Biblical Ethics and Application

Edited by
RUBEN ZIMMERMANN
and STEPHAN JOUBERT

Mohr Siebeck

Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament

Herausgeber / Editor
Jörg Frey (Zürich)

Mitherausgeber / Associate Editors
Markus Bockmuehl (Oxford) · James A. Kelhoffer (Uppsala)
Hans-Josef Klauck (Chicago, IL) · Tobias Nicklas (Regensburg)
J. Ross Wagner (Durham, NC)

384

Biblical Ethics and Application

Purview, Validity, and Relevance of Biblical Texts
in Ethical Discourse

Kontexte und Normen neutestamentlicher Ethik /
Contexts and Norms of New Testament Ethics

Volume IX

Edited by

Ruben Zimmermann and
Stephan Joubert

Mohr Siebeck

Ruben Zimmermann, born 1968; Professor for New Testament Studies and Ethics at the Protestant Faculty of the Johannes Gutenberg-University, Mainz; co-founder and -leader of the Mainz Research-Center of 'Ethics in Antiquity and Christianity' (*e/αc*), chair of the Mainz Graduate School 'Time and Ethics' and elected advanced career scholar in the "Enhancing Life-Project" (Chicago); Research Associate of the University of the Free State (Bloemfontein, SA).

Stephan Joubert, born 1958; 1986–90 Minister in the Dutch Reformed Church; 1990–97 Assistant Professor in Biblical Studies, University of Pretoria; 1997–2002 Professor in New Testament Studies, University of Pretoria; 2005–09 Extraordinary Professor in New Testament Studies, University of Pretoria; since 2011 Research Fellow, Radboud University, The Netherland; since 2013 Extraordinary Professor, Contemporary Ecclesiology, University of the Free State, South Africa.

Jan G. van der Watt

On the occasion of his 65th birthday

Foreword

This publication on "Biblical Ethics and Application" is dedicated to a dear friend and esteemed colleague, Prof. Dr. Dr. Jan G. van der Watt, *Hoogleraar Exegese van het Nieuwe Testament en Bronteksten van het Christendom*, Radboud University, The Netherlands. His pioneering research on the Gospel of John and, in particular, his groundbreaking work on metaphors[1] as well as his rediscovery of the importance of ethics in Johannine writings,[2] when the analytical categories are broadened, are widely recognised and enthusiastically applied by colleagues and students across the globe.

A catalyst moment for working on ethics in John was a fruitful exchange between Jan van der Watt and Ruben Zimmermann during the latter's research visit at the University of Pretoria as a fellow of the Alexander-von-Humboldt-Foundation. During this period, Zimmermann started to explore a methodological grid to investigate the so-called "implicit ethics" of New Testament writings. This laid the foundation for the work on the eight different perspectives to approaching New Testament Ethics.[3]

In September 2008, Jan van der Watt and Ruben Zimmermann organised a conference on "Moral language in the New Testament" in Pretoria, dealing with the first of these heuristically distinguished perspectives that seeks to understand, as precisely as possible, the language of New Testament ethical statements.[4] Ethics, understood as reflection on behavioural conduct and life values, is always linked to language. There is no ethical communication without the medium of language and, ultimately, of a text. Thus, the interrelatedness of ethics with

---

[1] Jan G. van der Watt, *Family of the King: Dynamics of metaphor in the Gospel according to John* (Biblical Interpretation Series 47; Leiden: Brill, 2000).

[2] Jan G. van der Watt and Ruben Zimmermann, eds., *Rethinking the ethics of John: "Implicit ethics" in the Johannine writings* (WUNT 291; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012).

[3] See the monograph exploring this idea: Ruben Zimmermann, *Die Logik der Liebe: Die 'implizite Ethik' der Paulusbriefe am Beispiel des 1. Korintherbriefs* (Biblisch-theologische Studien 162; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2016); see also the English translation *The Logic of Love: The 'Implicit Ethics' in Pauline Writings with Special Focus on 1 Corinthians* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2018, chap. 2, forthcoming); see further a summary and discussion in Ruben Zimmermann, "How to Read Biblical Texts Ethically: The New Method of 'Implicit Ethics' in Dealing with Biblical Ethics," in *New Approaches to Biblical Ethics: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue* (ed. V. Rabens, J. Grey, and M. Kamell Kovalishyn; BINS; Leiden: Brill, 2018, forthcoming).

[4] See the corresponding publication Jan G. van der Watt and Ruben Zimmermann, eds., *Moral language in the New Testament: The interrelatedness of language and ethics in Early Christian writings* (Contexts and Norms of New Testament Ethics II; WUNT II / 296; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

language can be viewed as the basis to be investigated when dealing with the 'implicit ethics' of New Testament writings.

After exploring several other dimensions such as norms, forms, and so on in some other volumes,[5] the majority of these related to the "Mainz Moral Meeting" conferences conducted by the Research Center of Ethics in Antiquity and Christianity (*e/ac*). This present volume completes the circuit in dealing with "Biblical Ethics and Application". Although the topic of this volume is closely interrelated with the method and work on 'implicit ethics', the contributions themselves address the issue on different levels, including texts from both the Old and the New Testament and a variety of methods. As editors, we did not want to limit this diversity, as it mirrors the complexity of the biblical text itself as well as the different situations and persons that highlight these ethical dimensions of the texts.

An introductory chapter explores how 'application' or the range of influence of the Bible in ethical debate can be understood.

The topic "Biblical Ethics and Application" also suits the person honoured by this volume. Jan G. van der Watt is an outstanding individual, not only in his scholarly work, but also in his authentic conduct of life. Jan has authored a number of monographs and served as editor of numerous influential academic publications. Only a few scholars in the field reflect brightness with humility, breaking new ground with modesty, purposefulness, with attentiveness towards others. In his native country South Africa, in particular, Jan van der Watt kept the Bible alive by means of preaching, translations, radio programmes and numerous Bible Schools, which he led in countless churches across South Africa. At the same time, several popular books came from his pen. A wide range of academic prizes have already been awarded to Jan in South Africa, including the Pieter van Drimmelen Medal for his contribution to theology and Bible translation, in 2000, for the Afrikaans Bible translation "Die Boodskap", as well as the Andrew Murray Prize, in 2003, for the *Bible A–Z*, of which he is the editor. In 2006, he received the Totius Prize for his contribution to theology and Bible translation from the South African Academy for Science and Art and, in 2017, Jan won the prestigious Jan H. Marais Prize from the South African Academy for Science and Art, together with Prof. Jaap Steyn, for his outstanding contribution to Afrikaans as a language of science.

---

[5] See Friedrich Wilhelm Horn, Ulrich Volp and Ruben Zimmermann, eds., *Normen frühchristlicher Ethik: Gut – Leben – Leib – Tugend.* (Contexts and Norms of New Testament ethics IV; WUNT 313; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013); Friedrich Wilhelm Horn, Ulrich Volp and Ruben Zimmermann, eds., *Metapher – Narratio – Mimesis – Doxologie: Begründungsformen frühchristlicher und antiker Ethik* (Contexts and Norms of New Testament ethics VII; WUNT 356; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016).

In other words: He has provided an extraordinary example of how the Bible can be applied to Christian life and modern society. As a scholar, teacher, academic supervisor for over 50 PhD-students, friend, family man and believer, he has made a lasting impression on so many people's lives. We deeply honour him and his work of life with this volume.

Mainz and Pretoria, May 2017

Ruben Zimmermann
and Stephan Joubert

Table of Contents

Biblical Ethics and Application

Introduction

Stephan Joubert and Ruben Zimmermann

I. Ethics and Application – Preliminary Remarks

The term 'application' in relation to biblical ethics might be misleading, because the texts of the Bible are not a manual for moral conduct that can be followed step-by-step. The texts cannot simply be 'applied' to different contexts in time and culture. In a broader sense, 'application' can be understood as the relevance and influence of biblical texts on moral behaviour and further ethical debate. As such, the quest for 'application' might be considered to be the final goal of investigating Old and New Testament ethics. If exegesis does not define itself as a retrospective task to explore historical facts or as a self-centred scholarly activity, the motivation for reading those ancient texts has something to do with current life and the search for truth and orientation. In other words, we enter a complex field of hermeneutics about the ongoing relevance and meaning of the Bible.

Does the Bible still play a role in a Christian's daily life, in forming a moral character, in providing an orientation for the moral statements of Christian communities such as the churches, or even in social values and norms? Or can the biblical texts serve as a source of stimulation for forms of ethical thinking and reflection (e. g. narrative ethics; metaphorical ethics[1])? How can one refer to texts of the Bible in moral conduct and ethical debate? Where are the limits of such an application? It is obvious that a fundamentalistic transfer of the biblical norms or commands to the present is not feasible and, in the majority of instances in history, led to terrible consequences.[2] Anyone wishing to appeal to the Bible in

---

[1] See, for instance, Jan G. van der Watt, "Ethics Alive in Imagery", in *Imagery in the Gospel of John* (ed. J. Frey, J. G. van der Watt and R. Zimmermann; WUNT 200; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 421–48.

[2] See the discussion of these issues in Willard M. Swartley, *Slavery, Sabbath, War, and Women: Case Issues in Biblical Scripture and Ethics: Twentieth-Century Portraits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Richard A. Burridge, *Imitating Jesus: An Inclusive Approach to New Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), ch. VIII ("Apartheid: An Ethical and Generic Challenge to Reading the New Testament").

terms of questions dealing with modern moral action must be prepared to grapple with complex hermeneutical issues.[3]

Application not only means engaging with biblical texts in current life and discourse, but also deals with questions as to how a text has been understood, read, used and misused, and in this way 'applied' over the centuries. This impact of the text started as part of a communication process e.g. between the author of the Fourth Gospel and its addressees or community. Therefore, the historical contexts and frameworks, e.g. life in Corinth, Stoic philosophy, or the Roman Empire, can be taken into account in order to consider probabilities of ethical applications in ancient contexts. What might have been the "ethos" of a Christian community in which a certain text was produced? Was a text built to shape the individual moral character and/or identity of a Christian community?[4] Did early Christians even lay claim to influencing ancient society and politics?[5] Although not knowing the ways of tradition in detail, it might be of interest to reflect on those postulated scenes of application heuristically, e.g. 'reading John in Ephesus'. This process of 'application' spread as soon as a text was copied and read in new and different contexts and cultures. "Throughout the history of the church Christians have looked to the Bible for theological concepts by which to understand their moral obligations, commandments by which to live, values by which to order personal and social existence, patterns of life worthy of emulation, and insight into the dynamics of character formation."[6] Thus, the reception history of the Bible, with a special focus on ethical impacts, is also at stake.

In many instances, the quest for application and relevance reverts to the text itself and its implied claims for ethical validity. Is Paul, for instance, only interested in solving the particular problems of the Corinthians, or do formulations in the Corinthian correspondence reveal an interest in going beyond the narrow

---

[3] See, for instance, Charles H. Cosgrove, *Appealing to Scripture in Moral Debate: Five Hermeneutical Rules* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), who explores "the Rule of Purpose", "the Rule of Analogy", "the Rule of Countercultural Witness", "the Rule of Nonscientific Scope", and "the Rule of Moral-Theological Adjudication". See also Marco Hofheinz, Frank Mathwig and Matthias Zeindler, eds., *Wie kommt die Bibel in die Ethik? Beiträge zu einer Grundfrage theologischer Ethik* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2011); Volker Rabens, "The Bible and Ethics: Pathways for Dialogue,", *In die Skriflig* 51 (2017): 1–12 (https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v51i3.2246; 09/03/2017); on hermeneutics in general, see Susanne Luther and Ruben Zimmermann, "Bibelauslegung als Verstehenslehre: Geschichte der Hermeneutik im Horizont gegenwärtiger Debatten", in *Studienbuch Hermeneutik: Portraits – Modelle – Quellentexte* (ed. S. Luther and R. Zimmermann; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlag, 2014), 13–70.

[4] On the interrelatedness of ethos and identity, see Jan G. van der Watt, "Again: Identity, Ethics, and Ethos in the New Testament. A few tentative remarks", in *Identity, Ethics, and Ethos in the New Testament* (ed. J.G. van der Watt; BZNW 141; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006), 611–32.

[5] See, for instance, Harold Attridge, Warren Carter and Jan G. van der Watt, "Are John's Ethics Apolitical?" *New Testament Studies* 62 (2016): 484–97; more general Eckart Reinmuth, ed., *Politische Horizonte des Neuen Testaments* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2010).

[6] Charles H. Cosgrove, "Scripture in Ethics", in *Dictionary of scripture and ethics* (ed. J. B. Green; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 13.

confines of the issue in order to formulate ideas more fundamentally? Friedrich W. Horn recognizes the "extremely dominating manner"[7] in which the apostle presents his concerns and even describes normative claims that are not restricted to certain situations for his congregations, but for early Christianity in general.[8] What are the textual indicators for specific or more general ethical claims?

Within the *organon* of implicit ethics mentioned earlier, *textual indications* have been discussed that reveal particularity or supraindividualism on several levels (imperatives, genres, form of ethical reflection, addressee, and so on). Here again, the question is a text-based one and the query is whether and to what extent ethical reflection is designed, from the outset, for a broader context and wider horizon.[9] The question concerning the textual claims is thus only part of a complex hermeneutical process of application and relevance of a text in contemporary ethical discourse. However, it is only when one understands as precisely as possible what the texts themselves offer that one can critically reflect on such hermeneutical processes.

If a text strives for an overindividualized or more general validity, does this lead directly to axiomatic or self-evident principles or even to a universal statement? Questions along these lines have often been posed in theology. For instance, M. Theobald refers to an "anthropological universalization"[10] of Paul's teaching on justification that can become the basis for a worldwide mission beyond the confines of Judaism. Can a similar "universalization" be found in ethics? Does the primacy of the good or love in New Testament ethics – as described by Söding based on Rom 12:17–21 – have a "clear universal orientation"?[11] What exactly does "universal" or "universalism" mean in those statements? In terms of the philosophical ethical discussion, we embark on the widely debated issue of the "universal-particular problem".[12] Biblical ethics, however, is temporally

---

[7] See Friedrich Wilhelm Horn, "Wollte Paulus 'kanonisch' wirken?," in *Kanon in Konstruktion und Dekonstruktion: Kanonisierungsprozesse religiöser Texte von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart: Ein Handbuch* (ed. E.-M. Becker and S. Scholz; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012) 400–22, 401: "At the same time, we recognize canonical claims, i.e., statements seeking to establish norms, in the letters of Paul." (transl. RZ).

[8] Ibid., 402.

[9] See Ruben Zimmermann, *Die Logik der Liebe*, Die 'implizite Ethik' der Paulusbriefe am Beispiel des 1. Korintherbriefs (Biblisch-theologische Studien 162; Neukirchen Vlyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2016), 118–23.

[10] See Michael Theobald, "Die anthropologische Universalisierung," in *Paulus Handbuch* (ed. F. W. Horn; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 354–58, 357. Theobald views this as already anchored in early Judaism (1QH 4,30, and so on), but expanded and christologically based in Paul (cf. Rom 3:20; 5:18).

[11] Thomas Söding, *Nächstenliebe: Gottes Gebot als Verheißung und Anspruch* (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 2015), 282.

[12] See, e.g., in a rationalistic direction, Marcus G. Singer, *Generalization in Ethics: An Essay in the Logic of Ethics, with the Rudiments of a System of Moral Philosophy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), 61: "The generalization argument has the general form: 'If everyone were to do x, the consequences would be disastrous (or undesirable); therefore no one ought to do x.'"

bound and limited, since reflection occurs in particular individuals, particular contexts and textual forms. Therefore, we can question the validity of a narrow understanding of ethics, according to which a judgement must prove itself to be a reason-based, universal law (e. g. Kant's so-called "categorical imperative") or, in the sense of objectivism, must be able to claim validity independent of the subject or context. Yet, even in those ethical systems that focus on the linguistic medium and the textual nature and uniqueness (e. g. in narrative ethics), reflection on conduct is drawn out of the realm of reference to particular situations and into the realm of a story, in which it begins a literary life. The ethics of literature, therefore, also create an artificial, atemporal perspective that allows for a transfer into other contexts. The story thus becomes – as Ricœur rightly noted – the "first laboratory of moral judgment".[13] Following this path, the narrative elements of a story have a direct influence in shaping the moral character of a reader and a reading community, and thus, bridging the gap of history. To mention one example, characters in the narrative could be viewed as role models for ethical behaviour, which stimulates processes of identification and alienation in the act of reading.[14] In other words, the narrative, linguistic approach also leads to some form of 'application'.

Needless to say, the different fields addressed in the issue of "Biblical ethics and Application" can by no means be discussed in this brief introduction. Neither can or should they be integrated into a coherent system. Following the example of Jan van der Watt,[15] we did not even want to limit the authors' perspectives and creativity on the issue of engaging with various texts. The contributors to this volume were invited to focus on the general issues from different perspectives.

1) They could opt for a text-immanent linguistic, narratival or rhetorical approach to describe the literary devices and signals whereby a text or document points to a particular situation, or expresses and formulates a somewhat more generalized perspective.

2) They could also address the socio-historical situation by using historical diachronic methods, or reconstruct the probable or intended impact of a text on the explicit readers, as well as early Christian or later discourses.

---

[13] See Paul Ricœur, *Oneself as another* (Chicago: University Press, 1992), 140.

[14] See on these aspects *Character ethics and the New Testament: Moral Dimensions of Scripture* (ed. R. L. Brawley; Louisville: Westminster Knox, 2007); Fredrik Wagener, *Figuren als Handlungsmodelle. Simon Petrus, die samaritische Frau, Judas und Thomas als Zugänge zu einer narrative Ethik des Johannesevangeliums* (Contexts and Norms of New Testament Ethics VI; WUNT II / 408; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015).

[15] See, for instance, the articles in Van der Watt, *Identity, Ethics, and Ethos,* and his final remarks in Van der Watt, "Again: Identity, Ethics, and Ethos," 611: "Ethical conduct, as it is described in these texts, is determined by different situations and is not intended to offer a single 'objective ethical system'. … Therefore, the multi-faceted levels of diversity, theological and linguistic alike cannot simply be 'synchronized'."

3) They could also take into account the hermeneutical appropriation of the biblical text in contemporary ethical debates in different cultures, interacting with current ethical theories or moral philosophy.

These three dimensions were not intended to mark separate fields, but to address heuristically different perspectives that often overlap in analysing a text.[16] Some of the articles can be clearly linked to one of these dimensions. The majority of these articles, however, deal with more than one perspective and method. Therefore, the order of the volume will follow roughly the canonical order of the text, which is the point of reference of the contribution.

II. The Contributions in this Volume

The following summaries of articles give a first impression of the variety of perspectives and exegetical methods, by means of which the issue of 'Biblical Ethics and Application' is adressed. The contributions cover many fields of the Bible and include texts from Genesis to Revelation. Due to the work areas of Jan van der Watt, there is, however, a clear emphasis on New Testament texts and, in particular, on Johannine writings.

Ellen van Wolde (God's Covenant with the Living Beings on Earth: An Eco-ethical Reading of Genesis 9:8–17) argues that Genesis 9:8–17 is wrongly labelled as a "rainbow text". Her reading of Genesis 1–11, as the broader framework of the meaning for Genesis 9:8–17, leads her to conclude that, although God shares the human perspective, he also shares that of the earth. God's view sometimes agrees with, but also opposes that of human beings. This is vividly illustrated in the story of the flood in Genesis 6–9, where God rescues the earth from evil human beings. After the flood, God inaugurates a new beginning by offering a covenant to Noah and his descendants, as well as to all other living beings on earth. God also sets a bow in the sky as a sign of the covenant (Genesis 9:12–17). In this instance, qěšět does not denote a rainbow, but rather a warrior's bow in the sky as a sign of his power over the earth, but also as a hierarchical pact between himself and all living beings who will share with him the responsibility for ruling over the earth. Unlike in Genesis 1:26–28, Noah and his descendants are not told to subdue the earth. The earth has acquired its own right of being independent of human beings. Over against the misused emphasis in Genesis 1 to defend the view that God created the earth for the benefit of human beings, Van Wolde emphasises that the heart of God's covenant is to benefit the entire earth and all creatures living on it. Her

---

[16] See as an example for such overlaps Jan G. van der Watt, "Ethics in First John: A Literary and Socioscientific Perspective," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 61 (1999): 491–511; Jan G. van der Watt, "Ethics of / and opponents of Jesus in John's Gospel," in *Rethinking the Ethics of John: "Implicit Ethics" in the Johannine Writings* (ed. J. G. van der Watt and R. Zimmermann; WUNT 291; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 175–91.

eco-ethical reading of Genesis 9 points out that the earth is its own subject of definition, and not only the object of human beings, or merely their habitat or food-production machine.

Bert Jan Lietaert Peerbolte (Protection against Evil: Jesus Christ as Shield and Buckler [Psalm 91]) investigates early Jewish and Christian understandings of Psalm 91 as an apotropaic text that offers protection against demons, as well as the ethical implications thereof. After pointing out that the LXX translation of Psalm 91 was consciously added to the MT text by linking the meaning of the "arrow that flies by day" to a noonday demon, Peerbolte investigates the New Testament usage of this psalm. Included in this analysis is the implicit link with Psalm 91 in Mark 1:12–13, as well as the temptation stories in Luke and Matthew. The fact that both Matthew and Luke describe the Devil by quoting Psalm 91:11–12 serves as an indication that this psalm was read as an apotropaic text thought to ward off demons. Luke 10:18 and Revelation 12:6–9, referring to the casting out of the Devil, as well as the longer ending of Mark (16:9–20) also point to a tradition of faith in apotropaic prayer and belief in protection against the evil by the name of Jesus. Various texts from early Judaism at the beginning of the Common Era (e.g. The Testament of Solomon) describe how Solomon (and David) battled with, but also had control over demons. This presupposes the influence of Psalm 91. In the Early Church, this apotropaic understanding of Psalm 91 and of the power of Jesus to protect believers from demonic attacks was also widely accepted. Origen, Tertullian and others took up this faith in demons and showed how Jesus held authority over them, while offering protection to believers. Ethically, demons could lead believers astray. Therefore, Peerbolte understands the strong ascetic movement in early Christianity as an attempt to use enkrateia in order not to give in to their temptations.

Ben Witherington, III (The Ethic of Jesus Revisited: An Essay in Honor of Jan van der Watt) questions the so-called Bultmannian assumption that the distance between the presentation of Jesus' ethics in the Gospels and what he actually said is too considerable to construct an ethic of Jesus. He argues that, although the Gospel writers had their own agendas, they ultimately directly or indirectly based their writings on eyewitness testimonies. He highlights the Sermon on the Mount, in particular, as a proof of both the eschatological nature of the ethic of Jesus, and his different form of revelatory wisdom. As God's wisdom in person, Jesus acts with sovereign freedom, particularly when it comes to the Law. He sometimes intensifies its demands and, at other times, he sets them aside. Jesus prohibits what Moses allows (oaths, divorce, killing), but allows what Moses prohibits (work on Sabbath). This rigorous ethic of Jesus places a considerable ethical demand on his followers to change their moral and spiritual behaviour, and to model themselves on Jesus' teaching and lifestyle. The ethic of Jesus is a community ethic; it is not meant for outsiders, but for disciples who implement his way of living. Apart from the radical and eschatological nature of Jesus' eth-

ic, it is also Christocentric. In other words, he not only models the right way to believe and behave, but also enables his followers to do so.

In his re-evaluation of the reign of Herod the Great, *Jan Willem van Henten* (Negative Peace Re-assessed: The Case of Herod the Great) uses the concept "negative peace", developed by Johan Galtung, Paul F. Diehl, Perry Yoder, William Swartley and others. He understands it as the absence of a violent conflict, including war, whereas positive peace could be defined as the absence of structural violence. From this perspective, Herod the Great (40–4 BCE) is interpreted as a ruler whose rule, surprisingly and in contradiction to his negative reputation in Matthew and in the works of Josephus, resulted in the establishment of a peaceful kingdom for 33 years. The Romans considered Herod a "friendly king", who succeeded in peace enforcement and preventative peacekeeping as the maximum achievable activities. From this perspective, the "negative peace" of Herod was astonishingly successful.

Tobias Nicklas ("Let the Dead Bury their Own Dead" (Matt 8:22 par. Luke 9:60): A Commandment without Impact for Christian Ethos?) turns our attention to one of the most radical sayings of Jesus and its reception in early Christian sources. Clement of Alexandria alludes to this verse where he speaks about Christians falling back to their old ways of life outside of the church. He understands this saying as a kind of spiritual death. In turn, Tertullian, in his *Monogamia*, while addressing the question of monogamy due to the new priestly status of Christians, does not use Matthew 8:22 // Luke 9:60 to rule out the existing burying practices of Christians. Hilary of Poitiers, who shares a similar perspective in terms of early Christian burial practices, also interprets Matthew 8:22 // Luke 9:60 as a reference to a believing son and an unbelieving father. Other ancient accounts of Christian martyrdom, such as The Martyrdom of Peter and the Acts of John, seem to criticise the veneration of the apostles' bodies in the light of Matthew 8:22 // Luke 9:60. Thus, even if these texts had the potential to distinguish a Christian group ethos from its environment by distinguishing between Christian and non-Christian practices related to burying the dead, no Christian groups, in all probability, refused to bury their dead because of Jesus' saying – hence, the figurative interpretations of Matthew 8:22 // Luke 9:60 in early Christianity.

Joseph Verheyden (Disqualifying the Opponent: The Catalogue of Vices in Matt 15:19 as Characterisation and Criticism) focuses on Matthew's list of vices in Matthew 15:19. He points out that Matthew's list, even though it follows Mark 7 rather closely, is not primarily meant as a general description of the evil side of the human condition, but as a means of disqualifying the opponents in this controversy. Although relying on Mark's model and after making a selection from Mark's list, Matthew carefully composed his own list for the specific purpose of characterizing and stigmatizing the Pharisees and, by extension, all other representatives of the Jewish religious establishment. There is a detailed discussion

of each item in Matthew's list of vices, which also addresses the reasons for his omission of certain vices from Mark's list. The morality of the opponents of Jesus, or rather the lack thereof, is emphasised and challenged in line with the purposes Matthew had set for himself.

In his analysis of Mark 13, *Cilliers Breytenbach* (Das Wissen und Nicht-Wissen um die Zeit als Verhaltensregel: Eine textpragmatische Analyse der Endzeitrede in Markus 13) first focuses on the intratextual, deictic context of this teaching on the Mount of Olives in Mark 13. He shows that there is a distinction between the hypodiegetic context, with the narrated Jesus as main character addressing four disciples as secondary characters, and the extratextual or extradiegetic context of the implied readers. However, Mark is aware of continuity between the disciples and later addressees and includes them in this text with its view on the future and on a post-resurrection bodily absent Jesus. Breytenbach also addresses the structure of the teaching (vv. 3–37), as an elaborated *chrie*, and presents us with Jesus' elaborated response to two questions of the disciples regarding the fall of the temple ("when" – 4b, and "what signs will serve as proof?" – 4c). This exposition, as a macro-speech act, has profound Christological implications, since Jesus, the main character, is aware of the nature of the end of time, as well as of his own role as inaugurator of God's eternal kingdom. In terms of the perlocutive nature of this speech act, his knowledge of this certain future serves as motivation for the correct ethical behaviour of both the disciples and the intended addressees. This includes faithfulness to Christ, trust in God during Jesus' absence, fleeing from danger, and being vigilant throughout until Jesus returns as the Son of Man to gather the elect.

Aware of the sparsity of ethical behaviour and explicit directives to this extent in the Gospel of John, *Robert L. Brawley* (Jesus as the Middle Term for Relationships with God in the Fourth Gospel) shifts our attention to the neglect of meta-ethics in Johannine studies regarding the possibility, empowerment, motivation and discernment for ethics. He addresses the so-called competence phase for ethics described by Greimas and Courtés, which, in terms of the corresponding level of meta-ethics in John, focuses on the how of ethics and on questions such as what empowers behaviour and how does discernment come about? In the Johannine world, what one is and does is always a product of being born from the Spirit (John 3:1–8). In this relationship, Jesus is the middle term between his followers and God. He is their teacher and Lord. A direct relationship between human beings and God is also evident, especially in John 15. At the same time, the Paraclete, like Jesus, abides with the disciples. This love-based reciprocal relationship produces discernment and empowerment for believers. Agape has the status of a new commandment in their midst (John 13:34). This love, which for John only exists in relationships, flows from a relationship of faith with God, one that is mediated by abiding in Jesus and gives an expression to a corporate group guided by the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth.

R. Alan Culpepper (The Ethics of the Shepherd) makes use of Jan van der Watt's research on implicit ethics and metaphor in his analysis of John's understanding of the shepherd metaphor. After a summary of Van der Watt's model of the interpretation of biblical metaphors, he offers an in-depth discussion on the development of the image of the shepherd in ancient literature. Biblical references to the role of the shepherd in leading, feeding and protecting the flock are also highlighted before he reviews the shepherd metaphor in John 10. The distinctiveness of John's interpretation of this metaphor, by means of a comparison with the shepherd in John's wider literary tradition, highlights not only John's creativity, but also his subtle reinterpretation and further development of the metaphor. Against the background of the promise of a future Davidic shepherd for Israel (Ezek 34; 37), the promise of a new covenant (Jer 31) and the call to know the Lord and heed his voice, Jesus, the good shepherd, serves as the model for believers. In terms of the implicit ethics in John 10 and the distinctive elements in John's understanding of this common metaphor, the sheep "know" their shepherd, because they "hear" his voice, while he, in turn, lays down his life for them. This implies a Christological ethic for Christian shepherds. At the same time, it also defines the role of those who belong to the flock of the Good Shepherd. They know and follow him and shall become one flock with those sheep who must still be gathered in. John develops the shepherd metaphor to the extent that it has clear Christological and ethical implications.

It has been widely acknowledged that the topic of "friendship" connects the Gospel of John with a central motif in ancient ethical debate (Aristotle, Cicero, Themistios, and so on). In their contribution (Freundschaftsethik im Johannesevangelium: Zur öffentlichen und politischen Reichweite eines ethischen Konzepts), *Mirjam and Ruben Zimmermann* focus on the public dimension of friendship ethics, which is often overlooked in studies on the Fourth Gospel. After a brief summary of public and political aspects of 'friendship' in moral philosophical debate and society in Antiquity (including state affairs, client-patron-relationship, effective death, and the notion παρρησία), they reconsider the Johannine use of friendship motifs throughout the Gospel (e.g. John 3; 11; 15; 19). The analysis of the texts leads to the conclusion that the friendship motif, though used in a specific manner in John, includes a public dimension, which is part of – as Van der Watt mentioned – the Johannine reflection on "a complex multi-layered political system".[17] This article also contributes to the broader question as to whether the ethics of John only address the in-group of a Johannine community, in extreme are sectarian ethics, or should be understood as an open behavioural reflection amenable to aspects of generalization.

In the farewell discourse, the Johannine Jesus shifts the attention, to a large extent, away from his struggle with the "Jews" by addressing the future task of

---

[17] Attridge, Carter and Van der Watt, "Are John's Ethics Apolitical?," 494.

the church in the world, as well as the new range of relationships that his disciples have to forge, according to *Ulrich Busse* (Die johanneische Abschiedsrede, die soziale Lage der Leserschaft und ethische Implikationen). The passion of Jesus introduces a new epoch in history where the world, the Kosmos, will be tested universally in terms of its "Erkenntnis- und Glaubensfähigkeit". During this time, and after Jesus' return to his Father, the disciples will, in solidarity with him, play a decisive role to publicly continue his work and to open new horizons for the future of their faith. Their present love for one another will serve as proof of the Father's love for Jesus, but at the same time it will also define discipleship in terms of the reciprocal love, respect, and loyalty between themselves and Jesus. As local house churches with their own "in-group" family language and unique organisational forms, their "high" Christology and a corresponding "sacral" Ecclesiology will not only safeguard them from external negative influences and stabilize their faith within their marginalised situation, but also change the very texture of the Kosmos through their mutual love. Loyalty and solidarity among Johannine believers will enable them to collectively embody the eschatological-ethical programme of Jesus. The Gospel of John thus shifts the emphasis away from the past of the early Christian Jesus tradition to the present fraught with difficulties, but to one that is also framed with new meaning.

Udo Schnelle (Ethik und Kosmologie bei Paulus) addresses the question as to what extent it is justified, within the context of Pauline ethics, to speak of cosmology. He finds the answer in the fact that ἁμαρτία or sin is constantly presented in Paul's thought as a cosmic reality and a trans-individual cosmic power. Paul deliberately raises the status of sin to a level that can only be overcome by another cosmic event: the resurrection and *parousia* of Jesus Christ. The resurrected Christ is now present in his church in the intervening time shortly before the *parousia*. This horizon of an imminent *parousia* provides an eminently cosmological dimension to Paul's ethics. His use of numerous apocalyptic motifs confirms this fundamental perspective. Paul understands the church as a cosmic entity that is constantly engaged in this cosmic struggle against the power of sin. While the baptized, Spirit-led *ekklesia* actively participates in this battle, as Paul vividly illustrates by means of his frequent use of weapon metaphors, her transformation is already under way on cosmological, individual and social levels. This effective transformation process began with the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, continues in the present healing activities of the Spirit, and leads up to the final transformation of the whole creation into the glory of God. A discussion of two texts from an earlier and later phase of Paul's ministry, namely 1 Thess 5:1–11 and Romans 6:1–23, addresses believers' participation in this universal transformation process. This coexistence, interdependence and opposition of individual, collective and universal aspects on both theological and cultural levels determine Pauline ethics not only as an ethics of participation in God's power, but also as an ethics of struggle against and resistance to the anti-God powers.

Michael Wolter ("Gebt allen, was ihr schuldig seid …" [Röm 13,6–7]: Was die Verpflichtung von Christen, sich den über sie herrschenden "Obrigkeiten" unterzuordnen, begrenzt) addresses the issue regarding the range or extent of the debt owed by believers in Romans 13:6–7. These verses form part of Paul's argument in Romans 13:1–7, with vv. 1–5 focusing on the necessity (ἀνάγκη; v. 5a) of obedience to all forms of authority (ἐξουσίαις ὑπερεχούσαις; v. 1a). All people are included in these instructions (as indicated by πᾶσα ψυχή). After a theological argument (vv. 1–2), Pauls shifts to a theological and ethical perspective in vv. 3–4, with emphasis on reward and punishment for obedience and/or disobedience to these ἄρχοντες. This is anchored in Paul's anthropological remarks in v. 5b, linking obedience to conscience. Vv. 6–7 are framed in terms of the question as to who owes Christians in Rome what? Paul acknowledges that they have multiple obligations ("Tribut", "Steuer", "Furcht", "Ehre"), which they should not "pay" indiscriminately to all, but only to those to whom they owe it. It is Paul's understanding that the readers have more obligations than those mentioned in v. 7b–e. Thus, Romans 13:7 paves the way towards a hermeneutical openness for the intended and other readers to discern for themselves which of these claims they have to fulfil and to whom. Different cultural and historical contexts will constantly determine whether the obligations of those in positions of authority are valid or in conflict with a plurality of other commitments and obligations placed on the readers' shoulders.

After an overview of ethics in the context of New Testament literature from the perspective of Ruben Zimmermann's research, *Bart J. Koet* ("Ethics or Halacha? "Calling" as a Key to the Dynamics of Behavior According to Paul in 1 Cor 1:1–11) focuses on the understanding of ἔθος in Flavius Josephus as a reference to typical Jewish behaviour. Koet also discusses *Halakha* as a concept that provides rules as identity markers for the sake of the unity of the Jewish people. He then analyses 1 Cor 1:1–11 in terms of its emphasis on the unity of the fellowship of disciples at Corinth. In this instance, the question: implicit ethics or implicit *halakha*? guides Koet's understanding of the main thrust and dynamics of this introduction to 1 Corinthians. It is not viewed as an ethical statement concerning the right way of doing things, since the unity of the community is Paul's highest aim. He calls on the people in Corinth to seek fellowship with Christ and for unity (1:10–11). The various issues and problems raised throughout 1 Corinthians point to the fact that Paul's view of human behaviour consists in his implicit ethics *together* with the rules necessary to keep the unity. These rules bear more than a passing resemblance to the Jewish *mitzwot*, so basic for the *halakhic* system of the rabbis.

Rainer Hirsch-Luipold ("Ich bete, dass ihr …": Impliziter und grammatischer Imperativ im Philipperbrief vor dem Hintergrund zeitgenössischer Literatur zum Gebet) addresses the rhetorical-pragmatic function of prayer in the Letter to the Philippians. On the rhetorical level of the letter, prayer functions as an im-

plicit imperative or as a preview of later remarks set in imperatival form. In this sense, the concept of prayer is a "Kompendium" of Paul's ethics. This finding is compared to Maximus of Tyros' reflection on the function of prayer who wrote about hundred years after Paul. His question: εἰ δεῖ εὔχεσθαι ("shall man pray?") is understood within the framework of the prayers of the ancient philosophers (Socrates, Pythagoras, Plato) as a conversation of the soul with God. For Maximus, prayer is theology proper; it is a pragmatic reflection on what man has been given from the gods. Paul focuses on the ethical-pragmatic function of prayer with special regard to the ethical imperatives inherent in the triangle between God, Paul, and the addressees. Thus, the ethical imperative of love for God and love for others (1:27–2:18) is already inherent in the initial "Gebetsbericht" in 1:3–11, with its emphasis on thanksgiving and supplication. It presupposes the ethical demand on the Philippians to act upon what has been given to them by God. At the same time, prayer deepens the readers' understanding of God, one that not only implies, but also leads to a corresponding adjustment of their ethical conduct "als Zielbestimmung".

Stephan Joubert (The Kenotic μορφή of Christ and Character Formation in Paul's Ethical Discourse in Philippians 2:5–11) points to the marked difference between Paul's description of the physical presence of Jesus in Philippians 2:5–11 and that of typical Graeco-Roman deities when they took on bodily forms. Their gait, speech, clothes, ornaments and radiation eventually revealed their identity. By contrast, Paul's poetic presentation of Jesus in Philippians 2:5–11 (in terms of pre-existence, earthly existence in the embodiment of a slave, and post-resurrection exaltation) shows how he deliberately chose to exchange his divine μορφή for the μορφή of a slave. Christ's ensuing kenotic life, by emptying himself of all the privileges of his deity and associating fully with humanity's plight, expresses his true character. Verses 9–11 do not allude to any transfiguration of his humble earthly body, as part of his exaltation into God's presence after his death on the cross. The μορφή of Jesus is no longer the focus, but his new/restored honour and name are emphasised to indicate both his true identity and the type of Lord whom believers must now follow. Paul models this kenotic life of Christ as "ethical exemplar" for the Philippians. In terms of the "universal applicability" of this ethic, Policarpus, in his *Epistula ad Philippenses* about 60 years later, understands Christ's sacrificial life as the expected pattern of conduct for believers. Sadly, the vibrancy of Paul's picture of Jesus' humble character, which gave rise to this ethos among early Christians, has been ideologically forced from the centre to the periphery since the fourth century. It needs to be reclaimed by means of a new theological ethics.

D. Francois Tolmie (John Chrysostom and the "Implicit Ethics" of the Letter to Philemon) applies the notion of "implicit ethics", developed by Van der Watt and Zimmermann, in his analysis of the reception of Paul's Letter to Philemon by John Chrysostom. A summary of elements that form part of Philemon's implicit ethics

is highlighted, such as Paul's own example; lauding the behaviour of certain individuals, as well as the norms and maxims for action. Tolmie then addresses the reception of Philemon in three of Chrysostom's homilies. Chrysostom's implicit ethics is to be found in the πρόθεσις and in the exegetical parts of these homilies in which Paul and Philemon's exemplary behaviour are emphasized. Paul's humility, zeal, rhetorical skills, kindness and concern for believers of different social status, as well as Philemon's behaviour as an admirable man who opens his house to the church and who refreshes the hearts of believers, are worthy of praise and emulation. On the other hand, Onesimus' immoral behaviour (theft and desertion) is also highlighted. Chrysostom's approach resembles a particular type of "virtue ethics". Christian values such as mercy, forgiveness and humility are constantly highlighted as his congregations' correct response to God's actions in Christ. Chrysostom's emphasis of Paul's rhetorical skills probably reflects the role that rhetorical training played in his own education. Similarly, his intuitive association with slave owners also reflects his own social location!

Michael Theobald ("Lauter Milde allen Menschen gegenüber!" [Tit 3,2]: Grenzüberschreitendes Ethos in den Pastoralbriefen) investigates the "ethische Entgrenzung" or the boundary-crossing ethical options propagated by the author of the Pastoral Corpus. The central theological worldview of the author is expressed in Titus 2:11, as the hinge text between the ethical instruction (Tit 2:1–10) and the theological grounding (Tit 2:11–14), with its emphasis on the universal nature of God's grace. In this instance, the Jewish "embossing" inherent in Paul's theology has been abandoned in favour of a true "Heilsuniversalismus". The question as to whether one is a Jew or a Gentile no longer plays a role, neither does the law in terms of qualifying the nature of one's deeds – even though they cannot lead to righteousness before God (Tit 3:5–7). God's grace, which has appeared to all people (Tit 2:11), informs the groundbreaking ethical directives propagated by the author. By accepting and adhering to the socio-ethical standards of the *Umwelt* regarding domestic roles and ecclesiastical functions and offices, he wants to ensure that the church is in good standing with outsiders. Literally, for the first time in Christian history, "public" or "Öffentlichkeit" becomes the criterion for the correct formation of *ekklesia*. While owing their new life to the "grace" and φιλανθρωπία or "human friendliness" of the Saviour God, they are also bound to the outside world through tolerance, mildness, renouncement of "hate-speech" against outsiders, while they are obliged "to do every good work" (Tit 3:2).

The Johannine Elder addresses several centrifugal threats within his churches that pull them away from corporate unity in the three Johannine Epistles according to *Paul N. Anderson* (Identity and Congruence: The Ethics of Integrity in the Johannine Epistles). Some believers refuse to acknowledge Jesus as the Christ; some participate in idolatry and follow questionable teachers, refusing to acknowledge Jesus' coming in the flesh, while others are denied hospitality. In order to hold his community together, the Elder calls on believers to abide in the

love of Christ and to love one another in the same way that they had received love from God. This involves caring for the physical and social needs of community members. True believers must not abandon the community as the schismatics did. They should also maintain the Jewish values of the Johannine leadership and practise hospitality. At the same time, they are not allowed to participate in the festivities of the surrounding pagan culture – even if supported by the imperial presence of the Roman occupiers. Within their multicultural and cosmopolitan context, the Johannine Elder calls for adherence to Jesus as the Father's Son, while also embracing basic standards of the Jewish faith rather than being convinced by the ways of the pagan world. This increases cognitive dissonance in the community by challenging them to constantly love one another. There is a constant appeal to the self-conception of community members. In this sense, group solidarity and personal wholeness are addressed from the perspective of believers' truth and love-oriented identity.

Drawing on Michael Labahn's understanding that ethical texts attempt to persuade readers to accept a writer's perspective on appropriate conduct as normative, *Craig R. Koester* (Babylon and New Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation: Imagery and Ethical Discernment) argues that Revelation shapes its readers' perspectives on human conduct mainly through imagery or word pictures. Much of the book's ethical impact is created by evocative images such as those of Babylon the whore and New Jerusalem the bride. In terms of a transfer of meaning, the readers' perceptions are shaped by these images, which contribute to their ethical discernment by means of the sharp contrasts between the values represented by Babylon and those of New Jerusalem. When images of wealth, combined with the values of profit and status, are at stake in the portrayal of Babylon and the New Jerusalem, or violence versus reconciliation, and idolatry versus fidelity to God, the readers must figure out how to turn those values into concrete actions. This process of ethical discernment is dynamic. At the same time, Revelation's imagery allows for complexity, since it addresses various readers of different social and economic status. While the imagery of Babylon in Revelation is highly critical of those who seek wealth as the object of social status, the description of New Jerusalem is presented in terms of luxury and wealth. The values conveyed by this imagery must encourage the readers to assume the responsibility of discerning a way forward in their respective contexts.

Michael Labahn (Der Konflikt zwischen Gut und Böse und seine ethische Dimension für frühchristliche Gemeinden in der römischen Provinz Kleinasien: Überlegungen zur Begründungsstrategie der Ethik in der Johannesoffenbarung) views the Book of Revelation as a subversive narrative, one that constantly deconstructs the power structures inherent in the Roman Empire. The narrated world of Revelation, probably written at the end of the reign of Emperor Domitian to churches in Asia Minor, is sharply divided into Good (God, the Lamb, the heavenly host and those loyal to God) and Evil (Satan, the two beasts, Babylon,

the Roman emperor, as well as their sympathizers and collaborators). Society is characterized as a rebellious rule of evil, which leaves the Church no other ethical option than a voluntary "Abgrenzung" or separation from it (Rev 18:4), as well as from other non-Christian cults and heretical Christian groups, thus refusing all forms of self-compromising interactions in everyday culture. Since Good has already overcome Evil cosmologically by the fall of Satan (Rev 12), as well as soteriologically in terms of the salvation brought about by the Lamb, and eschatologically in terms of the promised future citizenship in the New Jerusalem, the ethical strategy of the Church entails this freely chosen exile to the fringe of society. In this instance, the right "works" (or ἔργα in Rev 2:2, 5, 6, 19, 22, 23, 26; 3:1, 2, 8, 15) are indicative of the ideal believers' deliberate, non-compromising resistance to a corrupt society, while at the same time adhering to the call to love God and others in this marginal space.

God's Covenant with the Living Beings on Earth

An Eco-ethical Reading of Genesis 9:8–17

Ellen van Wolde

In the Hebrew Bible many explicit ethical texts regard the (ideal) relationship between YHWH, his people, and the land of Israel. Few texts are explicitly aimed at the humanity at large or at the entire earth. Primeval history in Genesis 1–11 is one of these texts. Most noticeable in this respect is the covenant between God and the living beings on earth in Gen 9:8–17. This text is known as "the rain-bow-text" since God sets a bow as sign of his covenant with the living beings on earth. However, this label is incorrect, as will be shown below. More importantly, a new understanding of God's covenant in Genesis 9 will lead to a correction of the view on humankind presented in Gen 1:26–27, with considerable eco-ethical consequences. I offer this study in honour of my New Testament colleague at the Radboud University in Nijmegen, Jan van der Watt, whose expertise in ethical studies of the Bible is one of a kind.

I. The larger context: primeval history in Genesis 1–11

Primeval history is often read as a description of the earliest history of mankind, but Genesis 1–11 is less human-centred than presupposed. Its main topics are the heaven and the earth, its inhabitants and the network of relationships between the created and separated phenomena in the universe. In this network human-kind is only one factor, an important factor indeed. But the subsequent stories of creation, paradise, human generations, spread of evilness and the consequent flood concluded by a covenant show that God not necessarily shares the human perspective, but also, and perhaps more often, the perspective of the earth.

Genesis 1–11 states not only thematically, but also *expressis verbis* that the earth has her own face. The term "the face of the earth" occurs fourteen times: six times with *hā'ārĕṣ* "the earth" (Gen 1:29; 7:3; 8:9; 11:4, 8, 9) and eight times with *hā'ădāmā* "the earth" or "the soil" (Gen 2:6; 4:14; 6:1, 7; 7:4, 23; 8:8, 13). With reference to *hā'ārĕṣ* always the face of the *entire* earth is mentioned (*'al-pĕnê kol-hā'ārĕṣ*). With reference to *hā'ădāmā* twice "the face of the earth" (*pĕnê*

hā'adāmā) is mentioned (Gen 2:6; 8:13), and six times "over the face of the earth" ('al-pěnê hā'adāmā) (Gen 4:14; 6:1, 7; 7:4, 23; 8:8). The earth has not only a face, but once a mouth as well in Gen 4:11, where the earth opened her mouth to take the blood from the murdered brother. These are visible signs of the earth's being described as a subject. But the main point is that God is in Genesis 1–11 not only presented as the divine being who shares the human perspective, but is acting on behalf of the earth, too. This earthly perspective is sometimes cooperative with that of the human beings, but other times opposite to that of the human beings. This is made clear in the story of the flood in Genesis 6–9 when God comes to rescue the earth from the evil human beings.

The story of the flood starts with an explanation of how the spread of humanity over the face of the earth entailed a spread of evil and destruction on the earth. It is care for the earth that make God decide for a destruction of everything on earth. All the details of the first verses (Gen 6:5–13) point this out: the word *hā'ārěṣ* occurs eight times in five verses (Gen 6:5, 6, 11bis, 12bis, 13bis), which shows that the earth is central in God's concern. The creator who has made the earth with people, is now confronted with people who are destroying the earth. God reacts with a corresponding action, as is shown in the use of the same word *šāḥat* "destroy": "The earth was destroyed before God's face" (Gen 6:11), "God saw the earth, and look she was destroyed" (Gen 6:12) and "God said: 'I shall destroy them from the earth.'" (Gen 6:13). With the slogan "save the earth, remove human beings", God sets to work.

A kind of anti-creation story follows: in Gen 1 the initial state was a boundless surface of water, both vertically and horizontally. In it, the heaven is distinguished as a vault between the vertical waters, and the earth is distinguished as the dry land which appeared between the waters under the heaven. In Gen 6–9 these distinctions are done away with again. God opens the fountains of the deep and the sluice gates of heaven and the waters come to submerge the earth both from below and from above. Everything disappears under a boundless mass of water. It is a kind of return to the primal state. Only the heaven and the earth continue to exist, all creatures perish. And God makes a new beginning.

God explicitly states so, when he says: "Never again will I doom the earth / soil (hā'adāmā) because of humankind (hā'ādām) since the devisings of the human mind are evil from his youth. Nor will I ever again destroy every living being, as I have done." (Gen 8:21). And he continues: "So long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest,(…) day and night, shall not cease." (Gen 8:22). No longer shall the days of the human beings be determinative for God, but the days of the earth. This is the transformation the story presents.

God confirms this new situation. First he blesses Noah and his sons (Gen 9:1–7) and then he offers a covenant to him and the other living beings on earth (Gen 9:8–17). In doing so he sets his bow in the sky as a sign for himself. The following sections will discuss this sign and the covenant in more detail.

II. The word *qěšět* in Genesis 9:12–17:
A rainbow or a warrior's bow?[1]

The word *qěšět* is generally understood to designate a rainbow in Gen 9:12–17.[2] Textual arguments provided to support the rainbow option are (1) God sets the bow in the clouds in v. 13, (2) the bow appears in the clouds in v. 14, and (3) God sees the bow in the clouds in v. 16. Since Julius Wellhausen many scholars have wondered about the word's meaning as "rainbow". The reason for doubt is the fact that out of its 76 occurrences in the Hebrew Bible, the word *qěšět* designates 72 times unequivocally a warrior's bow (or, rarely, a hunter's bow). And the collocation *qěšět bᵉʿānān* "bow in the clouds", occurs only twice in the Hebrew Bible, namely here in Gen 9:14–16. So, it is an extraordinary word combination in the Hebrew Bible.

The term used for clouds is *ʿānān*, which designates the cloud mass, cloud cover or undifferentiated cloud.[3] It entails the notions of vastness of space or expanse. It does not include the notion of rain, because in the Hebrew Bible only the term *ʿāb* or *ʿābîm* is used to refer to rain clouds. It is also highly unlikely that reference is made to a rainbow, because it stopped raining more than 200 days ago. And then, an even more pressing question can be posed, why would a rainbow be called *qaštô* "his bow", i. e. with a possessive pronoun "his"?

Some scholars have opted for the meaning of *qěšět* as a warrior's bow in Genesis 9.[4] Linguistically, the argumentation that the word *qěšět* expresses a warrior's is a strong one. Out of its 76 uses in the Hebrew Bible, this meaning is obvious in 72 texts (DCH VII: 339–40). Apart from the three uses in the text under research and the use of *qěšět* in Ezek 1:28 which is generally understood as a rainbow but

---

[1] For a more extensive study of Gen 9:8–17, in all its linguistic, textual, iconographic and comparative details, see Ellen Van Wolde, "One Bow or Another? A Study of the Bow in Genesis 9:8–17," *Vetus Testamentum* 63 (2013): 124–49.

[2] See *BDB* (906), *HALOT* (3:1155); *NIDOTTE* (3:1004); Heinz-Josef Fabry, "qěšět," *TWAT* 7 (1993): 218–25, 223; Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis. Part II: From Noah to Abraham: Genesis VI/9–XI/32* (trans. I. Abrahams; Jerusalem: The Magnes, 1964), 136; Claus Westermann, *Genesis. 1. Teilband: Genesis 1–11* (BK 1/1; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner Verlag, 1974), 632–35; Victor Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17* (NICOT 1; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 317. See also Heinz-Josef Fabry, "qěšět," *TWAT* 7 (1993): 218–25 for a description of the long tradition of Judaic and Christian interpretations in which the word *qěšět* in Gen 9:12–17 is understood as a rainbow.

[3] Mark D. Futato, "ʿānān," *NIDOTTE* 3: 465–66.

[4] Pieter A. H. de Boer, "Quelques remarques sur l'arc dans la nuée (Genèse ix 8–17)," in *Selected Studies in Old Testament Exegesis* (OTS 27; Leiden: Brill, 1974/1991), Erich Zenger, *Gottes Bogen in den Wolken: Untersuchungen zu Komposition und Theologie der priesterschriftlichen Urgeschichte* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1983), Udo Rüterswörden, "Der Bogen in Genesis 9. Militärhistorische und traditionsgeschichtliche Erwägungen zu einem biblischen Symbol," *Ugarit-Forschungen* 20 (1988): 247–64, Christoph Uehlinger, "Das Zeichen des Bundes," *BiKi* 44 (1989): 195–97.

which on further inspection also refers to a warrior's bow,[5] all other uses of the word *qěšět* in the Hebrew Bible clearly designate a warrior's bow. Let us look at these texts.

In the book of Gen the word *qěšět* occurs seven times: three times in our text, twice in the sense of a warrior's bow, once in the meaning of a hunter's bow, namely Gen 27:3 (Isaac says to Esau) "Take your gear, your quiver and bow, and go into the open and hunt me some game". In addition, in Gen 21:16 [Hagar] "went and sat down at a distance a bowshot away", *qěšět* can refer to either a warrior's bow or a hunter's bow; this is equally true for Gen 21:20, where Ishmael is called a *qaššāt*, an archer or bowman.

The two clear uses of *qěšět* "warrior's bow" are Gen 48:22 and 49:24. In Gen 48:22 the dying father Jacob speaks to Joseph saying: "And now, I assign to you one portion more than to your brothers, which I wrested from the Amorites with my sword and bow" (NJPS-translation). Literally the text speaks of "taking (*lāqaḥ*) from the hands of the Amorites" and together with the word combination of *ḥarabī* "my sword" and *qaštī* "my bow" it is obvious that the context is one of fight or war, that the described weapons are weapons of attack and that these weapons are closely connected with its possessor who beat his enemies. As a consequence of his winning power Jacob was able to take the land to apportion it to Joseph's sons. In Gen 49:23–24 Jacob continues his speech to Joseph saying "Archers bitterly assailed him [Joseph]; they shot at him and harried him. Yet his bow stayed taut, and his arms were made firm by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob" (NJPS-translation). The word *qaštô* "his bow" is used here in combination with the verb *yāšab* "to stay, abide, sit" plus the adverb *bᵉʾêtān* "permanent, enduring": his bow abode as an enduring, firm one, and the arms of his hands (*zᵉrōê yādaw*) were made firm by the hands of the Mighty One (*ʾābīr*) of Jacob. So here again, the bow is closely linked to its owner as a representation of his enduring power. From other texts in the Hebrew Bible we learn that the bow, bowstring and arrows are used as a weapon of attack of powerful fighters – mainly kings, commanders or other powerful persons – and often figure in a war-winning situation.[6] In the prototypical scenario of warfare the bow strike seems to mark the decisive blow in the final stage of war. This is visible in the books of Samuel and Kings, because here the bow is used by kings or their archers when describing their victory over the enemies.[7] A comparable use of the word *qěšět* is noticeable

---

[5] Shawn Zelig Aster, *The Unbeatable Light. Melammu and Its Biblical Parallels* (AOAT 384; Münster: Ugarit, 2012), 104–6, Ellen van Wolde, "The God Ezekiel 1 Envisions," in *The God Ezekiel Creates* (ed. P. M. Joyce and D. Rom-Shiloni; Bloomsbury: T & T Clark, 2015), 87–106.

[6] Heinz-Josef Fabry, "qěšět," *TWAT* 7: 222.

[7] See: 1 Sam 31:3 and its description of the final blow the Philistine archers strike on Saul when hitting him with their bow, 2 Sam 1:18–27 and David's "Song of the Bow" or *qěšět*, a song of military power and glory of Israel, 2 Sam 22, where David praises Yʜwʜ who has saved him from the hand of his enemies, saying in v. 35 "who trained my hands for the battle, so that my

in the Psalms, where metaphors depict God as a heavenly warrior who fights with warrior attributes. Based on a profound study of these Psalms, Klingbeil shows how God is characterized as being actively involved in the actual attack on an enemy in a war-winning situation and how this functions as an expression of his might and supremacy.[8] And he concludes: "Although Yahweh acts as a warrior he never becomes the warrior-god exclusively, he rather remains the supreme god displaying warrior characteristics, but not in the form of mere emblem which would designate him as the war-god."[9]

Because the bow is such a distinctive mark of warfare and of the winner who demonstrates his rule and dominion, it comes as no surprise that the end of the war is represented by the "breaking of the bow".

We can, therefore, draw the conclusion that throughout the Hebrew Bible the word *qěšět* designates prototypically a warrior's bow, while including the notions of weapon of attack, power, might, and supremacy. It is used in fighting events in which the bow strike marks the decisive blow in the final stage of war, and thus comes to stand for the "victorious weapon" of the winning warrior.

III. The "setting of the bow in the clouds" in Genesis 9:12–17

Having established the meaning of the word *qěšět* as a "warrior's bow", the question still remains what "the setting of the bow in the clouds" in Gen 9:12–17 means. In v. 13, "I have set my bow in the clouds", this noun is combined with the verb *nātan* and the preposition *bᵉ* "to place something in".[10] The difference between v. 13, on the one hand, and vv. 14 and 16, on the other hand, is that in v. 13 the deity moves his bow on a path that starts in his hands and ends in the clouds, whereas in vv. 14 and 16 the bow is not moved anymore. In all three verses God's bow is actually defined by its place in the cloudcover.

Verse 14 presents the unique word combination *bᵉʿanᵉnî ʿānān ʿal-hāʾārĕṣ*. Nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible is it stated that God "clouds clouds" or "brings in clouds", and it stands out as extraordinary. What does it say? First, that it is God who is bringing the cloud mass, "*my* clouding clouds". Second, God's bringing of

---

arms can bend a bow of bronze". Here the bow represents the victory of David as a warrior. Similar war winning situations are expressed by strikes of victorious bows in 1 Kgs 22:34 (the bow of an archer of the king of Aram kills Ahab, so that he dies of its wounds), 2 Kgs 9:24 (Jehu kills king Joram and thus becomes king), 2 Kgs 13:14–18 (Elisha tells King Joash of Israel to take his bow to defeat the Aram, which does exclaiming in v. 17: "An arrow of victory for Yʜᴡʜ! An arrow of victory over Aram!").

[8] Martin Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting from Heaven: God as Warrior and as God of Heaven in the Hebrew Psalter and Ancient Near Eastern Iconography* (OBO 169; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999).

[9] Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting*, 302.

[10] Michael A. Grisanti, "*nātan*," *NIDOTTE* 3: 205–11.

clouds is explicitly related to the appearance of the bow, "*my* bow and *my* bring-ing of clouds". Third, these clouds are related to the earth: "my bringing of clouds *over the earth*". The word *'ānān,* clouds or clouds cover (including the notions of vastness and expanse), is now contextually specified. It derives its specification from the clouds' position *'al-hā'ārĕṣ* "over the earth", and that the clouds are con-ceived relative to the entire earth. In other words, the divine actions of setting and clouding are both spatially oriented. The setting of his bow in the clouds in v. 13 shows that God separates from his bow and that he places it somewhere between his dwelling place (the heaven) and the earth. Verse 14 shows that this place is the clouds that are presented as covering the entire earth. Therefore, the bow is spatially positioned in a kind of intermediary space between the deity and the entire earth. And it is this bow that is said to represent Gods covenant between himself and the entire earth.

IV. The setting of the bow and the establishing of the covenant

In the entire section of Gen 9:8–17 the various meaning components form a clear combinatory pattern or composite meaning structure.

(1) There are only two subjects of action, viz. "I" in vv. 9–13a, 14a, 15, 16b, 17a, and "my bow" in v. 13b or "the bow" in vv. 14b and 16a. However, "my bow" and "the bow in the clouds" are the representative of the deity who is speaking in the first person. So, actually, there is only one active agent, namely God, who performs two actions of transformation (see 2) and two actions of evaluation (see 5).

(2) The verbs *qûm bᵉrîtî* "set up my covenant" and *nātan qaštî* "place my bow" share the same spatial concept of "setting up" or "establishing". The first clauses are set in similar particle constructions: "look, I am establishing my covenant" (v. 9a) and "I am setting the sign of the covenant" (v. 12a), while in the second clauses the qatal verb indicates the actual execution, *haqimōtî* "I establish my covenant" (v. 11a) and *nātattî* "I set my bow in the clouds" (v. 13a). These lines narrate of the actual start of the establishing of the covenant and of the setting of God's very own fighter's bow as a sign of the covenant.

(3) The fivefold use of the preposition with pronominal suffix *'ĕt* "with": "with you" (Noah), "with your sons / seed", "with all living beings with you", "with all living beings" and "with all living beings over the earth", clearly indicate with whom God establishes his covenant: with all living beings on earth, from Noah and his descendants to all inhabitants of the earth.

(4) Note also the sevenfold usage of *kol* "all" and "entire" in vv. 12 (once), 15 (three times), 16 (twice), and 17 (once), and the double usage of *'ōlām* "everlast-ing" in vv. 12 and 16. It is the entire earth God is offering his covenant to, not just one group or nation. All are included, no one excepted, from now and for ever.

(5) Speaking in the first person singular, God indicates how he will remember (*zākartî*) and see (*rĕ'îtî*) his covenant with all living beings either directly with his eyes or indirectly in his mind. Similar to the verbs of establishing his covenant and placing the bow as sign of this covenant, all verbs represent the spatial, conceptual, and perceptual perspective of God.

(6) The phrases *'ānān 'al-hā'ārĕṣ* ("clouds over the earth") and *kol ašer hā'ārĕṣ* ("the entire earth") share the notion of "the earth" as well as "extensiveness" and a certain vagueness, which also explains why the term *'ānān* is used to designate the extensiveness of the cloud covering the earth.

This composite meaning structure explains why v. 14a so explicitly states that God is bringing the clouds "over the earth". It is the individuality of the bow and the individuality of the covenant as well as the superiority of the powerful party that stands over against the extensive earth as a whole. When the deity sees his powerful weapon set in the clouds, he will remember his covenant with all those covered by the clouds. Thus the bow may function as the sign of his power and rule over the entire earth and of the hierarchical pact between God and all living beings on earth.

What distinctive features link God's fighting bow and his covenant? The word *bᵉrît* expresses a covenant between a superior party and an inferior party, a bond between a lord and his vassals. It presupposes a hierarchical framework of thinking. In establishing a covenant a sovereign lord offers to share power: if the vassals are loyal to their leader and follow the obligations laid down in the covenant, then the lord in his turn will guide and protect the vassals. God's *qĕšĕt* is closely linked to its owner as the victorious deity and his weapon represents his enduring power. God is setting his bow in the intermediary space between heaven and earth, which stands for his willingness to share his rule over the earth with those living on it. Hence, the base component that God's setting of the bow in the clouds shares with *bᵉrît* is sharing of power. Through his covenant God transfers his power to the living beings on earth, so that he shares his dominion over the earth with the human addressees and those living with them on earth.

It is the individuality of the bow and the individuality of the covenant as well as the superiority of the powerful party that stands over against the extensive earth as a whole that characterizes this text. When the deity sees his powerful weapon set in the clouds, he will remember his covenant with all those covered by the clouds. Thus the bow may function as the sign of his power and rule over the entire earth and of the hierarchical pact between God and all living beings on earth. From now on, the descendants of the Noah family and the other living beings with them will share with God the responsibility for the rule of and dominion over the earth.

V. The covenant between God, humanity,
and all living beings on the earth

This brings me to the main point of the present study. In contrast to Gen 1:26–28 in which God proposes his fellow gods to create humankind in order to rule or subdue the earth [upon which God places them on earth (Gen 1:28) and they start multiplying and filling the earth (Gen 4–5), with destructive effects on the earth (Gen 6:5), so that God decides to wipe off humanity from the earth (Gen 6–8)], the covenant God proposes in Genesis 9 does not include only the human beings but all living beings. Crucial in this respect is the conclusion God presents after the flood:

"Never again will I doom the earth / soil (*hā'adāmā*) because of humankind (*hā'ādām*) since the devisings of the human mind are evil from his youth. Nor will I ever again destroy every living being, as I have done. So long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease." (Gen 8:21–22)

God acknowledges the deviousness of the human beings, but nevertheless offers them his covenant, thus offering them a share in his power. They are invited to rule the world. But he does not offer his covenant to them alone. His covenant is established between him and every living being on earth, all those who live on the planet earth, or, in put in less modern terms, he establishes a covenant between him and all those that live under the cloud cover on earth.

And what, apart from loyalty and respect for the deity is requested from these parties? Gen 9:1–7 describe what actions are required from the human beings, Noah, his family and his descendants. They are blessed, they will be fertile and increase and fill the earth. All animals will fear them. And they shall respect the life-blood that is in every living creature. They must not eat flesh with its life-blood in it. Respect for the principle of life, be it human, animal or vegetal, is vital. Yet, an important contrast with Gen 1:26–28 can also be discovered. In both texts the human beings are told "to increase and to fill the earth", but here in Gen 9:1–7 they are not told "to subdue the earth". The verb used in Gen 1:28 *kābaš* is a strong one. It designates to subdue, to make subservient, bring into bondage. Still, the other living creatures will fear the human beings, but the earth has acquired her own right of being. Independently of the human beings. Since we know, and God knows, what will happen when humanity rules the world, namely they ruin it. This covenant is made to prevent them from doing so.

This is the other side of the covenant not often heard, although it is set in stone in Genesis 9: never again will the behavior of human beings be determinative for the earth. God will protect the earth, its inhabitants, and among those the human beings. This time, God's covenant is aimed at all that live on earth. He sets his bow in the clouds to memorize himself: to remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures (Gen 9:16). As we know, immediately after

this episode, the human beings start to fight again. This time, with only one family left, within the family itself. One group of descendants will be condemned, others chosen. Yet not by the deity, but by the human beings themselves, this time by Noah (Gen 9:24–27). And later on, in the reception history of this text, all attention will be paid to the so-called Noahite obligations, to the verses 1–7 that address the human beings alone. The covenant with the earth is neglected.

VI. Eco-ethical conclusion

In Jewish and Christian traditions many have misused Genesis 1 to defend the view that God has created the earth for the benefit of human beings. Genesis 9 is less often read, and seldom placed at the heart of an eco-ethical discussion. Yet this chapter in Gen clearly shows that the benefit of the earth and all creatures living on it is in the heart of God's covenant. In this sense, Gen 9:8–17 is a correction on the idea what human beings as "image of God" means. It does not mean that the earth is subdued to their will, that it has not its own perspective. The earth is its own subject of definition, not only the object of the humans. It is not defined as the environment of the humans to live in. Not the production machine of food for humans only.

Too often, humans are seen as agents of God and therefore allowed to use or exert power over the rest of the world and universe. Economic life based on endless quests for ever greater growth and profit driven by greed, are threatening the habitats of many a forest, animal species, oceans and seas. I propose to read Genesis 9 as a challenge to lead us away from our anthropocentrism that tends to value only that which serves human ends.

Protection against Evil

Jesus Christ as Shield and Buckler (Psalm 91)

Bert Jan Lietaert Peerbolte

The analysis of ethical ideas and instructions in the New Testament, a field where Jan van der Watt has earned his credits with innovative contributions over the past decade, can begin with the study of implicit as well as explicit ethical instructions and codes in the writings under scrutiny.[1] One additional characteristic of the world of first century Christians, however, that was certainly important for their behaviour, is the assumed power of demons and other evil spiritual creatures. The study of demonology is a field that is generally separated from the study of New Testament ethics, and this contribution is an attempt to argue that the two fields are closer to each other than often thought.[2]

There is an abundance of proof that in the world in which the first Christians lived demons and other evil spiritual creatures were thought to have a prominent place. Apotropaic texts in early Judaism, in emerging Christianity, but also in the pagan context of these movements indicate the fear people must have felt on a daily basis. Demons are usually seen as spirtual beings that intend to negatively influence people in their health or in their behaviour, and protection against these demons was something that many people sought.

Interestingly enough, the many early Jewish and Christian texts that mention demons and other evil beings often contain an ethical slant: demons are not just thought of as endangering people's health, but are also seen as a threat to people's behaviour. Especially among the scrolls of Qumran a number of writings

---

[1] See esp. his contributions in *Moral Language in the New Testament: The Interrelatedness of Language and Ethics in Early Christian writings* (ed. R. Zimmermann, J. G. van der Watt and S. Luther; WUNT II / 296; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010); Jan G. van der Watt, *Identity, Ethics, and Ethos in the New Testament* (ed. J. G. van der Watt and F. S. Malan; BZNW 141; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006).

[2] Speculations about the origins of evil in the Greco-Roman period often trace these to the myth of the fall of the angels as described for instance in Enochic literature. In 2 Enoch 18:7 the fallen angels are described as residing in the netherworld, referred to elsewhere as the Tartarus. This netherworld comes close to the description of hell found in 2 Enoch 40:13–42:2; cf. Francis I. Andersen, "2 (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch," in *Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments* (ed. J. H. Charlesworth; vol. 1 of Old Testament Pseudepigrapha; Garden City: Doubleday, 1983), 91–213, esp. 139, note i (= *OTPseud*).

were found that indicate how demonic figures would undertake attempts to lead people in the wrong direction. The ultimate Christian example of such an evil, heavenly being, is found in the tradition of Antichrist.[3] Here, the combination of the eschatological function of this negative creature and his expected attempts to lead believers astray turns Antichrist into an ethical enemy.

The current essay is offered to Jan van der Watt as a token of friendship and gratitude for the cooperation we have had, both during his time in Pretoria and in his Nijmegen period. It is an attempt to turn Van der Watt's focus on ethics in early Christian texts towards the demonological interpretation of a popular psalm, Psalm 91. This psalm was read in the first century as an apotropaic text offering protection against demons, and the ethical implications of such a reading are overlooked by many researchers: good and bad are not just human decisions – a bad way of life exposes people to the forces of evil and should thus be avoided. The present undertaking hopes to illustrate that the study of demonology is a necessary addition to the line of arguing developed by Van der Watt. In order to substantiate this point, I will first look into the usage of Psalm 91 in the canonical gospels. Next, the early Jewish setting of this usage should be studied, and the focus will be on a number of extra-canonical texts that are illustrative of the context in which the first Christians interpreted Psalm 91. In the third section, I will look into a number of patristic texts, and finally I will draw a number of conclusions with regard to the study of demonology.

Why Psalm 91?[4] This psalm focuses on the individual believer and his relationship to the Almighty. It speaks of trust and protection, and has evidently been read and recited as a means to strengthen the bond of the believer and God. As will appear below, there is an old interpretative tradition in which two verses are read as a means to fence off danger: 'You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday' (vv. 5–6; NRSV). Clearly the words used here intend to express the belief that trust in God gives protection to the believers and this protection is effective night and day. Especially the reference to the 'arrow', however, is often read as the assurance that the believer will be protected against the attacks of demons.[5] By means of this hermeneutical move the psalm becomes an apotropaic protector against evil forces, an amulet almost.

---

[3] On the variety of eschatological figures that merged into the tradition of Antichrist in the second century, see my *The Antecedents of Antichrist: A Traditio-Historical Study of the Earliest Christian Views on Eschatological Opponents* (SJSJ 49; Leiden: Brill, 1996).

[4] A detailed discussion of Psalm 91 in its ancient Israelite and Near Eastern context of origin is offered in a Dutch dissertation by Gerrit C. Vreugdenhil, *Onheil dat voorbijgaat: Psalm 91 en de (oudoosterse) bedreiging door demonen* (Utrecht: s. n., 2013). The author analyses the psalm by taking the demonological reception history of the text as his point of departure, but does not study that history itself.

[5] See e.g. Vreugdenhil, *Onheil*, 15–22. Rashi takes this interpretation for granted and explains

The function of this psalm as a means to protect human beings against demonic influences is already visible in the LXX. In the Masoretic text, the Hebrew of verses 5–6 reads as follows:

לֹא־תִירָא מִפַּחַד לָיְלָה מֵחֵץ יָעוּף יוֹמָם

מִדֶּבֶר בָּאֹפֶל יַהֲלֹךְ מִקֶּטֶב יָשׁוּד צָהֳרָיִם

The Septuagint, however, has a different reading here, and although hypothetically it would be possible that the MT has an adapted Hebrew text that does not correspond to the *Vorlage* that was used by the translators of the LXX, it is more likely that the latter consciously adds to the Hebrew:

οὐ φοβηθήσῃ ἀπὸ φόβου νυκτερινοῦ,
ἀπὸ βέλους πετομένου ἡμέρας,
ἀπὸ πράγματος διαπορευομένου ἐν σκότει,
ἀπὸ συμπτώματος καὶ δαιμονίου μεσημβρινοῦ.

The LXX understands the two verses as a parallellism, and thus the words ἀπὸ πράγματος διαπορευομένου ἐν σκότει are an elaboration of the preceding ἀπὸ φόβου νυκτερινοῦ, and the second clause (ἀπὸ βέλους πετομένου ἡμέρας) is elaborated by the fourth (ἀπὸ συμπτώματος καὶ δαιμονίου μεσημβρινοῦ). Thus, 'mishap and noonday demon' of verse 6 are the explanation of the 'arrow that flies by day' of verse 5.[6] The interpretation of this arrow as a demon is therefore already given in the Greek translation of Psalm 91 (Psalm 90[LXX]), and cannot be regarded as a late addition.

The observation that this particular text was understood as means of protection against demons already by the translators of the LXX gives us an opening as to the understanding of how people in the first century thought about the spiritual and physical dangers they had to face, and it offers us insight into the way in which these dangers were understood as evil forces that threatened their lives. The everyday belief in the presence of demons and in the need to protect oneself against them in word and deed is a necessary addition to the material studied so far in the search for understanding of New Testament ethics and ethos.

---

the words 'the arrow that flies' as 'a demon that flies about like an arrow'; cf. Mayer I. Gruber, *Rashi's Commentary on Psalms* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2007), 582.

[6] Terms from *A New English Translation of the Septuagint and Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included Under That Title* (ed. A. Pietersma and B. C. Wright; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 593.

I. Psalm 91 in the New Testament

1. The Temptation in the Desert

In the opening verses of the gospel of Mark Jesus is described as going to the desert where he is tempted by Satan. The description is brief and condensed: 'and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him' (Mark 1:13; NRSV). The other synoptic gospels have a more elaborate description of the event, which indicates that both Mark and Q had a version of the account. The marginal reference in Nestle-Aland 28 points at Psalm 91:11–12 ('For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone'), and indeed this is the most likely background of the description that 'the angels waited on him'.[7]

Whereas the reference in Mark is brief and condensed and the link with Psalm 91 remains implicit, the account taken up in Luke and Matthew does contain an explicit reference to this psalm. The account from Q is clearly an expanded version of the tradition also found in Mark 1:12–13, and it contains a threefold dialogue between Jesus and the Devil, in which the latter tries to tempt Jesus to show his power. Jesus, however, rebukes the Devil three times by using scriptural quotations. In Matthew, the Devil's first attempt is to ask Jesus to turn stones into bread, and here Jesus replies with Deut. 8:3. Next, the Devil leads Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple and urges him to throw himself from the roof. He assures Jesus that he will be saved, by referring to Psalm 91:11–12, but Jesus answers by quoting Deut. 6:16. Finally, the Devil takes Jesus to a high mountain and offers him the entire world if Jesus should worship the Devil. Again, Jesus wards him off by a quotation, this time Deut. 6:16.

The Lukan version of the temptation story is slightly different: Luke describes the scene at the temple as the third temptation, and offering of power over the nations of the earth as the second. The effect of the order in Luke is that the quotation of Psalm 91 by the Devil more or less becomes the climax of the narrative.

The words that Matthew and Luke attribute to the Devil may differ in detail, but the agreements between the two versions are enough to still conclude that the two versions go back to Q.[8] The editors of the critical edition of Q actually decided that the Matthean order of the temptation account is most likely original. Regardless of this, however, the fact is that probably in the 40's of the first century followers of Jesus saw him as superior in power to the Devil, and attributed a saying to the latter that took a traditional reading of Psalm 91 as its point of

---

[7] Psalm 91 is only one of the references mentioned here in NA28. The others are Exod. 16:35; 24:18; Nu 14:33; 1 Rg 19:8; Job 5:22s; Is 11:6–8; 65:25; 2 Bar 73:6; Test Naph 8:4; Test Iss 7:7; 1 Rg 19:5.

[8] See James M. Robinson, Paul Hoffmann and John S. Kloppenborg, eds., *The Critical Edition of Q: Synopsis including the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, Mark and Thomas with English, German, and French Translations of Q and Thomas* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 22–41.