in which the *analogia entis* can be configured with respect to the body using queer theological metaphors. Specifically, the *analogia entis* is best conceptualized in terms of surface touch which preserves transcendence but also converts it into intimacy. It then argues further that the fundamental immanence-in-transcendence of the *analogia entis* is in fact perceived by the body as eros. It is this erotic-analogical perception of intimacy with the transcendent God which is the basic form of experiencing God; this encounter is then taken up into conceptual metaphor and translated into language.

Chapter five moves from bibliology to hermeneutics, looking at some of the implications of the preceding chapters for the actual event of Bible reading. The most significant points are a hermeneutical and methodological particularism and an increased awareness and attentiveness to the physical and emotional reactions of one's body when reading. The reader is not called to be a dispassionate, uninvested, disconnected observer, but to be wholly invested in the self-presence of God that takes place through Scripture.

The case study of sexually violent metaphors for YHWH's interaction with humanity provides a rigorous test case for the proposals of this thesis. It argues that the account of revelation in Scripture given in this thesis and the hermeneutical implications thereof are sufficient to respond to some of the most shocking and horrific passages in the Bible without compromising the nature of the Bible has Holy Scripture or denigrating human needs for the sake of the text.

God can be found through the pages of the Bible because God chooses to be present to creatures through those pages and has ordained all of creation in such a way as to be suited to that self-presence. But the pages of the Bible are the result of a long process of divine-human interaction and divine self-presence, and this result itself is not a fixed or static declaration. God is present through the Bible because God is present through the body which reads the Bible and so encounters God. The word of God made text touches the embodied human mind to bring ever more faithful, abundant, and joyful communion, fellowship, healing, justice, understanding, comfort, enjoyment, and peace.

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