

THE ART OF VISUAL EXEGESIS

EMORY STUDIES IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY

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Number 19



THE ART OF VISUAL EXEGESIS

Rhetoric, Texts, Images

Edited by

Vernon K. Robbins, Walter S. Melion, and Roy R. Jeal



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ABBREVIATIONS

Primary Sources

<i>Aen.</i>	Virgil, <i>Aeneid</i>
<i>Ant.</i>	Josephus, <i>Jewish Antiquities</i>
<i>Aug.</i>	Suetonius, <i>Divus Augustus</i>
<i>b.</i>	Babylonian Talmud
<i>Bib. hist.</i>	Diodorus Siculus, <i>Bibliotheca historica</i>
<i>Cels.</i>	Origen, <i>Contra Celsum</i>
<i>Clem.</i>	Seneca, <i>De clementia</i>
<i>Comm. Cant.</i>	Rupert of Deutz, <i>Commentaria in Cantica Cantorum</i>
<i>Comm. Luc.</i>	Bonaventure, <i>Commentarius in Evangelium Sanctus Lucae</i>
<i>Comm. Matt.</i>	Hrabanus Maurus, <i>Commentaria in Matthaеum</i>
<i>Conf.</i>	Augustine, <i>Confessiones</i>
<i>De an.</i>	Aristotle, <i>De anima</i>
<i>De imag.</i>	John of Damascus, <i>De imaginibus</i>
<i>De imit.</i>	Thomas à Kempis, <i>De imitatione Christi</i>
<i>Decal.</i>	Philo, <i>De decalogo</i>
<i>Div.</i>	Cicero, <i>De divinatione</i>
<i>Div. quaest. LXXXIII</i>	Augustine, <i>Eighty-Three Different Questions</i>
<i>Enarrat. Matt.</i>	Anselm, <i>Enarrationes in Matthaеum</i>
<i>Enarrat. Ps.</i>	Augustine, <i>Enarratio in Psalmos</i>
<i>Ep.</i>	Plato, <i>Epistulae</i> ; Seneca, <i>Epistulae morales</i>
<i>Exh. virginit.</i>	Ambrose, <i>Exhortatio virginitatis</i>
<i>Fort. Rom.</i>	Plutarch, <i>De fortuna Romanorum</i>
<i>Fug.</i>	Philo, <i>De fuga et inventione</i>
<i>Gloss. ord.</i>	Glossa ordinaria et interlinearis. Published as <i>Biblicorum Sacrorum cum Glossa ordinaria iam ante quidem a Strabo Fulgensi collecta: Nunc autem</i>

	<i>novis, cum Graecorum, tum Latinorum Patrum expositionibus locupletata.</i> 6 vols. Venice, 1603.
<i>Hist.</i>	Polybius, <i>Histories</i>
<i>Hom. fest.</i>	Godfrey of Admont, <i>Homiliae festivales</i>
<i>Hom. Gen.</i>	Origen, <i>Homiliae in Genesim</i>
<i>Hom. Luc.</i>	Origen, <i>Homiliae in Lucam</i>
<i>Hom. Matt.</i>	John Chrysostom, <i>Homiliae in Matthaeum</i>
<i>In. Matt.</i>	Pseudo-Bede, <i>In Matthaei Evangelium</i>
<i>Inst.</i>	Quintilian, <i>Institutio oratoria</i>
<i>Legat.</i>	Philo, <i>Legatio ad Gaium</i>
<i>m.</i>	Mishnah
<i>Marc.</i>	Tertullian, <i>Adversus Marcionem</i>
<i>Metaph.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Metaphysics</i>
<i>Mos.</i>	Philo, <i>De vita Mosis</i>
<i>Mund.</i>	Pseudo-Aristotle, <i>De mundo</i>
<i>Nat.</i>	Pliny, <i>Natural History</i>
<i>Or.</i>	Aelius Aristides, <i>Orationes</i> ; Dio of Prusa, <i>Orations</i>
<i>Pesah.</i>	Pesahim
<i>Phaedr.</i>	Plato, <i>Phaedrus</i>
<i>Phileb.</i>	Plato, <i>Philebus</i>
<i>Princ. iner.</i>	Plutarch, <i>Ad principem ineruditum</i>
<i>Pr Man</i>	Prayer of Manasseh
<i>Prog.</i>	<i>Progymnasmata</i>
<i>Res gest. divi Aug.</i>	Res gestae divi Augusti
<i>Resp.</i>	Plato, <i>Republic</i>
<i>Rev.</i>	Brigitta of Sweden, <i>Revelationes</i>
<i>Rhet.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Rhetorica</i>
<i>Serm.</i>	Aelred of Rievaulx, <i>Sermon</i> ; Augustine, <i>Sermones</i>
<i>Spec.</i>	Philo, <i>De specialibus legibus</i>
<i>Subl.</i>	Longinus, <i>On the Sublime</i>
<i>Super miss.</i>	Bernard of Clairvaux, <i>Super missus est</i>
<i>Theaet.</i>	Plato, <i>Theaetetus</i>
<i>Tract. Ev. Jo.</i>	Augustine, <i>Tractates on the Gospel of John</i>
<i>Vesp.</i>	Suetonius, <i>Vespasian</i>

Secondary Sources

ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
AcBib	Academia Biblica
AJP	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
AJSR	<i>Association for Jewish Studies Review</i>
AmER	<i>American Economic Review</i>
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung</i> . Part 2, <i>Principat</i> . Edited by Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Haase. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1972–.
AOS	American Oriental Series
Argu	<i>Argumentation</i>
ASAN	<i>Annales de la Société Archéologique de Namur</i>
ASP	<i>American Studies in Papyrology</i>
BAFCS	The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting
BAGD	Bauer, Walter, William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker. <i>Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979.
BDAG	Danker, Frederick W., Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium
BGBE	Beiträge zur Geschichte der biblischen Exegese
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation Series
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BMCR	<i>Bryn Mawr Classical Review</i>
BNP	<i>Brill's New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World</i> . 22 vols. Edited by Hubert Cancik. Leiden: Brill, 2002–2011.
BRLJ	Brill Reference Library of Judaism
BTB	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament

BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CalC	Calvin's Commentaries
CCCM	Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio mediaevalis. Turnhout: Brepols, 1969–.
CCS	Cambridge Classical Studies
CH	<i>Church History</i>
CibR	<i>Ciba Review</i>
ClAnt	<i>Classical Antiquity</i>
ClQ	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
CP	<i>Classical Philology</i>
CRS	Classics in Religious Studies
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
DRA	<i>Holy Bible Translated from the Latin Vulgate.</i> Edited by Richard Challoner. Baltimore: Murphy, 1899. Repr., Rockford, IL: Tan Books, 1971.
<i>Ebib</i>	<i>Études bibliques</i>
ESEC	Emory Studies in Early Christianity
ET	English translation
FC	Fathers of the Church
GTJ	<i>Grace Theological Journal</i>
HR	<i>History of Religions</i>
HSem	<i>Horae semiticae.</i> Margaret Dunlop Gibson et al. 9 vols. London: Clay; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903–1916.
IEph	Wankel, Hermann, et al., eds. <i>Die Inschriften von Ephesos.</i> 8 vols. Bonn: Habelt, 1979–1984.
<i>Inquiry</i>	<i>Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
Intersections	Intersections: Interdisciplinary Studies in Early Modern Culture
ITQ	<i>Irish Theological Quarterly</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JR	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
JRASup	Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplements
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
JSJSup	Journal for the Study of Judaism Supplements

<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JSNTSup</i>	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplements
<i>JSOTSup</i>	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplements
Lat.	Latin
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
LSJ	Liddell, Henry George, Robert Scott, and Henry Stuart Jones. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> . 9th ed. with revised supplement. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996.
MM	Moulton, James H., and George Milligan. <i>The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament</i> . London, 1930. Repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997.
<i>NewDocs</i>	<i>New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity</i> . Edited by G. H. R. Horsley. North Ryde, NSW: The Ancient History Documentary Research Centre, Macquarie University, 1981–.
NHMS	Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies
<i>NIB</i>	<i>New Interpreter's Bible</i> . Edited by Leander E. Keck. 12 vols. Nashville: Abingdon, 1994–2004.
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIV	New International Version of the Bible
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NovTSup</i>	Novum Testamentum Supplements
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version of the Bible
<i>NRTh</i>	<i>La nouvelle revue théologique</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OCSJC	Oeuvres complètes de Saint Jean Chrysostome
<i>ODCW</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of the Classical World</i> . Edited by John Roberts. Oxford Reference Online. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. www.oxfordreference.com .
OECS	Oxford Early Christian Studies
<i>OED</i>	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. Online. www.oed.com .
<i>OGIS</i>	<i>Orientis graeci inscriptiones selectae</i> . Edited by Wilhelm Dittenberger. 2 vols. Leipzig: Hirzel, 1903–1905.

OTP	<i>Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> . Edited by James H. Charlesworth. 2 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1983–1985.
PG	Patrologia graeca [= Patrologiae cursus completus: Series graeca]. Edited by J.-P. Migne. 162 vols. Paris: Migne, 1857–1886.
PL	Patrologia latina [= Patrologiae cursus completus: Series latina]. Edited by J.-P. Migne. 217 vols. Paris: Migne, 1844–1855.
PRSt	<i>Perspectives in Religious Studies</i>
PTMS	Princeton Theological Monograph Series
RelSRev	<i>Religious Studies Review</i>
RhetR	<i>Rhetoric Review</i>
RRA	Rhetoric of Religious Antiquity
RSV	Revised Standard Version of the Bible
SAC	Studies in Antiquity and Christianity
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SCJud	Studies in Christianity and Judaism
SE	<i>Studia Evangelica</i> I, II, III (= TU 73 [1959], 87 [1964], 88 [1964], etc.)
SiCS	<i>Sino-Christian Studies</i>
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SP	Sacra pagina
SREC	Sociorhetorical Exploration Commentaries
SRI	Sociorhetorical Interpretation
StBibLit	Studies in Biblical Literature
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
SymS	Symposium Series
TAPA	<i>Transactions of the American Philological Association</i>
TAPS	Transactions of the American Philosophical Society
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976.
TENTS	Texts and Editions for New Testament Study

<i>Thf</i>	<i>Theoforum</i>
TLG	<i>Thesaurus linguae graecae: Canon of Greek Authors and Works.</i> Edited by Luci Berkowitz and Karl A. Squitier. 3rd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.
USQR	<i>Union Seminary Quarterly Review</i>
VC	<i>Vigiliae christianae</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WGRW	Writings from the Greco-Roman World
WGRWSup	Writings from the Greco-Roman World Supplements
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
YCS	Yale Classical Studies
ZKG	<i>Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte</i>
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>
ZPE	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>

INTRODUCTION

Vernon K. Robbins, Walter S. Melion, and Roy R. Jeal

This volume emerged in the context of the academic year 2013–2014, during which monthly Sawyer Seminars held at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, focused on visual hermeneutics and exegesis in multiple religious traditions. The year-long series was titled “Visual Exegesis: Images as Instruments of Scriptural Interpretation and Hermeneutics.” The seminar was proposed by Walter S. Melion and funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation through Emory University. As the seminars unfolded, Vernon Robbins, assisted by Walter Melion and Roy Jeal, selected certain participants to revise their presentations for publication and in some instances invited authors to write essays based on ideas that developed in the context of the presentations and seminar discussions.

There are three parts to the volume. The first part focuses on methodology for interpretation of texts in relation to images and exemplifies the increasing inclusion of visual material culture in interpretation of New Testament texts during the last two decades. The second part provides justification for the first by examining the use of visual material culture of the Roman Mediterranean world during the time of the emergence of early Christianity. The third part consists of five art-historical studies of exegetical images produced in France, Italy, and the Low Countries from the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries. These Christian paintings and prints functioned as visual *machinae* (apparatuses) for close reading and interpretation of Scripture; in showing how they operated for their early modern viewers, the five art historians not only unfold the process of visual exegesis, but themselves engage in it.

Part 1, “Methodology for Visual Exegesis and Rhetography,” begins with an essay by Robbins that surveys major works from Graydon F. Snyder’s *Ante Pacem* (1985) to recent publications that use Roman imperial visual material culture to establish context for interpreting New Testament

writings. After decades of scholarly interpretation that focused on textual issues, an explosion of publications containing photographs of visual material culture in the Roman imperial world, often accompanied by architectural drawings, began to appear. The overall effect has been a shift from analysis of biblical-Jewish heritage in the context of Hellenistic tradition to discussion and debate regarding the presence or absence of Roman imperial conceptuality and practice for interpretation of particular New Testament writings. A major movement of interpretation has emerged arguing that the early writings of the apostle Paul energetically contrasted the early Christian gospel to the Roman imperial gospel of Augustus Caesar and his successors. In this overall context, various iconological-iconographical approaches have emerged, some with well-developed combinations of political, rhetorical, semiotic, and feminist dimensions. The result has been a growing number of publications that include significant discussion of the relation of Roman imperial conceptuality and practice to aspects of most of the New Testament.

The second essay, “Visual Interpretation: Blending Rhetorical Arts in Colossians 2:6–3:4” by Jeal, indicates how pictures evoked in human minds by texts provide an entry to understanding. Frequently, complex pictures themselves are directly argumentative. The visual argumentation of Col 2:6–3:4 presents highly complex imagery of circumcision, burial with Christ in baptism, being raised with Christ, and being clothed with Christ to explain the fullness in Christ that believers already inhabit. Jeal uses insights from writings of Aristotle, Ezra Pound, Vernon Robbins, Margaret Visser, and Daniel Kahneman to develop a sociorhetorical approach to visual interpretation guided by modern cognitive theory.

L. Gregory Bloomquist’s “Methodology Underlying the Presentation of Visual Texture in the Gospel of John,” the third essay, features application of a range of aspects of cognitive science about mind, brain, and visualization to show the relationship of visual exegesis or *rhetography* to textual interpretation. Bloomquist applies cognitive methodology in a sociorhetorical analysis of the Gospel of John to understand the argumentative movement from images to narrative. The approach employs aspects of the work of Kahneman in his books *Attention and Effort* (1973) and *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (2011), and Kahneman’s work with Amos Tversky in *Judgment under Uncertainty* (1982) and *Choices, Values, and Frames* (2000) as ways of entering the analysis.

The fourth essay, Bloomquist’s “Eyes Wide Open, Seeing Nothing: The Challenge of the Gospel of John’s Nonvisualizable Texture for Readings

Using Visual Texture,” grounds the term *rhetography* theoretically, describing its argumentative nature and demonstrating how the human brain employs “elaborate integration networks” that shape images into powerful narratives that evoke understanding. The visual imagery develops in the mind through complex conceptual blending. The article presents an expansive visual explanation of the Gospel of John that describes and interprets the visual portrayal of the offspring of God as not yet fully born, not yet “seeing” fully, and appearing and imagining themselves to be free when they are not. They remain in the “womb,” where their vision is limited by corruption in the “Roman inspired Herodian Temple run by Roman appointed personnel,” which functions as a “hollow tomb.” The visualized corruption does not allow for more than a view of the “inner lining of a womb” from which birth into the family of God is needed.

Part 2, “Visual Exegesis Using Roman Visual Material Culture,” begins with Harry O. Maier’s essay, which presents a model for using and exploring the influence of visual culture in the study of New Testament texts. It discusses the importance of *ekphrasis* or vivid speech in ancient persuasion. With the help of the anthropological study of visual culture, it explores the political iconography of the Roman Empire as a means of furnishing external narratives for the internal narrative constructions of early Christian beliefs and their graphic representations. The paper concludes with a discussion of the Letter to the Colossians to illustrate the use of the model. It argues that the letter does not reveal an apostle and his followers opposed to the Roman Empire but, rather, Christ followers positioned within it in complex ways.

The essay by Brigitte Kahl, “*The Galatian Suicide* and the Transbinary Semiotics of *Christ Crucified* (Galatians 3:1): Exercises in Visual Exegesis and Critical Reimagination,” describes in intriguing and critical detail the evocative statue of the *Suicidal Gaul*, as observed recently in plaster cast form at the Pergamon Museum in Berlin. The statue portrays ethnic ancestors of the Galatians addressed in Paul’s New Testament letter. The Galatian subjects being portrayed face defeat and choose suicide rather than capture. With New Testament studies turning gradually to interest in the visual, Kahl analyzes *The Galatian Suicide* by means of sociohistorical, sociorhetorical, and semiotic approaches that “reimagine” how things might be seen so that the image of the statue and the text describing Christ crucified in Gal 3:1 can “become mutually readable.” Kahl offers a visual exegetical reading of *The Galatian Suicide* that indicates how modern perspectives are different from ancient ones and how interpretation reveals

striking surprises. As the statue points to the victory of the conquerors of the Galatians by means of the portrayal of the death of the figures, so Christ crucified points careful readers to victory and freedom through the death of Jesus Christ.

Rosemary Canavan's "Armor, Peace, and Gladiators: A Visual Exegesis of Ephesians 6:10–17" shows how a growing field of interpretation looks at the clothing and armor imagery in the seven verses in the final chapter of Ephesians in relation to and in dialogue with the sociopolitical visual landscape of the Roman Empire. Canavan engages the iconographic panorama of the cities in which this biblical text was written, heard, and read to illuminate the meaning of the description of the spiritual struggle of the faith communities with the imagery in the text. Canavan uses an adapted sociorhetorical approach to analyze the clothing and armor images in Eph 6:10–17 in light of a gladiator graveyard in Ephesus and in the context of *Pax Romana* in Asia Minor. Through this visual exegesis, she examines the schema of visual images and investigates how the spectacle of gladiatorial combat and the sculpted panorama of imperial iconography informs, critiques, and interacts with the metaphorical images in the biblical text.

Part 3, "Visual Exegesis using Christian Art," as noted above, focuses on image-based exegesis, both as an object of historical study and as a species of art historical interpretation. Here image refers to actual pictorial images, which often enter into complex relations with other kinds of primarily verbal image-making. In this context, visual exegesis refers to the use of pictorial images as hermeneutical prompts, in and through which Scripture is visualized and interpreted.

From the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, painters, drafters, and printmakers increasingly engaged with Scripture by means of the images they produced of scriptural *loci* and of the persons, places, and events described and narrated therein. At the same time, the theory and practice of exegesis proved responsive to three great developments that brought pressure to bear on the ways in which visual images were conceived, in their form and function, manner and meaning, as exegetical instruments and, accordingly, put to use. The first is the humanist philology that scrutinized the source texts, questioning if not quite displacing the singular authority of the Latin Vulgate, reading the canonical books according to rules of rhetoric and dialectic codified by the ancients, and situating biblical history and prophecy within their appropriate contexts—archaeological, geographical, and sociocultural. The second is the proliferation of printed Bibles, both Latin and vernacular, at the turn of the sixteenth

century. Whether Roman Catholic, Lutheran, or Reformed, these publications were often illustrated, with the majority of images occurring in the Pentateuch and historical books of the Old Testament, in the Psalms, in the Gospels and Acts, and in Revelation. The third is the establishment of the major reproductive print publishing houses in Antwerp, Lyon, Rome, and elsewhere around the mid-sixteenth century, and as a consequence, the rise in popularity of scriptural woodcuts and engravings, issued not as biblical illustrations but as independent prints and print series. These new media introduced novel visual exegetical formats: for example, they are often richly inscribed with scriptural tags and texts; in aggregate, these extracts cohere into a biblical intertext whose mutually discursive elements are read by way of the pictorial image to which they jointly attach. The prints also often contain scriptural paraphrases in prose or verse or, alternatively, exegetical commonplaces that invite various readings of the scriptural imagery. Moreover, the visual images can constitute a reading of Scripture: the pictures then usurp the function of prompting the biblical interpretation.

The introduction of new kinds of text-image apparatus, such as the emblem book, at mid-century further enriched and complicated the exegetical potential of scriptural imagery. Pioneered by Georgette de Montanay and Benito Arias Montano (the former Calvinist, the latter Roman Catholic), the scriptural emblem book places various types of image—historical, enigmatic, allegorical, paraphrastic—into conversation with various types of biblical text—citations, mottoes, epigrams, and commentaries. The interaction of the emblem's verbal and visual components is dialogic, reciprocal, and polyvalent, and the emblematic readings of Scripture that ensue are frequently inventive and occasionally unorthodox. By the second half of the sixteenth century, a new format of Bible, consisting entirely of prints and print series that distill the Old and New Testaments into images, had been promulgated in Antwerp. The picture Bible jointly illustrates and interprets Scripture, following the canonical order of the biblical books—as established by Trent, Luther, or Calvin—and reducing the text proper to condensed and corollary biblical subscriptions.

These developments constitute the large discursive context for the pictures expounded in the five art-historical essays in part 3. The section begins with Christopher J. Nygren's essay, "Graphic Exegesis: Reflections on the Difficulty of Talking about Biblical Images, Pictures, and Texts," which offers a systematic appraisal of the term *image* as construed by art historians and rhetographers, with a view better to understand how these

scholarly communities anchor scriptural interpretation in processes of biblical image-making. Whereas rhetography expounds “pictorial imagining” by embedding the production of biblical images within six sociorhetorical discursive fields—wisdom, prophetic, apocalyptic, precreation, miracle, and priestly—art history, in its various forms, preserves and endeavors to parse the relation between nonmaterial images (from the Greek *eidōlon*, a noncorporeal image) and material images (such as works of painting or sculpture). Nygren envisions a mutually productive exchange between rhetography’s approach to reading the dynamic interaction among author, text, and interpreter, and art history’s approach to negotiating between virtual and actual, nonmaterial and material modes of imaging. The common ground for both the rhetographer and the art historian is the shared assumption that the production of biblical images, both *in mente* and *in materia*, and their decipherment rely on or, better, activate an engagement with Scripture that is profoundly exegetical. As an exercise in interpretative precision, Nygren asks that a distinction be drawn between the practice of visual exegesis and a specific subset of this practice which, in his view, should dwell exclusively on pictorial and other kinds of material image that propound readings of Scripture, largely independent of the textual exegetical tradition. He designates this species of visual exegesis *graphic exegesis* and offers as a case study of such an exegetical picture Titian’s large *Ecce Homo* of 1543 (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna), which views this biblical subject through the lens of the Pr Man 1:11, “Now therefore I bend the knee of mine heart, beseeching thee of grace.” On this account, Bruegel’s *Resurrection* (Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam; Art Institute, Chicago; and British Museum, London), Philip de Champaigne’s *Christ Healing the Blind* (Timken Museum of Art, San Diego), and Herri met de Bles’s *Parable of the Good Samaritan* (Musée des arts anciens du Namurois, Namur), as discussed in the essays by Melion, James Clifton, and Michel Weemans, respectively, would be examples both of visual exegesis *and*, more particularly, of graphic exegesis.

Henry Luttikhuisen’s “The Gifts of Epiphany: Geertgen tot Sint Jans and the Adoration of the Magi” discusses the iconography of three paintings of the Epiphany by the Dutch fifteenth-century master Geertgen tot Sint Jans. Variations in the artist’s portrayals of the adoration of the magi derive from the rich tradition of exegetical elaboration upon the gospel account of the wise men’s visit to the newborn Christ, which appears only in Matt 2:1–12. Geertgen alludes by turns to the typological reading of this passage as the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy that the

king of Israel would be born in Bethlehem (Mic 5:2, as cited by the priests and scribes described in Matt 2:6), to Origen's conviction that there were three kings (all three of whom were descended from the magus Balaam, and each of whom gave one of three gifts), to Tertullian's analogy of the Epiphany with the psalmist's prophecy of the kings who shall pay homage to the King of kings in Ps 71:10–11, to Pseudo-Bede's allegorization of the three magi as representatives of the three ages of humanity, to Augustine's identification of them with Europe, Asia, and Africa, respectively, and to Bonaventure's association of them with the three powers of the soul—memory, intellect, and will—and with the spiritual gifts of divine love, contemplative devotion, and penitential sorrow. Geertgen's paintings variously layer upon these readings of the adoration, the Christological image of Christ as the doorway to salvation (John 10:9), and the Mariological image of the Virgin Mary as the *porta clausa* through whom the “Lord the God of Israel hath entered in” (Ezek 44:2). Furthermore, the implied comparison between the adoration of the humble shepherds and the adoration of the magi, who humbled themselves before Christ, alludes to the mystery of *kenosis*, the self-emptying of Godhead in the Incarnation, as set forth in Phil 2:6–7. In sum, Geertgen's three paintings are in no way simply illustrative of the Epiphany; rather, they are rooted in exegetical *amplificationes* that would have been intimately familiar to his primary patrons, the Hospitallers of Saint John the Baptist, in whose commandery in Haarlem the artist resided and labored.

Clifton's essay, “Exactitude and Fidelity? Paintings of *Christ Healing the Blind* by Nicolas Poussin and Philippe de Champaigne,” compares the artists' very different versions of this biblical subject, as recounted in Matt 20:29–34, Mark 10:46–52, and Luke 18:35–43. These differences, argues Clifton, are exegetical in form, function, and meaning. He begins with a question: why did Champaigne respond to a lecture on Poussin's picture, given in 1668 at the French Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture, by accusing him of insufficient fidelity to Scripture? His own version, after all, rather than illustrating the miracle, views it through the readings of Origen, Augustine, Gregory the Great, John Chrysostom, and Hrabanus Maurus; indeed, like the great Jesuit exegete Cornelius a Lapide, Champaigne interprets the healing of the blind men at Jericho as an index of penitential spiritual agency. He does so by introducing two conspicuous features, both of which markedly diverge from pictorial tradition: Christ stands at a distance from the blind men, whom he is seen to call rather than touch, and the two men are portrayed as hermits living far beyond the city

of Jericho. Closely following Gregory's account of the miracle, he implies that even before their sight has been restored, the blind men "already see by desire the joys of [the Redeemer's] internal light." Their joint action of reaching earnestly for Christ, even while groping blindly, speaks to the efficacy of their faith in the Lord, whose power to heal them internally Champaigne endeavors to demonstrate. Viewed through this exegetical lens, his painting must be recognized as a depiction, not of Matt 20:34, "And Jesus having compassion on them, touched their eyes," but of Matt 20:32 (as well as Mark 10:49 and Luke 18:40), "And Jesus standing, commanded him to be brought unto him. And . . . he asked him, saying: 'What wilt thou that I do to thee?'" Such pictures, concludes Clifton, function as exegetical instruments, comparable to scriptural commentaries; like the biblical passages they depict and interpret, they are themselves open to a richly multifaceted analysis.

Weemans's "Topos versus topia: Herri met de Bles's Visual Exegesis of the Parable of the Good Samaritan" describes and explicates the tissue of motivic topoi ("commonplaces") woven into the expansive biblical *Weld-landschaften* ("world landscapes") of the mid-sixteenth-century Flemish painter Herri met de Bles. The term for these landscape features is topia, but Weemans more accurately construes them as topoi—topical motifs or rubrics—that resolve into structures of interpretation, which in turn allow the setting itself to be read as a gloss on the biblical story embedded in the landscape. The metonymic motifs preferred by Bles cluster into relations of "repetition, similarity, opposition, and comparison," organized along horizontal, vertical, and, in the case of the *Landscape with the Parable of the Good Samaritan*, diagonal axes.

Just as in Luke 10, the key term *neighbor* is first stated (10:27), then recontextualized by the parable, and finally restated (10:36). With its meaning now based in action altered evangelically rather than merely in the Law in Bles's parabolic landscape, the motivic superstructure converts the landscape proper (its topia) into an exegetical apparatus that exerts interpretative pressure on how we visualize and understand the parable. The conversion of the landscape into a heuristic network of metaphors stands proxy for the spiritual conversion of the viewers whom the motivic topoi enable fully to engage with the Parable of the Good Samaritan, by seeing or, more precisely, reseeing the world landscape in a new way.

Finally, Melion's essay, "*Signa Resurrectionis*: Vision, Image, and Pictorial Proof in Pieter Bruegel's *Resurrection* of Circa 1562–1563," investigates the exegetical format and function of Bruegel's distinctive, even

idiosyncratic, and yet deeply scriptural depiction of this greatest of mysteries. Engraved by Philips Galle after a complex drawing in pen, ink, and wash by Bruegel, the *Resurrection* explores a problem central to the exegetical tradition but rarely if ever investigated so fully and subtly—namely, that this great mystery of faith, as set forth in the gospels and epistles, was witnessed by no one and must thus be ascertained solely by means of the evidentiary signs divinely promulgated to make known the mystery. Bruegel takes great care to show his protagonists responding to these visible traces. He portrays the risen Christ as present and yet unseen, radiant and yet shadowed: the Lord's gesture of pointing directs the viewer's eyes toward the rising sun, which functions as visual analogue and proxy for the resurrection. Christ can be seen to license this and other proxies for the mystery fulfilled, not least Bruegel's picture itself, whose status as yet another kind of visual evidence the artist reflexively underscores. The *Resurrection*, in these and other ways, emphasizes that vision is an instrument of faith. Melion's paper explores how Bruegel's grisaille, in the arguments it puts forth about vision, operates as a prime example of visual exegesis, amplifying the terse gospel accounts of the resurrection and its attendant circumstances. By reference to corollary *auctoritates* such as the *Glossa ordinaria et interlinearis*, the *Postillae* of Nicholas of Lyra, and Desiderius Erasmus's *Paraphrases* on the gospels, Bruegel breaks with pictorial convention in order directly to engage with Scripture and the exegetical tradition.

We editors owe a debt of thanks to the contributors, who brought their insights to the Sawyer Seminar and then worked closely with us, revising their essays for inclusion in this volume. In addition, we thank Jonathan M. Potter, John Michael Blackmon, and Aubrey Elizabeth Buster for assistance with the indexing. Also, we are deeply grateful for the generous support of the Pierce Program in Religion of Oxford College of Emory University, which made possible the publication of this volume. We hope that the book's three parts shed light on the ways in which verbal, visual, and pictorial methods of image-making proved crucial to various kinds and degrees of engagement with Scripture in antiquity, and early modern Europe, and to the ongoing practice of biblical interpretation.

PART 1
METHODOLOGY FOR
VISUAL EXEGESIS AND RHETOGRAPHY

NEW TESTAMENT TEXTS, VISUAL MATERIAL CULTURE, AND EARLIEST CHRISTIAN ART

Vernon K. Robbins

INTRODUCTION

This essay addresses the interpretation of New Testament texts in the context of visual material culture. Especially during the last two decades, interpreters have begun to produce explicit exegesis of New Testament texts in the context of statues, frescoes, archaeological structures, inscriptions, pottery, coins, paintings, and other artifacts that existed in the Mediterranean world during first-century emerging Christianity. A major question is how the presence of a display of visual material culture in the context of interpretation of a text may be legitimately persuasive. Is the presence of the visual display simply a tour de force that has no scholarly validity? Could it be the case that the uninformed are easily persuaded, but those who are really informed about the data know otherwise?

LATE TWENTIETH-CENTURY EMERGENCE OF VISUAL MATERIAL CULTURE IN NEW TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION

As this essay explores ways interpreters have been interpreting New Testament texts during the last two decades, it includes significant methodological detail and comment for the purpose of exploring ways interpreters may include substantive visual material culture in well-informed exegesis of texts. It is important to be aware at the beginning that texts themselves are items of visual material culture. Texts are material objects on which humans write signs that signify meanings and meaning effects. The body-mind actions of composing and writing texts create networks of meanings and meaning effects that function as historical, social, cultural,

ideological, religious, and artistic phenomena among humans. In the field of biblical studies, texts were given dominant status within visual material culture during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries for the discovery of truth about both the past history of humankind and the present importance of humans in the world. The gradual movement of the social sciences (including ideology) into biblical studies that began to flourish in New Testament studies during the 1970s and the entry of the cognitive sciences (including conceptual integration/blending theory) into biblical studies during the first years of the 2000s has given more and more prominence to visualization in interpretation.

Social-science interpretation regularly visualizes activities through diagrams and tables, many of which are models, and, especially in anthropology, photographs of people and items from unusual places accompany the visual displays. The cognitive sciences have not only expanded models and diagrams to represent visualization of activities in people's bodies and minds, but they emphasize the centrality of visualization itself for the way the mind thinks, the way people understand, and the particular things people believe. Since a growing number of biblical interpreters are now inviting the social and cognitive sciences into their work in one way or another, an emphasis on visual material culture in the context of both the production and interpretation of biblical writings has become stronger. What are some of the effects these emphases on visual material culture are producing in biblical interpretation?

Graydon F. Snyder: Pre-Constantinian Christian Archaeology and Art

During a period of time when investigation of the emergence of Christianity focused heavily on textual interpretation of various kinds and an explosion of new methodologies had been occurring, Graydon F. Snyder published, in 1985, *Ante Pacem: Archaeological Evidence of Church Life before Constantine*.¹ Observing that there was at that time "no introduction or sourcebook for early Christian archaeology now available in the English language," his aim was to begin to fill the void.²

1. Graydon F. Snyder, *Ante Pacem: Archaeological Evidence of Church Life before Constantine* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985).

2. He cites (*ibid.*, 3) five predecessors: Giuseppe Ferretto, *Note storico-bibliografiche di archeologia cristiana* (The Vatican: Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, 1942); Pasquale Testini, *Archeologia cristiana* (Rome: Desclée, 1958), 64–72; Giuseppe

To establish a framework for his presentation, Snyder introduced three chronological parameters. First, he described the apostle Paul's proclamation of the new Christian faith as a universalization of Judaism in which it became a mode of religious life "acceptable for Gentiles without losing its basic Jewish world view."³ Second, he posited a social disruption in the early Christian movement as it enacted a "suspended" faith as "Paul had to discuss whether the new Christian community should follow Jewish, Gentile, or some other set of customs in such matters as eating, dressing, marrying, and worshipping."⁴ Snyder proposed that the earliest Christian writings could not "indicate the actual social development that occurred" since the writings were participating so internally in the process itself. Rather, the writings primarily show a polemic against culture as a way of engaging its contexts. This leads him to suggest that only the scarce nonliterary data available to us provides the possibility of catching "a glimpse of what actually happened, regardless of the polemical concerns of the Christian leaders as expressed in written form."⁵ Snyder asserts that Christian people left material remains during the first two centuries, but these remains are indistinguishable from the predominant culture "until about 180," when "distinguishable funerary art, inscriptions, letters, symbols, and perhaps buildings surface."⁶ After these two chronological parameters, Snyder posited a "third sociological explosion" that occurred in Christianity during the fourth century as it "was thrust into a universal role as the formal religious expression of the Roman Empire."⁷ This role created an environment for the emergence of public structures and artistic productions with "elements of Christianity as we now know it."

Within the framework of these three chronological parameters, Snyder's goal was to present data that exhibit "archeology in the broader sense of any remains that are nonliterary."⁸ The result was a presentation of data under the rubrics of early Christian symbols, pictorial representations,

Bovini, *Gli studi di archeologia cristiana* (Bologna: Patron, 1968); Carl Andresen, *Die Kirche in ihrer Geschichte: Einführung in die Christliche Archäologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971); Edwin A. Judge, "'Antike und Christentum': Toward a Definition of the Field. A Bibliographical Essay," *ANRW* 23.1:3–58.

3. Snyder, *Ante Pacem*, 1.

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.*, 2.

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*

pictorial interpretations, early church buildings, inscriptions, graffiti, and papyrus documentation. Our focus calls for special attention to his presentation of data in his chapters on early Christian symbols and pictorial representations. But first it is important to understand the presuppositions and methodology that guided his work.

Snyder begins with a dictum about archaeology: “Just as biblical archaeology inherently implies Palestinian archaeology, so early Christian archaeology refers primarily to Rome.”⁹ He clarifies that this does not mean there is evidence for Christianity only in Rome, but “it does mean that in the Mediterranean world of the third century, most cultural expressions emanated from Rome, the political center.”¹⁰ Thus, he proposes, studying Christianity in major contexts outside of Rome is “simply to study the development of Roman Christianity in that particular locale.”¹¹ We will see below that most interpreters consider Snyder’s insight about Roman Christianity outside of Rome to be implicitly on target. The environment of interpretation has substantively changed, however, as a result of the vast amount of visual material culture now readily available to scholars through electronic media, including inscriptions on public edifices, statues, frescoes, pottery art, and so on. Especially during the last two decades of scholarship, investigation of emerging Christianity through available archaeological and pictorial data has been introducing a relocation of debate about the relation of Judaism to Hellenism to debates about the relation of both Judaism and emerging Christianity to Roman imperial practices, conceptuality, and institutions.

To establish a context for discussing early Christian symbols and pictorial representations, Snyder proposed that it is important to move beyond weaknesses of both the Roman school of archaeology—which began in 1632, became a discipline of the science of early Christian archaeology during the nineteenth century, and was modified through some alternative methods during the twentieth century—and Palestinian archaeology, which started with a goal “to prove or illustrate the validity and/or accuracy of the Bible.”¹² In a context where major advances had been made by the 1980s in both Roman Mediterranean archaeology and Palestinian archaeology, Snyder formulated his particular approach. He proposed four

9. *Ibid.*, 3.

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*, 3–5, 7.

principles to guide his work, using insights both from greater understanding of diversity within early Christianity and from insights within the social sciences during recent decades of the study:¹³

1. Some elements of the great tradition are being accepted in the social matrix.
2. Some elements of the great tradition are being accepted in the social matrix in a nonnormative manner.
3. Some elements of the social matrix are being adapted by the great tradition.
4. Some elements of the social matrix are being accepted by the great tradition in a nonnormative manner.¹⁴

Following these guidelines, Snyder concluded that the nascent culture of Christianity appeared circa 180 CE. This was the time when Christians were accused of being atheists, because they did not believe in the dominant pluralism. As the tension became violent with persecutions during the mid-third century, “the power of a symbol (Jesus) became evident with its abilities to absorb the divinities and social structures of the Roman world.”¹⁵ The issue for Snyder, then, was how the power of the symbol of Jesus emerged through artistic representations in the context of the ubiquitous visual material culture in the Mediterranean world during the Roman era.

Snyder’s second chapter presents, as a beginning point, the early Christian symbols that emerged for Jesus. Working programmatically through the data, he finds the following symbols: lamb, anchor, vase, dove, boat, olive branch, the Orante (person praying with arms extended and palms upward), palm or tree, bread, the Good Shepherd, fish, vine and grapes, and cross.¹⁶ As he proceeds, Snyder presupposes that “a sign or symbol, like a metaphor in linguistic expression, reflects the multiple social conflicts or paradoxes in which the producing group finds itself.”¹⁷ When narrative art emerges, in contrast to the earliest context of signs and symbols,

13. *Ibid.*, 8–10.

14. *Ibid.*, 10.

15. *Ibid.*, 11.

16. *Ibid.*, 13–29.

17. *Ibid.*, 13.

it “normally indicates the resolution of conflicts into a common story.”¹⁸ For Snyder this means that one does not find narrative Christian art until the peace of Constantine in the fourth century, thus the title of his book *Ante Pacem*.

For Snyder, all the symbols except the cross (listed last) can endure in an alien environment without difficulty. Lambs appear in bucolic scenes, referring to a kinship community, rather than a sacrificial or liturgical context.¹⁹ The anchor, complemented by fish and ships, implies security in a hostile or negative culture; and the vase probably symbolizes “the kinship meal of the early Christians.”²⁰ The early Christian dove “must have signified that peace and satisfaction derived from faith and the faith community as one faced death, or cultural and existential entrapment”; along with the Orante, doves appear in conflict situations such as Noah and the ark, Daniel and the lions, and the three young men in the fiery furnace, but these symbols begin to disappear after the fourth century.²¹ The boat was a popular symbol during the third and fourth centuries but then lost its usefulness. In its origin it referred, like the anchor and sometimes the fish, to security in an alien environment. It lost its popularity in Christian art, even though patristic literature regularly considered it to refer to the church as the sole means of salvation.²² The Orante, a standing female figure with arms stretched above her head, “must be the most important symbol in early Christian art.... She is Noah in the ark; Jonah in the boat and Jonah spewed out of the *ketos* (sea monster); Daniel between the lions; Susanna saved by Daniel; the three young men in the fiery furnace; and occasionally Lazarus.”²³ Snyder concludes that “in its original social context, the Orante referred to the security of filial piety. The symbol was used by some early Christians in reference to the new, adopted family—the Church” with the “sense of community security or peace.”²⁴ In accord with these conclusions, Snyder considers the palm or tree, bread, the Good Shepherd, fish, and vine and grapes all to be general symbols in Roman art signifying peace, safety, and security. During the period prior to the

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid., 14.

20. Ibid., 15–16.

21. Ibid., 16–17.

22. Ibid., 18–19.

23. Ibid., 19.

24. Ibid., 20.

peace with Constantine, there is nothing distinctly Christian about any of these symbols. Even the final symbol he presents, the cross, should not be considered to be pre-Constantinian. It is of primary importance, he therefore argues, that multiple instances of the cross as a symbol in pre-Constantinian Christianity do not appear in the archaeological data.

Robin Jensen: Interpreting Earliest Christian Art

A decade and a half after Snyder's *Ante Pacem* appeared, Robin Margaret Jensen published a book interpreting many of the images Snyder had gathered and presented in print.²⁵ Signaling indebtedness to his work as well as ongoing debate between herself and Snyder, she arranges her book in a sequence of nonnarrative images, pictorial typologies and visual exegesis, portraits of the incarnate God, images of the suffering redeemer, and the resurrection of the body and restoration of Eden.²⁶

In a chapter on issues and problems of interpretation, she explains that carved sarcophagus scenes are higher quality art than the haphazard composition of catacomb art.²⁷ Some scholars identify the persecutions of Christians during the third century as a context where catacomb iconography selected figures like Daniel and the three youths in the fiery furnace, Abraham's offering of Isaac, and Noah's deliverance from danger to express Christian views of deliverance or martyrdom.²⁸ In particular, scholars differ on the propriety of interpreting early Christian iconography on the basis of literary sources from the patristic era. A major issue is whether the visual material culture reflects more the faith of common folk or is significantly influenced by more aristocratic and educated male clergy.²⁹

In a second chapter on nonnarrative images, Jensen interprets the Orante, Good Shepherd, Christ as Orpheus or Helios, the seated philosopher/teacher, the fisher and the fish, fish and meal scenes, and the vine and the wheat.³⁰ She emphasizes that these images are popular symbols and figures in the Mediterranean world that the earliest Christians

25. Robin Margaret Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art* (London: Routledge, 2000).

26. *Ibid.*, 32–182.

27. *Ibid.*, 24–25.

28. *Ibid.*, 27.

29. *Ibid.*, 27–30.

30. *Ibid.*, 35–61.

were adapting for their own contexts and viewing with specific Christian meanings “without being overly self-conscious or apologetic for the borrowing.”³¹ The meanings are multivalent and even ambiguous, but they regularly emphasize human virtues and general hopes of after-life. Overall, she sees an “almost graceful transition from pagan imagery to Christian symbolism in the early period” that has parallels in many second- and third-century writers including Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria.³²

In a following chapter Jensen contrasts the widespread nonnarrative images in the Mediterranean world with pictorial typologies based on biblical figures that evoke visual exegesis. Popular third-century depictions from the Old Testament include Moses crossing the Red Sea and striking the rock in the wilderness, Jonah, Noah, Abraham offering Isaac, and Daniel flanked by lions. There is not a single third- or early fourth-century instance of Jacob, Joseph, Joshua, David, or the major prophets.³³ Popular depictions from the New Testament include the baptism of Jesus, the raising of Lazarus, multiplication of loaves and fishes, healing of the paralytic, transformation of water to wine at Cana, and the woman at the well. But there are no depictions of Jesus with the elders, his temptation, or his cleansing of the temple.³⁴ Also, there are no depictions of Jesus on the cross.

After her discussion of nonnarrative images, pictorial typologies, and visual exegesis, Jensen presents a chapter rich with interpretation of Christian art that emerged during the fourth and fifth centuries. In addition to depictions of special scenes in Jesus’s life including his raising of people from the dead, washing his disciples’ feet, and talking with the woman at the well, there are depictions of Christ in relation to imperial cult imagery, Greek gods and goddesses, and saints. Jensen emphasizes the multivalency and complexity of the visual imagery as well as the literary imagery during this period of time.³⁵ Philosophical perspectives, mystical experiences of presence, and the actions of Jesus among humans on earth intermingle with people’s apprehension of the divine in the midst of the vicissitudes of earthly life.

31. *Ibid.*, 62.

32. *Ibid.*

33. *Ibid.*, 65.

34. *Ibid.*, 65–88.

35. *Ibid.*, 98–129.

Then Jensen presents a chapter of detailed discussion on artistic imagery related to Jesus as the suffering redeemer. Depictions of Jesus's suffering under Pontius Pilate and crucifixion are central topics of discussion and debate within scholarship as a result of the widespread absence of crucifixion images until their dominance during the medieval period. Central to the debate is the degree to which "crypto-crosses" (anchors, ships' masts, trees, plows, axes), and *tau*-crosses present a well-developed sacrificial view of Christ's death. Jensen's well-informed, careful, and nuanced discussion shows a mastery of the highly complex and vigorously debated data.³⁶

The final chapter on resurrection of the body and restoration of Eden again shows the complexity of the data. She perceives a widespread view of a physical resurrection in Christian tradition, despite significant debate about the body in the literary tradition.³⁷ After a discussion of depictions of the dry bones in Ezekiel, the raising of Jairus's daughter, the widow's son, Lazarus, and the allegories of resurrection in the stories of Jonah, Daniel, and the baptism of Christ, Jensen discusses creation and restoration with scenes of Adam and Eve and the garden of Eden.³⁸ The visual material culture that emerges, Jensen asserts, depicts a full-bodied view of bodily resurrection. In the end she concludes:

Thus "religious pictures" are not merely for the theologically untrained, or for the illiterate, or for the practitioner of popular religion at all, even while they serve the needs of persons in those categories. By the same token, neither is the deepest value of art restricted to the elite, the intelligentsia, or to those trained in the lore of techniques of its interpretation.³⁹

From Jensen's perspective, texts, rituals, and visual material culture all show the many ways communities express their values, beliefs, differences, and coherence. A major point of her approach is to demonstrate that leaving visual material culture out of the discussion is a huge mistake. Her conclusion is, indeed, that "unless it is about to go into schism, fundamental continuity among these different modes of expression should be presumed about any group."⁴⁰

36. Ibid., 130–55.

37. Ibid., 159.

38. Ibid., 167–80.

39. Ibid., 181–82.

40. Ibid., 182.

David Balch: Suffering and Death in Pompeiian and Roman Houses

Soon after the work of Jensen appeared, two essays by David Balch in 2003 presented interpretation of selected New Testament texts in the context of visual material culture in the Mediterranean world that encouraged other New Testament scholars to join the effort. Bypassing both Snyder's and Jensen's discussion and presentation of early Christian symbols and pictorial representations, Balch's essays are guided by social-cultural texture, namely, visual representations in the social and cultural context of the Mediterranean world that had the potential to encourage or evoke a particular range of meanings and meaning effects for participants in emerging Christianity.

Balch begins with the thesis that "Greco-Roman domestic, tragic art emphasizing pathos would have provided a meaningful cultural context for understanding Paul's gospel of Christ's passion."⁴¹ First he quotes Gal 3:1, "You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly exhibited [προεγράφη] as crucified!" (NRSV).⁴² Then he presents extensive quotation and interpretation of Mediterranean texts in the context of the description and display of visual objects that present stories and images of Iphigenia, Laocoön, the dying Galatians, and the crucifix on the Palatine to support the conclusion "that contemporary, domestic tragic art emphasizing pathos would have provided a meaningful cultural context, whether consciously or unconsciously assimilated, for understanding Paul's gospel of Christ's suffering and his saving death."⁴³ Balch asserts that while the art itself

reinforces ethnic divisions ... [n]either ethnic nor gender roles are to determine status in the Christian assembly. Christ did not die for Greece, or Rome, or North America, or for straight men, but according to Paul's polemical thesis, for the 'ungodly' (Rom. 1:18 with 4:5), in that cultural context, for Laocoön, Cassandra, and the Galatians—for whom Paul portrayed Christ crucified (Gal. 3:1). Paul's polemical gospel was dis-

41. David L. Balch, "Paul's Portrait of Christ Crucified (Gal. 3:1) in Light of Paintings and Sculptures of Suffering and Death in Pompeiian and Roman Houses," in *Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*, ed. David L. Balch and Carolyn Osiek (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 85.

42. Ibid., 87.

43. Ibid., 105.

turbing because he embodied, proclaimed, and challenged key Roman ideological values.⁴⁴

In a complementary essay emphasizing the suffering of Isis/Io in Mediterranean literature and visual material culture, Balch began with two important assumptions: (1) many urban Greco-Roman houses, unlike many modern ones, were filled with art, including paintings, mosaics, and sculptures; and (2) Greeks and Romans were “the most right-brained, artistic peoples on earth.”⁴⁵ Balch described his approach as “a novice art historian” who has “viewed these pictures asking whether they portray themes in common with Paul’s gospel.”⁴⁶ He argued that the pervasive art depicting scenes of suffering and death provide “one meaningful cultural context for understanding Paul’s gospel of Christ’s passion.”⁴⁷ Again this essay features extensive presentation of Mediterranean texts and art to show the pervasiveness of depictions of suffering and death. The text of Gal 3:1 is a substantive touch point for his argumentation, but there is no goal of programmatic exegesis of this text in the Letter to the Galatians itself, or in relation to other letters, though he cites a range of verses in which Paul emphasizes suffering and death in relation to Christ. His overall goal is not to establish any special program of exegesis but to present a viable social context of visual material culture that supports meanings and meaning effects in relation to Paul’s central emphasis on Christ’s suffering and death.

THE EMERGING PRESENCE OF VISUAL MATERIAL CULTURE IN NEW TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION

John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan L. Reed: Paul’s Anti-Roman Empire Gospel

Without any mention of or reference to publications by Snyder, Jensen, or Balch, John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan L. Reed presented in 2004 a sustained interpretation of the seven undisputed letters of the apostle

44. *Ibid.*, 107–8.

45. David L. Balch, “The Suffering of Isis/Io and Paul’s Portrait of Christ Crucified (Gal. 3:1): Frescoes in Pompeian and Roman Houses and the Temple of Isis in Pompeii,” *JR* 83 (2003): 25.

46. *Ibid.*, 26.

47. *Ibid.*

Paul as anti-Roman Christian gospel in a context of multiple displays of Mediterranean visual material culture.⁴⁸ Building on a stream of New Testament interpretation that had started during the late 1970s and was promoted especially by Richard A. Horsley,⁴⁹ Crossan and Reed programmatically present an argument, supported by textual interpretation in the context of 134 displays of visual material culture or architectural diagrams, that Paul's undisputed letters present a religious-political assault on Roman imperial promotion of its establishment of peace, security, justice, and benefaction throughout the Roman world.

As Crossan and Reed begin their interpretation, they interweave portions of undisputed letters of Paul (1 Thessalonians, 1–2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philemon, Philippians, Romans) with the Pastoral Epistles (1–2 Timothy, Titus) and the disputed Pauline letters to the Colossians and Ephesians to show alternative positions of equality and hierarchical modes of power and subordination in Pauline letters in the New Testament. In this context, they display an image of Emperor Augustus as a

48. John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan L. Reed, *In Search of Paul: How Jesus's Apostle Opposed Rome's Empire with God's Kingdom; A New Vision of Paul's Words and World* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2004).

49. New Testament scholars: Karl Donfried, "The Cults of Thessalonica and the Thessalonian Correspondence," *NTS* 31 (1984): 336–56; Donfried, *The Romans Debate*, rev. and exp. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991); Holland Hendrix, "Thessalonians Honor Romans" (ThD diss., Harvard, 1984); John K. Chow, *Patronage and Power: A Study of Social Networks in Corinth*, JSNTSup 75 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992). Roman Empire scholars: Peter D. A. Garnsey and C. R. Whittaker, eds., *Imperialism in the Ancient World*, The Cambridge University Research Seminar in Ancient History, Cambridge Classical Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, "The Golden Age and Sin in Augustan Ideology," *Past and Present* 95 (1982): 19–36; Richard P. Saller, *Personal Patronage under the Early Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); S. R. F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Paul Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, trans. Alan Shapiro, Jerome Lectures 16 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990); Stephen Mitchell, *The Celts in Anatolia and the Impact of Roman Rule*, vol. 1 of *Anatolia: Land, Men and Gods in Asia Minor* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993). Richard A. Horsley, ed., *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997); Horsley, *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretatio; Essays in Honor of Krister Stendahl* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000); Horsley, *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2004).

priest with his head covered and a Roman priestess with her hair up and head covered to address the issue of men and women covering their heads in worship.⁵⁰ Then in a chapter titled “The Golden Age, or As Golden as It Gets,” they display in the opening sections a mosaic from Pompeii depicting Darius, king of Persia, fleeing from the army of Alexander at Issus and the obverse and reverse of three coins depicting Augustus with symbols of divine favor.⁵¹ Then they display and present significant interpretation of the *Gemma Augustea* cameo, which features Emperor Augustus seated in a Jupiter-like manner amid his court, with Roman soldiers and defeated barbarians below. They continue by displaying and interpreting the *Grand Camee de France* that features divine Augustus looking down on his wife Livia and his successor, Tiberius.⁵² After this they display various coins, views of Philippi, and three important statues of emperors—Augustus in divine pose, found at Thessaloniki; a headless statue of Claudius in divine pose and imitating Augustus, also found at Thessaloniki; and the Prima Porta statue of Augustus with Cupid, son of Venus, indicating Augustus’s deified status.⁵³ Then they display the front and back of an altar from Praeneste honoring sacred Augustan peace and security, *pax* and *securitas*.⁵⁴ The final display is a photograph of mausoleums and sarcophagi of the dead lining the road leading into Hierapolis, just a few kilometers from Colossae, to support the interpretation of the Greek word *parousia* (the coming) as a term referring to the coming of the emperor or his ambassador to a city, rather than a biblical apocalyptic term. As a designated group from the city would go out to meet the emperor or his ambassador, their presence would be among the dead alongside the road before they greeted the living in the city.⁵⁵ The goal of the display, therefore, is to reorient interpretation of the coming of the Lord and the rising of the dead in 1 Thess 4 from biblical apocalyptic conceptuality to experiences of people living in the Roman Empire.

In subsequent chapters on “Blessings for All the Earth” and “Goddesses, Gods, and Gospels,” Crossan and Reed display multiple images of places, inscriptions, architectural edifices, statues, and tomb portraits to

50. Crossan and Reed, *In Search of Paul*, 113.

51. *Ibid.*, 127, 138–39.

52. *Ibid.*, 145–46.

53. *Ibid.*, 158–59.

54. *Ibid.*, 166.

55. *Ibid.*, 168–71.

interpret Roman benefaction (*euergetism*), Romanization, worship of gods and goddesses, public depictions of sexual activities, and defeated nations as subordinate women in the context of counterarguments by Paul in his letters.⁵⁶ This sets the stage for a chapter on “Who and What Controls Your Banquet?” supported by floor designs of temples, houses, and other buildings; a final chapter on “One World under Divine Justice”; and an epilogue on “The Lure of a Global Empire.”⁵⁷ The overall goal of the book is to interweave texts and visual images for the purpose of interpreting early Christianity in a political context related both to Roman antiquity and to the present. A quotation of most of the final paragraph in the chapter before the epilogue captures the goal of the volume with clarity:

The ideal of human unity under divine justice grounds Paul’s theology of history in Romans. And, after two thousand years, we know it did not work out as he expected, but we also know that it must work out somehow if the earth is to have any future.... Is it not clear by now that the safety of the world and the security of the earth demand the unity not of global victory, but of global justice? Otherwise, God will still be God, but only of the insects and the grasses.⁵⁸

Annette Weissenrieder, Frederike Wendt, and Petra von Gemünden:
Iconography and the New Testament

In contrast to the political agenda of the Crossan and Reed volume, a collection of essays appearing in 2005 places front and center a call for scholars to include visual material culture in their interpretation of New Testament writings.⁵⁹ Its introduction opens with a quotation that asserts in part: “The relationship between ‘religion and art’ has no secured place within th[e] memory system of academic theology; it does not have its own discipline; thus it lacks an institutionalized memory, a place where themes and questions and names can be held together in their historical course.”⁶⁰ As a beginning place to address this issue, the authors introduce

56. Ibid., 178–291.

57. Ibid., 292–348, 349–413.

58. Ibid., 402–3.

59. Annette Weissenrieder, Friederike Wendt, and Petra von Gemünden, eds., *Picturing the New Testament: Studies in Ancient Visual Images*, WUNT 2/193 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005).

60. Ibid., v, quoting Alex Stock, *Bilderfragen: Theologische Gesichtspunkte*,

four major approaches to images for understanding Christian systems of communication.⁶¹

1. Iconological analysis examines a visual source against the background of that knowledge in the human sciences which was typical for the period.
2. Motif-oriented analysis investigates a thematic constellation in its differing expressions.
3. Semiotic analysis aims at uncovering deep logical structures.
4. Constructivist analysis asks about the meaning of the visual process itself in its relation to the visual source.

The author of each essay in the volume was asked to identify special New Testament passages related to particular images and to participate in one or more of the four approaches listed above. The opening essay entitled “Images as Communication: The Methods of Iconography,” however, establishes the overall approach for the authors, which is perceived as a twofold task of describing the iconographical background or culture of a particular set of images and then interpreting the iconological meanings or meaning effects of the images.⁶² This means that motif-oriented, semiotic, and constructivist approaches function as supplements to an overall iconographical-iconological orientation that dominates the volume. The result is four well-developed essays on passages in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts, five on passages in the Johannine corpus including the Revelation to John, and five on passages in letters of Paul.

Before turning to the essays, I consider it instructive to spend a bit of time with the detailed discussion by Annette Weissenrieder and Friederike Wendt in the opening essay on the work of Erwin Panofsky,⁶³ since his approach reveals a number of close relationships to interpretive analytical strategies for visual exegesis of texts. First, “Panofsky developed a precise method which uses each interpreter’s practical experience,

Ikonische Bild-Theologie (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2004), 61.

61. Weissenrieder, Wendt, and von Gemünden, *Picturing the New Testament*, viii.

62. Annette Weissenrieder and Friederike Wendt, “Images as Communication: The Methods of Iconography,” in Weissenrieder, Wendt, and von Gemünden, *Picturing the New Testament*, 3–49.

63. Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939).

culturally acquired knowledge and intuition in order to open up the possible meaning of a depiction.”⁶⁴ This leads, second, to “a heuristic model for the interpretation of images which is anchored in a comprehensive theory of the interpretation of reality, without itself raising claims to a universal, aesthetic interpretation of reality.”⁶⁵ Third, Panofsky began with a focus on visual objects that is closely related to the alternative focus by textual scholars on words and phrases in texts.

Panofsky’s “primary starting point in any interpretation of an image is formed ... by that which one directly sees.”⁶⁶ He considers this to be a *pre-iconographic phase* of the interpretation, in which the interpreter attempts “to name as precisely as possible those motifs which are visible in the image.”⁶⁷ This is closely related to detailed strategies used by textual interpreters.⁶⁸ Instead of focusing on word patterns and structures, Panofsky focuses on “motifs which are visible.” For him this is an intentionally “pre-interpretive,” analytical phase where the object of the observation is “simply everything which is transferred across the senses and which can be inferred with the help of that ‘vital experience of being.’”⁶⁹ This is meant “in a very elementary way, namely the manner in which lines and colours are set in relation with each other and how the materials used in concrete objects have been shaped.”⁷⁰

As Weissenrieder and Wendt continue their description of Panofsky’s approach, clear relationships emerge with the concept of modes of discourse or traditions that have special meaning or prominence in textual scholarship. Panofsky explains how “it is necessary to order the motifs and their attributes into the context of their ordinary usage, and in this way to understand their meaning.”⁷¹ Who is represented? What is it about? Since

64. Weissenrieder and Wendt, “Images as Communication,” 5.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid., 7.

67. Ibid.

68. Compare with identification and display of repetitive and progressive words and patterns in Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-rhetorical Interpretation* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012), 8–14; Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1996), 46–50.

69. Weissenrieder and Wendt, “Images as Communication,” 7.

70. Ibid.

71. Ibid. Compare with discourses and rhetorolects in Robbins, *The Invention of Christian Discourse: Volume 1*, RRA 1 (Dorset, UK: Deo, 2009), 90–120.

“the same theme may be portrayed in completely differing ways depending on the differing particularities of the times and places in which the discussion finds itself,” the interpreter uses and gathers as much “pre-knowledge,” and especially as much “literary knowledge,” as possible to start the process of what Panofsky calls “iconological interpretation.”⁷²

The essays that follow the opening methodological essay reveal an overall procedure where each author gathers visual images in Mediterranean antiquity related to certain verses in the New Testament. The authors explain their task either as describing iconography within culture or as describing a wide-reaching iconographic culture. Some of the essays focus on particular visual objects: crowns, scenes of suffering and death, vines and vineyards, water, bread, and wine, a palm branch, mirror, or an aging, drunken prostitute. Others focus on actions: sleeping, healing, or participating in athletic contests. Major motifs that emerge are persecution, suffering and death, resurrection and new life, restoration and healing, and enthronement and power.

C. Kavin Rowe’s essay, which investigates all of the *eikōn*-references in the letters of Paul, provides some especially helpful guidelines for understanding the absence of distinctively Christian visual culture during the first two centuries.⁷³ He explains that on Paul’s terms “the conversion of pagans to Christianity” would first of all “require aniconic ground clearing.”⁷⁴ In other words, it would be necessary for Christ believers to empty their devotional conceptuality and ritual practices in relation to the many gods, goddesses, kings, emperors, and heroes that accompany festivals, parades, sacrifices, and celebrations that represent religious belief and practice in the Roman world. But this would occur through processes where new iconic experiences and conceptualities would fill the newly emptied spaces. He proposes that the new “iconism” would be “a life-story, first of a particular human and then of the community that embodies the pattern which is the story on the side of humanity and is known humanly. In this way the image of God is in fact God’s humanity. It is in this sense that room exists within Pauline iconic theology for artistic depictions.”⁷⁵

72. Weissenrieder and Wendt, “Images as Communication,” 7–8.

73. C. Kavin Rowe, “New Testament Iconography? Situating Paul in the Absence of Material Evidence,” in Weissenrieder, Wendt, and von Gemünden, *Picturing the New*, 289–312.

74. *Ibid.*, 311.

75. *Ibid.*

In the end this means that to read nonnarrative symbols “Christianly is to presuppose, consciously or not, the story which itself creates the context. There is no such thing, in other words, as Christian art which is non-narrative: to grant the possibility that an image could evoke a Christian interpretation at all is to presuppose knowledge of the Christian story in the reading of the image.”⁷⁶ Thus, to understand a crown symbol in a Christian way would be to interpret it either as a royal crown of suffering, which is a mockery, or as an imperishable crown where the guidelines are set by the obedience, discipline, and willingness to suffer in relation to the storyline of Jesus’s life and Paul’s life in Christ that embodies these guidelines.⁷⁷ Likewise, to interpret a vine as a Christian symbol would be to understand it in relation to Jesus as the true vine through the story of his incarnation.⁷⁸ In addition, a palm branch would be understood as a symbol of victory over death in relation to resurrection rather than a political-national celebration of victory.⁷⁹ This accords with Harry O. Maier’s emphasis in his essay that the conceptuality in the Letter to the Colossians of the rule of Christ “over the furthest reaches of the ancient geographical imagination” is a complex negotiation within Christian conceptuality that “takes place in the semantic communication system of Roman imperial politics and iconography.”⁸⁰ Argumentation would not be enough. An essential aspect of the Christian conceptuality would be the imaging of Christ as having

76. Ibid., 311–12 n. 94.

77. Rita Amedick, “‘Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum’: Hellenistische Königsikonographie und das Neue Testament,” in Weissenrieder, Wendt, and von Gemünden, *Picturing the New Testament*, 53–66. Philip F. Esler, “Paul and the Agon: Understanding a Pauline Motif in Its Cultural and Visual Context,” in Weissenrieder, Wendt, and Gemünden, *Picturing the New Testament*, 356–84. Esler explains that the regular athletic crowns would be made of the perishable materials of wild olive, laurel, pine, or wild celery (376).

78. Gabriele Elsen-Novák and Mirko Novák, “‘Ich bin der wahre Weinstock und mein Vater ist der Weingärtner’: Zur Semiotik des Weinstocks in Joh 15,1–8 aus Sicht der Altorientalistik,” in Weissenrieder, Wendt, and Gemünden, *Picturing the New Testament*, 183–206.

79. Petra von Gemünden, “Die Palmzweige in der johanneischen Einzugsge-schichte (Joh 12,13): Ein Hinweis auf eine symbolische Uminterpretation im Johanne-sevangelium?” in Weissenrieder, Wendt, and von Gemünden, *Picturing the New Testament*, 207–27.

80. Harry O. Maier, “Barbarians, Scythians and Imperial Iconography in the Epistle to the Colossians,” in Weissenrieder, Wendt, and von Gemünden, *Picturing the New Testament*, 405.

ascended above, where he rules sitting in a position of dominance over every power and ruler in the heavens and on the earth. This visual conceptuality would represent a complex process of emptying, filling, transferring, and replacing. A story-line of God's activity through Christ both in heaven and on earth would gradually become a semantic communication system with priority over Roman imperial politics and iconography.

Vernon K. Robbins: Rhetography in Texts Related to Iconography in Culture

In the tradition of rhetorical interpretation, Vernon Robbins published an essay in 2008 that interacts with iconographic methodology in study of New Testament texts.⁸¹ Emphasizing how some words, phrases, clauses, and sentences in texts bring images and pictures vividly before the eyes of hearers/readers, he coined the term *rhetography* to refer "to the graphic images people create in their minds as a result of the visual texture of a text."⁸² Referring to the ancient progymnastic rhetorical exercise of *ekphrasis*, Erwin Panofsky's "Iconography and Iconology" in dialogue with Karl Mannheim, Roland Barthes's "The Imagination of the Sign" and "Literature and Signification," and W. J. T. Mitchell's *Picture Theory*, Robbins juxtaposes rhetography in a text with rhetology, verbal argumentation in a text. Robbins presents a correlation of rhetography with rhetology that is related to but somewhat different from the relation of iconography and iconology. As described above, iconography is a tradition of visual material culture. Alternatively, rhetography is the visual and pictorial imagery that words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and paragraphs prompt in the minds of readers or hearers of a text. *Iconology*, also described above, is the process of interpreting a semantic communication system promulgated by

81. Vernon K. Robbins, "Rhetography: A New Way of Seeing the Familiar Text," in *Foundations for Sociorhetorical Exploration: A Rhetoric of Religious Antiquity Reader*, RRA 4 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 367–92.

82. *Ibid.*, 81. Earlier essays introducing the term *rhetography* were Vernon K. Robbins, "The Sensory-Aesthetic Texture of the Compassionate Samaritan Parable in Luke 10," in *Literary Encounters with the Reign of God*, ed. Sharon H. Ringe and H. C. Paul Kim (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 253; Robbins, "Enthymeme and Picture in the Gospel of Thomas," in *Thomasine Traditions in Antiquity: The Social and Cultural World of the Gospel of Thomas*, ed. Jon Ma. Asgeirsson, April D. DeConick, and Risto Uro, NHMS 59 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 175; Roy R. Jeal, "Clothes Make the (Wo)Man," *Scriptura* 90 (2005): 689.

an iconographic culture. *Rhetology*, alternatively, refers to the argumentative texture of texts that has been the analytical and interpretive focus of the field of rhetorical studies for many centuries. Rhetology is created by words and patterns that create theses, rationales, contrasts and opposites, analogies, authoritative testimony, and conclusions.⁸³

For Robbins, the special rhetographic nature of New Testament texts is related to George A. Kennedy's identification of "radical rhetoric" in its writings. While most New Testament writings contain some aspects of common rhetorical argumentation in Mediterranean society and culture, which Kennedy calls "worldly rhetoric," they also regularly contain argumentation based on the speaker's special authority from divine authorization, which he calls "radical rhetoric." In the essay, Robbins builds on the concept of dialectical modes of rhetorical argumentation within cultures, which he calls *rhetórolects* (an elision of *rhetorical dialects*), by describing six first-century Christian modes of discourse that presuppose an earthly or cosmic location, real or imagined, that the words in the rhetoric of the text create in the mind of the hearer/reader. Primary locations of the household, earthly kingdom, cosmic empire, body, and temple interact in the combinations of worldly and radical rhetoric that produce wisdom, prophetic, apocalyptic, precreation, miracle, and priestly rhetorolects in the New Testament. The result is richly textured discourse that nurtured the emergence of Christianity during the first century CE. In the essay, Robbins works briefly through each rhetorolect, describing its nature in relation to Kennedy's discussion of aspects of worldly and radical rhetoric in his *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*.⁸⁴ The end result of the approach is methodological interaction between the study of rhetography and rhetoric in New Testament texts and studies of iconography and iconology in the fields of art and art history.

83. Vernon K. Robbins, "Progymnastic Rhetorical Composition and Pre-Gospel Traditions: A New Approach," in *The Synoptic Gospels: Source Criticism and the New Literary Criticism*, ed. C. Focant, BETL 110 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1993), 111–47; Robbins, "Argumentative Textures in Socio-rhetorical Interpretation," in *Rhetorical Argumentation in Biblical Texts: Essays from the 2000 Lund Conference*, ed. A. Eriksson, T. H. Olbricht, and W. Übelacker, ESEC 8 (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002), 27–65; Burton L. Mack and Vernon K. Robbins, *Patterns of Persuasion in the Gospels* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008).

84. George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984).

Brigitte Kahl: Reading Galatians in the Roman Imperial World

Brigitte Kahl's *Galatians Re-imagined*, appearing in 2010, moved the field of New Testament studies even more explicitly toward the fields of art and art history by interpreting Paul's Letter to the Galatians in the presence of the Great Altar of Pergamon.⁸⁵ She presents a fully developed argument for interpreting the letter in relation to conceptuality and practice as communicated through visual material culture in the Roman Empire, rather than focusing solely or primarily on Jewish heritage and related issues in the letter. Her approach is substantively guided by both semiotic and feminist theory.

The foundation of Kahl's mode of interpretation is the generation of a Greimasian semiotic square for the Roman imperial world.⁸⁶ The square shows the nature of Roman imperial order at the top, grounded in dominance and superiority that nurtures opposition among people. At the bottom of the semiotic square is the messianic order envisioned by Paul, grounded in mutuality and inclusion that accepts inferiority as oneness in the Messiah. Kahl programmatically applies this square first of all to the Great Altar of Pergamon.⁸⁷ This introduces not only up and down movement based on superiority and inferiority but also in and out movement based on inclusion and exclusion. The sequence of her application then interprets the combat semiotics of Self and Victory versus Other and Defeat in the Great Frieze, the semiotics of rule/ruled and Gods/mortals in the Telephos Room, and subject formation as submission to the Law in the Great Staircase.⁸⁸ This means that Kahl generates each semiotic square out of visual material culture in the Roman Empire during the first century CE. In other words, she does not simply create vertical hierarchies and horizontal movements through imaginary hierarchies and activities in her own mind as she reads the text of Galatians. She generates the squares cognitively out of the vertical and horizontal features of a major architectural embodiment of Roman imperial visual material culture. This means that the semiotic squares she displays are grounded in the visual material

85. Brigitte Kahl, *Galatians Re-imagined: Reading with the Eyes of the Vanquished*, Paul in Critical Contexts (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010).

86. *Ibid.*, 18, 126–27, 306 n. 37, 322 n. 31.

87. *Ibid.*, 89.

88. *Ibid.*, 104, 110, 115.

culture that existed during the time Paul generated the undisputed letters attributed to him. This leads to the next observation.

After Kahl establishes a hierarchical and oppositional semiotic square to depict the cognitive nature of Roman imperial conceptuality and practice, she generates a model that shows the relation of Paul's conception of the messianic realm of Christ to the Roman imperial realm. In contrast to a life of law and order in the Roman Empire, believers have a life in an evolving process of transformation. Paul describes the process as a new creation in community. Kahl displays the conceptuality and action of this new creation process with centrifugal movement around and away from the Roman imperial semiotic square to a figure-eight diagram with arrows that indicate continual movement in a life of building community with other people.⁸⁹ In contrast to a life of law and order in the Roman Empire based on superior to inferior, Christ believers live in an evolving process of mutual interaction with one another. Paul describes the process as a new creation. The transformation changes people from a relationship of Self versus Other to continually-moving life in community with people in supportive, caring relationships. Moving among one another in community and concern, Self and Other become related as surrogate kin, upholding one another as sister and brother, niece and nephew, and co-worker with co-worker in a new family. In these new relationships people embody "a foolish gospel of love" where they willingly suffer in slavery to Christ and the needs of other humans. Kahl's diagram depicts her cognitive visualization of Paul's movement beyond Roman imperial binary thought and practice into interaction designed to orient the Self continually toward the Other. In her view, the nonbinary, continually moving model depicts the rhetorical movement in the rhetology, the verbal argumentation, in Paul's undisputed letters. The nonbinary circulation deconstructs and reconciles Self to Other. This figure-eight view of life, she asserts, is grounded in the conceptuality and language of Paul's undisputed letters.

Kahl begins her exegetical interpretation of Galatians by focusing on the opening nine verses of the first chapter.⁹⁰ She starts by displaying fifteen lines of Peter Weiss's description of the Great Altar of Pergamon in his *The Aesthetics of Resistance*.⁹¹ This creates the context for her display of the first nine verses of Galatians, after which she turns to *amēn* in 1:5 and

89. Ibid., 24.

90. Ibid., 246–65.

91. Ibid., 246.

anathēma in 1:9 as two words “splitting the world down the middle—good and bad, condemnation and salvation, blessing and curse.”⁹² Beginning with the polarization and anger in Paul’s discourse in these verses, Kahl argues that this rhetoric “puts us right back at the foot of the Great Altar in Pergamon,” which Weiss describes with the terms “warlike gestures,” “gigantic wrestling,” “relentless rivalry,” and clashes with one another in the Great Battle Frieze.⁹³

Kahl’s commentary continues, stating, “A battlefield, it seems, unfolds before our eyes in the first nine verses of Paul’s Galatian letter.”⁹⁴ Then she describes how Paul’s *anathēma* in 1:9 functions as a weapon “no less efficient than the deadly spears, arrows, and snake-pots that we see in action on the Pergamene Frieze. In Paul’s world, a curse effectively engages the power to destroy someone and expel them from the community.”⁹⁵ After explaining how Paul’s discourse moves beyond earthly battles to evoke “the whole cosmos,” she turns to Paul’s *amēn* in 1:5 which, like the curse, “is also a speech-act.”⁹⁶ The rhetorical effect of this speech act is to convert the epistolary prescript of the letter “into a moment of liturgical performance.”⁹⁷ Thus, in the context of both earthly and cosmic battle, Paul creates a liturgical moment related to prayers, creeds, hymns, and sermons. With this commentary, Kahl proposes, “we have entered into Galatians by simultaneously entering the Great Altar of Pergamon.”⁹⁸ Asserting that her approach is “both a method of contextual and intertextual interpretation,” she explains that intertextuality in this mode is a designation for a text’s “participation in the discursive space of a culture.”⁹⁹ In sociorhetorical terms, then, her special focus is on “cultural intertexture.”¹⁰⁰

A key turn in Kahl’s interpretation emerges at the opening of her section titled “Imperial versus Messianic Gospel: Exile or Exodus.”¹⁰¹ After a section titled “The Other Gospel: Apostasy and Golden Calf,” where

92. Ibid., 247.

93. Ibid.

94. Ibid.

95. Ibid.

96. Ibid., 248.

97. Ibid., 249.

98. Ibid., 250.

99. Ibid., 251, quoting Jonathan D. Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), 103.

100. Robbins, *Exploring*, 58–62.

101. Kahl, *Galatians*, 255.

she discusses aspects of Deuteronomy, Judges, and Exodus, she starts the next section with: “The competing gospel message, the ‘other good news’ referred to no fewer than five times in 1:6–9, is thus much more likely the gospel of imperial salvation than any ‘Jewish gospel.’”¹⁰² After discussing various intertexts, she asks if indeed “the whole of the following letter needs to be read in an empire-critical key.”¹⁰³ She answers this question in a section titled “The Pergamene Code: Confusing the Battle Order,” which begins with another lengthy quotation from Weiss’s *Aesthetics of Resistance*, followed immediately by a quotation of selected portions of Gal 1:1, 4: “who raised him out from the dead ... who gave himself for our sins so that he might liberate us out of this present evil age.”¹⁰⁴ Again, then, the mode is selection of phrases and clauses from specific portions of text for the purpose of interpreting particular topoi. The topos in this instance is “raising him out of the dead” and its related concept of “liberating us out of this present evil age.” This leads to an exhibit of the *Grand Camée de France*, with divine Tiberius sitting enthroned in the center and deified Augustus being welcomed into heaven above him.¹⁰⁵ In her words, this means that

Jesus’ resurrection “from the dead” (Gal 1:1) thus is a spoken mockery of Olympic and Roman law enforcement; it clashes with the most sacred images of the cosmic order. Though the Hellenistic and Roman world had no difficulty imagining how Caesars, divine sons, or victorious demi-gods like Heracles could be raised from the dead to heavenly glory and power, as for example on the *Grand Camée de France*, ... neither could ever contemplate a *crucified* man representing the vanquished nations being raised to life—and to lordship—as *kyrios ek nekrōn*.¹⁰⁶

When Kahl’s interpretation comes to “Love and the New Order of Noncombat” (Gal 5–6), again she starts with a lengthy quotation from Weiss’s *Aesthetics of Resistance*, followed by a full quotation of Gal 5:13–15.¹⁰⁷ In other words, her basic strategy is to interpret the text of Galatians intertextually with a modern interpreter of the Great Altar of Pergamon

102. Ibid., 253, 255.

103. Ibid., 257.

104. Ibid., 258.

105. Ibid., 260.

106. Ibid.

107. Ibid., 265.

followed by commentary sprinkled with quotations of phrases and clauses in other places in Galatians.¹⁰⁸ In the last part of her commentary, intermittent display of portions or all of her semiotic square with circular movement around and out to Paul's Self and Other appear, rather than any more displays of visual material Mediterranean culture.¹⁰⁹ Her own diagrams, which were generated out of Mediterranean visual culture and Paul's rhetoric, become the primary intertext for her commentary.

A major result of Kahl's presentation is a mode of commentary on specific verses in the New Testament saturated with visual depictions of Roman material culture overmapped with semiotic squares and figure-eight diagrams. This is no longer a standard mode of exegesis in New Testament commentary. Rather, this is commentary that interprets biblical text by means of intertexts intermingled with visual material culture overmapped with semiotic shapes and diagrams containing arrows to depict the movement of rhetorical argumentation in the text.

Davina Lopez: Reading Paul in Relation to Vanquished Nations in the Roman Empire

Although Davina Lopez's book *Apostle to the Conquered* was published two years earlier than Kahl's, her insights were developed out of Kahl's semiotic squares and figure-eight diagram of Paul's view of the Self and Other discussed above.¹¹⁰ She begins with three chapters that include an account of the fate of nations under the campaigns and practices of Roman emperors from Augustus through Nero.¹¹¹ The first chapter displays an image of Emperor Claudius subduing Britannia, personified as a woman, then a second display of the image overmapped with Kahl's Greimasian semiotic square with its display of up and down positions of superiority and inferiority.¹¹² After this, the second chapter begins with displays of Kahl's image of a Roman marble copy of the Dying Gaul and the *Gemma Augustea* with Emperor Augustus seated as Jupiter.¹¹³ Then the chapter

108. Ibid., 266–73.

109. Ibid., 264–85.

110. Davina C. Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered: Reimagining Paul's Mission*, Paul in Critical Contexts (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008).

111. Ibid., 1–118.

112. Ibid., 2, 21.

113. Ibid., 30, 34, which Kahl displays in *Galatians*, 32 (and front cover of the book), 128.

proceeds with multiple displays of visual material culture that accompany her interpretive discourse: a Judea Capta coin, Emperor Augustus in military cuirass, Nero defeating personified Armenia, multiple images from the Sebasteion in Aphrodisias, the depiction on a silver cup of Augustus showing mercy to captured barbarians, and a depiction from the Sebasteion in Aphrodisias of Augustus “over land and sea.”¹¹⁴ These two chapters, then, contain a significant number of displays of Roman visual material culture to introduce the reader to the Roman imperial world that Lopez uses in the later chapters as a context for interpreting portions of undisputed letters of Paul.

After the first three chapters, Lopez turns to a dialogue between visual material culture and verses in Paul’s Letter to the Galatians without displays of visual material culture in chapter 4.¹¹⁵ In a sequence she interprets:

1. “Conversion,” “Call,” and “Consciousness” in Gal 1:13–17;¹¹⁶
2. The Politics of the New Creation in Gal 4:12, 19; 3:26–29; 5:9–6:2;¹¹⁷
3. The Fate of the Nations in Pauline Imagination in Gal 4:21–5:1.¹¹⁸

Lopez includes an English translation of verses with transliteration of certain Greek words in parentheses at various points in her discussion. When she interprets a text, she focuses on specific words, regularly telling the reader in notes how many times the word occurs in the New Testament and its basic meanings according to BAGD. In the process of interpretation of Paul’s conversion, call, and consciousness, Lopez adapts Kahl’s use of a semiotic square with reference to the Great Altar of Pergamon, adding a focus on “the gendered and sexual texture of visual and literary representation concerning the fate of the nations according to the Roman sources.”¹¹⁹

Throughout her analysis of texts, Lopez’s approach foregrounds a gender-critical ideological lens of interpretation. Her first text of interest is Gal 1:13–17, where Paul recalls his earlier manner of living in “Jewishness/Judeanism” (1:13–14) and God’s revealing of his son to him so he

114. Lopez, *Apostle*, 36, 38, 40, 43, 46–48, 53.

115. *Ibid.*, 119–63.

116. *Ibid.*, 119–37.

117. *Ibid.*, 137–53.

118. *Ibid.*, 153–63.

119. *Ibid.*, 119–37, esp. 127.

might proclaim his son among the nations (1:15–16). To introduce her approach to these four verses of text, Lopez recalls the interpretation of Roman imperial ideology she exhibited in visual representation and visual narratives in the first chapters of her book. This sets the stage for structural analysis of the Romans/nations hierarchy through a series of semiotic square diagrams and leads to a display in English translation of the first two verses of her focus text (Gal 1:13–14) that contains transliterated Greek words in parentheses for certain English words.¹²⁰ Her interpretation of key words, including their frequency or rarity outside the New Testament, leads to the display of an intertext in English translation that contains a constellation of words related to “the semantic field” of her interest. At this point, she displays Kahl’s “Pre-Damascus Paul” semiotic square for the purpose of adding “a gender-conscious level” to the terminology in the four corners of the square.¹²¹

From a sociorhetorical perspective, Lopez moves through five steps throughout her book:

1. Ideological texture (gender-critical interpretation) as a beginning point, which moves through masculine Roman imperial ideology in visual material culture and visual narrative toward its gender-critical goal of interpretation of Paul’s writings.¹²²
2. Display and interpretation of a semiotic square model constructed by Kahl that shows structural “bipolar oppositions,” followed by a series of modifications and/or additions of terminology in the model to introduce gender-critical terms at the four corners of the square.¹²³
3. Display of the inner texture of select focus texts.¹²⁴
4. Interpretation of meanings of key words in the inner texture of her focus texts with the aid of displays of intertexts that contain constellations of terms exhibiting a “semantic field” of importance for interpreting the focus text.¹²⁵

120. *Ibid.*, 125–29.

121. *Ibid.*, 130–32, citing Brigitte Kahl, “Reading Galatians and Empire at the Great Altar of Pergamon,” *USQR* 59.3–4 (2005): 28.

122. Lopez, *Apostle*, 119–25.

123. *Ibid.*, 126–28.

124. E.g., *ibid.*, 129.

125. E.g., *ibid.*, 129–30.

5. Display and interpretation of additional semiotic squares for the purpose of adding gender-critical terminology to Kahl's basic semiotic square.¹²⁶

The five steps reveal, first, that a fully articulated, explicit, and complex ideological location drives Lopez's analysis and interpretation. Second, they show that the primary agency of the interpretation lies in a semiotic square model that displays bipolar oppositions, which Lopez sequentially modifies to introduce gender-critical terminology. Third, the specific strategy for interpretation of texts is to display the entire wording of a text in English translation with transliterated Greek words in parentheses for some of the words, followed by semantic field interpretation of certain words with the aid of a display of a substantive number of lines of a key intertext. In other words, from a sociorhetorical perspective the primary focus is on a structural cognitive frame that displays bipolar oppositions. Lopez uses carefully selected words and phrases in the inner texture of her focus texts to create a transition to intertexts that help her exhibit and interpret a semantic field she can interpret in the context of the semiotic square. These activities in dialogue create the catalyst for elaboration of gender-critical prose commentary.

When Lopez turns to the last two verses of her focus text, Gal 1:15–16, she presents traditional commentary on these verses that modulates into gender-critical interpretive commentary. This prose sets the stage for a display of a semiotic square that exhibits "Paul's Shift in World Consciousness."¹²⁷ Once again, the primary agency of the interpretation is a semiotic square. A focus on modification of terminology in the semiotic square using aspects of inner texture and intertexture makes the semiotic square function as a catalyst for gender-critical interpretive commentary.

Lopez entitles her second section "The Politics of the New Creation." This section only displays the wording of five verses of text (1 Cor 11:23–27) in sixteen pages of interpretation.¹²⁸ Titles of subsections list four portions of Paul's Letter to the Galatians (4:12, 19; 3:26–29; 5:9–6:2) as the focus of the commentary. The section foregrounds gender-critical commentary and titles that create touch points with portions of Paul's Letter to the Galatians for the purpose of showing a "gender-critical reimagination

126. E.g., *ibid.*, 131–33.

127. *Ibid.*, 136.

128. *Ibid.*, 137–53.

of Paul as apostle to the defeated nations.”¹²⁹ The titles of the subsections nicely show the movement of the section:

1. Paul Adopts the Subordinate Position among the Other Defeated Nations;¹³⁰
2. The Defeated Paul among the Nations: “Become like Me” (Gal 4:12);¹³¹
3. The Defeated Paul as a Suffering Mother (Gal 4:19);¹³²
4. Bear One Another’s Burdens: A Movement of International Solidarity;¹³³
5. The Politics of the New Creation;¹³⁴
6. The Uniform of International Solidarity (Gal 3:26–29);¹³⁵
7. Performing International Solidarity (Gal 5:9–6:2).¹³⁶

The interpretation in the section moves forward through five displays that modify the semiotic squares in the previous section with circular movement around the square that spins out into Paul’s Self and Other (“one-an(d)-other”) figure-eight pattern of movement. It also contains a display of the *Grande Camée de France*, where divine Augustus watches from above over Livia with her son Tiberius and other family members in the middle, and with barbarian families portrayed in a lower tier.¹³⁷ As Lopez’s gender-critical prose commentary introduces modifications of the semiotic square, the circular and figure-eight diagrams show Paul’s embodiment of a (female) subordinate/defeated nation status as a means of communicating his message of solidarity with defeated others. This, from Lopez’s perspective, is Paul’s gospel for the defeated nations. The displays of the semiotic square encircled and supplemented by the figure-eight diagrams provide the catalyst for the gender-critical prose commentary. The only portions of the inner texture of the text important for Lopez’s com-

129. Ibid., 137.

130. Ibid.

131. Ibid., 140.

132. Ibid., 141.

133. Ibid., 146.

134. Ibid., 147.

135. Ibid., 149.

136. Ibid., 152.

137. Ibid., 144.

mentary are selected words and phrases interpreted through intertextual phenomena that evoke semantic fields of meaning she interprets culturally and ideologically.

Lopez's final section is entitled "The Fate of the Nations in Pauline Imagination (Gal 4:21–5:1)."¹³⁸ There are three displays of continuous text in this section (Gal 4:24–26; Gal 4:27 // Isa 54:1; Isa 65:21–23 LXX) in a context of three displays of semiotic square, circular, and figure-eight diagrams.¹³⁹ The three titles of the subsections show the movement of the argumentation:

1. Abraham as the Father of the Nations;¹⁴⁰
2. Paul as a Mother among the Defeated Nations;¹⁴¹
3. Two Covenants: With Caesar and with God.¹⁴²

Again, the displays of the semiotic square, circular, and figure-eight diagrams function as the agency and catalyst for the gender-critical prose commentary, with the aid of key intertexts. Only carefully selected words and phrases in the inner texture of Gal 4:21–5:1 appear in the gender-critical commentary. The overall goal is to present a gender-critical view of Paul's writings with the aid of the structural and circular displays, and with contemporary visual material culture from the Mediterranean world.

Neil Elliott and Mark Reasoner: Visual Material Culture and the Letters of Paul

In 2011, Neil Elliott and Mark Reasoner published a volume of documents and images for the study of Paul.¹⁴³ This volume displays well the visual turn in study of the Pauline letters in the New Testament. The organization of the volume also is instructive for its influence on the study of emerging Christianity.

138. Ibid., 153.

139. Ibid., 156–61.

140. Ibid., 154.

141. Ibid., 156.

142. Ibid., 162.

143. Neil Elliott and Mark Reasoner, *Documents and Images for the Study of Paul* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011).

The first chapter of the book features Paul's self-presentation. While Paul refers to himself as "slave of Jesus Christ, called an apostle" in Rom 1:1, Elliott and Reasoner display artistic depictions of him as a philosopher with a cloak and basket of scrolls.¹⁴⁴ Then in the midst of excerpts of texts from the writings of Greek and Roman philosophers, they display a Cynic philosopher, the philosopher Socrates, and finally a young man in the context of a letter from a son to his father. Then there is a shift to "philosophy in the workplace" with a display of a tailor's shop in Pompeii.¹⁴⁵ Later in the chapter is a bust of Tullius Cicero followed by a baker selling bread on the public square.¹⁴⁶ Then follows a bust of Emperor Gaius, whom Philo of Alexandria especially deplored for arraying himself with staffs, sandals, and mantles in the guise of Hermes, the interpreter of the gods.¹⁴⁷ After a display of Ezekiel's vision of restored bodies and Moses and the burning bush, they exhibit a bust of Scipio Africanus, who appeared in his grandson's dream.¹⁴⁸ Then in the context of a discussion of Paul's possible death under Nero, they show a room in Nero's palace and an amethyst depicting Nero in the guise of Apollo.¹⁴⁹ The visual displays in the midst of the texts give prominence to the Roman context of Paul's activities, with a minimal glimpse of biblical-Jewish imagery that reminds the readers/viewers of the Jewish heritage of Paul's thought and message.

The second chapter, which starts with brief excerpts from letters written by Roman philosophers, presents numerous visual displays in the context of multiple kinds of texts related to aspects of Paul's letters. First it displays a young woman writer, a page of Arrian's *Discourses of Epictetus* in Greek, a fresco of the Cynic philosopher Crates and his wife Hipparchia, the earliest extant papyrus page (P46) of a letter of Paul (2 Cor 11:33–12:9), and two brothers in the context of a letter from one brother to another.¹⁵⁰ Then it exhibits a coin depicting Agrippa I, whose letter to Emperor Gaius is perceived to have a tone similar to Paul's Letter to the Romans 1:8–12; 15:14–16, a portrait of the philosopher Seneca, an inscription consecrated to a god or goddess, a marble bust of Zeus, a statue of Isis, a marble bust

144. Ibid., 10.

145. Ibid., 18–25.

146. Ibid., 29, 31.

147. Ibid., 36.

148. Ibid., 43, 49, 52.

149. Ibid., 56–57.

150. Ibid., 66–79.

of a priest of Isis, a priest presiding over worship at a temple of Isis, and two images of a crowned and enthroned Cybele with one giving grain to a devotee.¹⁵¹ The final pages of the chapter contain a display of the heel bone of a young Jewish man who had been crucified during the reign of Herod the Great, the well-known Roman graffito mentioned above of a donkey being crucified, a Roman bust of a young man from the tomb of Virgil, a relief of agricultural laborers, and a ceramic tile of Apollo and Diana from the temple of Apollo on the Palatine Hill in Rome.¹⁵² These displays reinforce an implication that the primary issues in Paul's letters concern philosophers, emperors, gods, and goddesses in the Roman Empire rather than the Jewish heritage of Paul and first-century Christ-believers. A later chapter focuses on Paul and Israel, but this chapter communicates loudly and clearly that the primary context is the Roman Empire and all that is happening in it.

The third chapter highlights a major shift promoted by the discussion of Paul's letters in the midst of visual material culture in the Roman Mediterranean world in this volume. The chapter, entitled "The Gospel of Augustus," communicates to readers/viewers the ideology that Paul's letters present a political gospel of Jesus Christ as an alternative to the gospel of Augustus. The chapter begins with the gospel according to Virgil, continues with the achievements of Augustus, and ends with Claudius's death and Nero's Accession, and the "vast unruly throng."¹⁵³ In the midst of texts that call the birthday of Augustus "good news" about the beginning of a new time, displays of emperors are interspersed among depictions of visual material culture that show embodiment of divine virtues by Roman emperors—peace, mercy [clemency], and friendship—and mingling of the divine emperors and their wives among gods and goddesses.¹⁵⁴ Depiction of the conquered nation of Armenia as a defeated woman then raises the issue of the relation of Paul to the defeated nation of Israel and the people to whom he presents the gospel of the crucified Messiah of God.¹⁵⁵

In contrast to the first three chapters, which contain a large number of visual images, the last three chapters on the people of Israel, the communities around Paul, and Paul's legacy contain only a sprinkling of images in

151. *Ibid.*, 84–99.

152. *Ibid.*, 103–13.

153. *Ibid.*, 119–23, 123–45, 146–61, 161–73.

154. *Ibid.*, 125, 126, 129, 142, 148.

155. *Ibid.*, 170.

the context of the texts they display. The images range from a third-century CE mosaic of a menorah to a slave carrying a tray to a painting of Augustine taking up the letters of Paul.¹⁵⁶ As a result, the major work of persuading the reader by means of visual material culture in the Mediterranean world concerns the necessity of including the dominance of Roman imperial conceptuality and practice in the areas of Paul's influence. In contrast, the presence of Jewish conceptuality and practice in Paul's undisputed and disputed letters is accompanied by very little visual material culture but is supported by verbal argumentation in the letters.

Aliou Cissé Niang and Carolyn Osiek: *Text, Image, and Christians in the Graeco-Roman World*

In the context of the ongoing development of resources and strategies for interpreting New Testament texts in their surrounding visual material culture, a group of scholars published an honorary volume for Balch that presents the thriving activity of interpreting earliest Christian texts dialogically with the exhibition of aspects of visual material culture.¹⁵⁷

Only two essays in part 1, "Text and House Churches," contain images. Edward Adams's "Placing the Corinthian Communal Meal" displays basement and ground-floor designs for a Roman cellar building to support "disciplined imagination" of the possible division of the Corinthians into two dining areas on the basis of socioeconomic differences, "with the more socially distinguished members of the church dining in the smaller and perhaps nicer room."¹⁵⁸ In addition, the essay by Lopez and Todd Penner, "Houses Made with Hands," contains a display of a portion of the Arch of Titus in Rome that shows objects the conquering Romans seized from the "house" of the God of Israel. Lopez and Penner perceive the public celebration of these triumphal spoils to support their thesis that in the Roman Empire "'house' becomes the place that represents the public, however idealized, and perhaps even participates in its creation."¹⁵⁹

156. Ibid., 174, 292, 334.

157. Aliou Cissé Niang and Carolyn Osiek, eds., *Text, Image, and Christians in the Graeco-Roman World: A Festschrift in Honor of David Lee Balch*, PTMS 176 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012).

158. Edward Adams, "Placing the Corinthian Communal Meal," in Niang and Osiek, *Text, Image, and Christians*, 30–34.

159. Davina C. Lopez and Todd Penner, "'Houses Made with Hands': The Tri-

In part 2, “Creating Images—Verbal and Visual,” there are eight essays containing visual figures. Aliou Cissé Niang’s “Seeing and Hearing Jesus Christ Crucified in Galatians 3:1 under Watchful Imperial Eyes” displays a map of Diola Settlements in West Africa and three sculptures—the dying Gaul, the priest Laocoön, and a defeated Gaul killing his wife and then himself—to compare the appropriation of the message of the cross by Gauls/Galatians in the first century CE Roman Empire with Diola Christianity, where “Christian missionaries known as ‘Holy Ghost Fathers,’ wearing crucifixes, portrayed Jesus as crucified under the aegis of Imperial France.”¹⁶⁰ Frederick Brenk’s “Image and Religion” contains twelve figures to support his tour of the precinct and inner parts of the Temple of Isis at Piranesi in Pompeii.¹⁶¹ He invites readers to imagine the responses of a first-century Christian to the displays of priestess, priest, gods, goddesses, and animals that occupy the imagery in the temple and its precinct. Oliver Larry Yarbrough’s “Shadow of an Ass” contains an indecipherable display of the graffito that the author (nevertheless) analyzes and interprets with substantive detail and effect.¹⁶² John R. Clarke’s “Constructing the Spaces of Epiphany in Ancient Greek and Visual Culture” contains eleven architectural designs or photographs plus a photo of the house of Sutoria Primi-genia at Pompeii to show the powers of the *paterfamilias*.¹⁶³ Hal Taussig’s “Melancholy, Colonialism, and Complicity” presents six photographs of portions of the Sebasteion to support his thesis that the visual material culture of Aphrodisias displays “the complex melancholy of an Asia Minor city at the crossroads of its own colonization and complicity.”¹⁶⁴ It was not simply a Roman tool or ally, he argues, but an instance of colonial

umph of the Private in New Testament Scholarship,” in Niang and Osiek, *Text, Image, and Christians*, 99–101.

160. Aliou Cissé Niang, “Seeing and Hearing Jesus Christ Crucified in Galatians 3:1 under Watchful Imperial Eyes,” in Niang and Osiek, *Text, Image, and Christians*, 160–82, esp. 162.

161. Frederick Brenk, “Image and Religion: A Christian in the Temple of Isis at Pompeii,” in Niang and Osiek, *Text, Image, and Christians*, 218–38.

162. Oliver Larry Yarbrough, “The Shadow of an Ass: On Reading the Alexame-nos Graffito,” in Niang and Osiek, *Text, Image, and Christians*, 239–54. The indecipherable display of the graffito is a result of poor printing (240).

163. John R. Clarke, “Constructing the Spaces of Epiphany in Ancient Greek and Roman Visual Culture,” in Niang and Osiek, *Text, Image, and Christians*, 257–79. The display includes an image of the *genius* of the *paterfamilias* (ibid., 276, fig. 16.12).

164. Hal Taussig, “Melancholy, Colonialism, and Complicity: Complicating

hybridity that exhibits “a complex consciousness that not only appreciates the benefits of Roman rule, but also experiences ambivalence and melancholy about it.”¹⁶⁵ Robin M. Jensen’s “Nudity in Early Christian Art” displays eleven figures in support of her well-informed argument about nudity in Roman art and its relation to certain scenes in third- and fourth-century Christian sarcophagi art that depict new or newly restored life through baptism, rescue from martyrdom or persecution, or resurrection.¹⁶⁶ Yancy W. Smith’s “Bible Translation and Ancient Visual Culture” contains two figures to support the author’s thesis that absence of crucifixion imagery during the first two centuries of the emergence of Christianity, followed by the scarcity of artistic display of Christ’s crucifixion during subsequent centuries, is related to the presupposition by Christians that Christ was stripped naked to die in shame on the cross.¹⁶⁷ Richard Freund’s “Created in the Image of God” displays six figures—Iron Age figurines from Bethsaida, a door lintel from Bethsaida, an Eros oil lamp, images from the Arch of Titus, a Bet Shearim sarcophagus, and a Bet Alpha Synagogue zodiac—to support the thesis that “the ancient Israelites and Jews seem to have developed a two tiered system of ancient art in the Hebrew Bible through the Hellenistic Jewish tradition.”¹⁶⁸ Official Jewish teaching banned the worship of artistic renderings of the God of ancient Israel. Nevertheless, “some parts of the Rabbinic tradition did come to accept that art could provide the Jewish masses with a way of integrating images into the official religious life of the Jews.”¹⁶⁹ The overall result of this volume, therefore, is a substantive contribution to the ongoing use of visual material culture in interpretation of New Testament and other early Christian texts.

Counterimperial Readings of Aphrodisians’ Sebasteion,” in Niang and Osiek, *Text, Image, and Christians*, 280–95, esp. 286–87.

165. *Ibid.*, 288.

166. Robin M. Jensen, “Nudity in Early Christian Art,” in Niang and Osiek, *Text, Image, and Christians*, 296–319.

167. Yancy W. Smith, “Bible Translation and Ancient Visual Culture,” in Niang and Osiek, *Text, Image, and Christians*, 320–41.

168. Richard Freund, “‘Created in the Image of God’: Graeco-Roman Jewish Art—New Perspectives from Archeology,” in Niang and Osiek, *Text, Image, and Christians*, 354–67, esp. 365.

169. *Ibid.*, 366.

Rosemary Canavan: *Clothing the Body of Christ at Colossae*

Rosemary Canavan has published the most extensive sociorhetorical interpretation (SRI) of a text in the context of visual material culture in *Clothing the Body of Christ at Colossae*.¹⁷⁰ Starting with the topos “clothing with meaning,” she explores the context of the Christ community at Colossae.¹⁷¹ After this she has a section on engaging images and texts and on art history.¹⁷² Then she explores how clothes are related to identity construction to set the stage for an exploration of visual imagery of clothing in the Pauline letters.¹⁷³ This leads to a discussion of sociorhetorical interpretation as a guide to her interpretation and her modification of certain aspects in her application of the approach.¹⁷⁴ Programmatically using the five textual arenas of inner texture, intertexture, social-cultural texture, ideological texture, and sacred texture, she explores the manner in which the metaphorical use of clothing and body in Col 3:1–17 constructs the identity of the members of the community as the body of Christ. Her thesis is that the imagery in the text of being clothed with Christ “is informed by the idealized and representative images of clothing and body apparent in the cities of Lycus Valley and their regional partners in the first century CE.”¹⁷⁵ As she discusses the identification of the communities as members of the body of Christ at Colossae and Laodicea, and probably also at Hierapolis, she investigates how the distinguishable identities of “Greek and Judean, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, and free” are integrated into the identity of the body of Christ (Col 3:11).¹⁷⁶ For her, the overall study is supported by the special way in which Roman emperors beginning with Augustus actively constructed identities embedded in their own persona. The Letter to the Colossians, she argues, presents an

170. Rosemary Canavan, *Clothing the Body of Christ at Colossae*, WUNT 2/334 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012). Earlier Jeal published the essay, “Clothes Make the (Wo)Man,” using the SRI concept of rhetography to interpret the concept of being “clothed with Christ” in Gal 3:27, Rom 13:14, Col 3:10, and Eph 4:22–24. Following the twentieth-century custom in scholarly essays on the New Testament, Jeal’s essay contains no images of any item of visual material culture.

171. Canavan, *Clothing the Body of Christ*, 1–5, 11–23.

172. Ibid., 32–40.

173. Ibid., 41–49.

174. Ibid., 50–51.

175. Ibid., 134.

176. Ibid., 135.

alternative identity by clothing the identity integral to every member of the community with the body of Christ. Her investigation moves beyond previous studies of Col 3:1–17 by means of her investigation of the dialogue between image and text that constructs a new identity for its hearers/readers.

Harry O. Maier: Negotiation of the Roman Empire in Colossians, Ephesians, and the Pastoral Epistles

In *Picturing Paul in Empire*, which appeared in 2013, Harry O. Maier presents programmatic iconographic exegesis of Colossians, Ephesians, and the Pastoral Epistles to show their “complex negotiation with the Roman imperial mentality that defined their cultural horizon.”¹⁷⁷ Beginning with a description of the overall imperial context of the emergence of Christianity, he develops a special focus on the imperial practices of Nero, the Flavian emperors Vespasian, Titus and Domitian, and the emperors Trajan and Hadrian.¹⁷⁸ He provides a detailed history of previous development of iconographic interpretation of visual material culture to present his form of iconographic exegesis, which stresses “the role of imagery in imagination and persuasion in the ancient world ... to demonstrate the critical importance of visual evidence in the exegesis of biblical texts.”¹⁷⁹ Building on earlier iconographic interpretation of the Hebrew Bible by members of “The Freiburg School”—especially Othmar Keel, Christoph Uehlinger, and Silvia Schoer—he uses recent work by Isaak de Hulster and iconographical readings of the New Testament in the edited volume by Weissenrieder, Wendt, and Petra von Gemünden discussed above to set the stage for discussion of his own socially oriented constructivist approach.¹⁸⁰ With the help of Hölscher’s semiotic approach, which focuses on fixed formulae that “communicated a hierarchy of values that in turn gave rise to a hierarchy of forms” in Roman imperial art, Maier distinguishes his

177. Harry O. Maier, *Picturing Paul in Empire: Imperial Image, Text and Persuasion in Colossians, Ephesians and the Pastoral Epistles* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 29.

178. *Ibid.*, 9.

179. *Ibid.*, 16.

180. *Ibid.*, 16–20; Izaak de Hulster, *Iconographic Exegesis and Third Isaiah*, FAT 2/26 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009); Weissenrieder, Wendt, and von Gemünden, *Picturing the New Testament*.

approach from the semiotic approach of Kahl and Lopez discussed above.¹⁸¹ For him, the special hierarchy in view in the primary political virtues of *virtus*, *clementia*, *pietas*, and *concordia* establish the most promising context for investigating the relation of the discourse in Colossians to Roman imperial conceptuality. Using the work of the social-constructivist theorist David Morgan, Maier defines visual culture as “the images and objects that deploy particular ways of seeing and therefore contribute to the social, intellectual, and perceptual construction of reality.” This guides Maier in his own professional practice of study, which he perceives to be “that form of inquiry undertaken within a number of humanistic and social scientific disciplines whose object is the conceptual frameworks, social practices, and the artifacts of seeing.”¹⁸² Emphasizing that he is more of a social than cultural constructivist, he clarifies his approach further through discussion of rhetography in relation to rhetology as defined by Robbins and applied by Canavan, and through description of vivid speech as *ekphrasis* and *enargeia* in relation to *phantasia* in the *Progymnasmata* and other rhetorical works.¹⁸³

Central to his approach is a view that it is simplistic to think that Paul was either for or against the Roman Empire. Rather, the Pauline corpus contains “an entangled imagination whose formulations, couched as they are in the image and metaphor of their authors’ social world, express a complex negotiation with the Roman imperial mentality that defined their cultural horizon.”¹⁸⁴ As he performs his investigation and interpretation, he also uses the postcolonial notion of hybridity, which he considers to be “a properly nuanced way to describe Paul’s relationship to his imperial context.” For him, “The term speaks neither of relentless opposition to the Roman Empire, nor to a kind of spiritual quietism or political conservatism for the sake of larger theological formulations, but of Paul’s negotiation of the cultural and social arrangements of his urban contexts to make

181. Maier, *Picturing Paul*, 20–21; Tonio Hölscher, *Römische Bildsprache als semantisches System* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1987); Hölscher, *The Language of Images in Roman Art*, trans. Anthony Snodgrass and Annemarie Künzl-Snodgrass (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

182. Maier, *Picturing Paul*, 22, quoting David Morgan, *The Sacred Gaze: Religious Visual Culture in Theory and Practice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 27.

183. Maier, *Picturing Paul*, 27–31; Robbins, “Rhetography”; Canavan, *Clothing*. See also Jeal, “Clothes Make the (Wo)Man.”

184. Maier, *Picturing Paul*, 22.

his Gospel persuasive to his listeners.”¹⁸⁵ An overall guide for his conclusions lies in his observation that “by the second century, consideration of the emperor’s rule as parallel with Jupiter’s governance of the cosmos was a stock feature of imperial political theology.”¹⁸⁶ This means that the emphasis on Christ’s establishment of peace and order over chaos negotiates multiple aspects of well-established imperial practices and conceptuality to present its own version of a Christian hierarchical system that promotes its own version of *virtus*, *clementia*, *pietas*, and *concordia* in a world that was created by God through the agency of Christ, who was the firstborn of all creation.

CONCLUSION

The last two decades of study of the New Testament show a steady shift in some circles away from emphasis on the Jewish heritage of the early Christian movement to a focus on its emergence in the context of the Roman Empire. A contributing factor to this shift has been the accessibility of Mediterranean visual material culture for research and publication as a result of the advance of computer technology and the storing of digital versions of visual material culture on the Internet. In addition, the emergence and growing prominence of cognitive science in our understanding of human knowledge has been increasingly emphasizing the prominence of seeing in human interpretation of data.¹⁸⁷

Is it the case that the Jewish heritage of early Christianity will continually move further into the background in the study of early Christianity because Jewish visual material culture was less present in first-century CE Mediterranean society than Roman visual material culture? If the Roman imperial context becomes more and more prominent in interpretation of the New Testament, how does an interpreter weigh the legitimacy of emphasizing it over other information? Judaism was and is a religion that puts literature at the center of its practices and beliefs. First-century CE Judaism did not have either the financial or political support to produce the vast amount of visual material culture that accompanied Greek and Roman literature during the Roman imperial period.

185. *Ibid.*, 38.

186. *Ibid.*, 72.

187. Benjamin K. Bergen, *Louder than Words: The New Science of How the Mind Makes Meaning* (New York: Basic Books, 2012), 49–72.

It has seemed obvious during the last century of scholarship that the ability of the Jesus movement to emerge, grow, and become the religion of the Roman Empire during the fourth century CE was substantively enabled by its production of a large amount of literature. The energy and ability of the movement to produce this literature has been perceived to be embedded deeply in its Jewish heritage. Is it now necessary that we modify or supplement this point of view? Is it important for us to see that the textual nature of the earliest Jesus movement was simply one aspect of its energetic participation in visual material culture in the Mediterranean world? In other words, must we now come to understand that literature presupposes seeing and is a way of participating in visual material culture?¹⁸⁸ People at lower economic levels in the Roman Mediterranean world produced extensive textual material culture on fragile material such as papyrus, leather, and wood, rather than stone. Of course, writing or drawing on stone or marble is much more durable. A significant issue, then, may be *how* writing or drawing on fragile materials participates in visual material culture alongside engraving and drawing on stone or marble.

One of the noticeable things about uncial Greek writing, which is the earliest form of Christian literature that has survived, is how it easily nurtured production of alphabetic letters that could be pictorially meaningful. The Greek *tau* readily prompts imagery of crucifixion.¹⁸⁹ Likewise, the Greek *alpha* could prompt imagery of a fish, which in turn could prompt the word ΙΧΘΥΣ, which could be an abbreviation for Ἰησοῦς Χριστός Θεός Υἱός Σωτήρ, Jesus Christ God Son Savior.¹⁹⁰ An essay by James Clifton in *Imago Exegetica* discusses the intermingling of pictorial image with text that creates iconotexts.¹⁹¹ Do we need to complement the emphasis on the

188. See John Harvey, *The Bible as Visual Culture: When Text Becomes Image*, Bible in the Modern World 57 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2013).

189. Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, 137–41.

190. See Larry W. Hurtado, “The Earliest Evidence of an Emerging Christian Material and Visual Culture: The Codex, the *Nomina Sacra* and the Staurogram,” in *Text and Artifact in the Religions of Mediterranean Antiquity*, ed. S. G. Wilson and M. Desjardins, SCJud 9 (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2000), 271–88; Hurtado, “The Staurogram in Early Christian Manuscripts: The Earliest Visual Reference to the Crucified Jesus?” in *New Testament Manuscripts: Their Text and Their World*, ed. Thomas J. Kraus and Tobias Nicklas, TENTS 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 207–26.

191. James Clifton, “Modes of Scriptural Illustration: The Beatitudes in the Late Sixteenth Century,” in *Imago Exegetica: Visual Images as Exegetical Instruments, 1400–1700*, ed. Walter S. Melion, James Clifton, and Michel Weemans, Intersections

orality of early Christian tradition with an emphasis both on the pictorial possibilities within its written literature and with the intermingling of text with pictorial image?

There also are other possibilities to consider in the context of information that cognitive scientists are producing for us. Benjamin Bergen makes readily available to us information about how the human brain works in the context of visual objects. Using information from embodied simulation experiments, cognitive scientists have discovered, for instance, that when humans see persons performing bodily action with their feet, hands, or face, the part of the brain that activates motion in those areas becomes active in the person seeing or hearing the performance. Hearing or reading the gospels and Acts, therefore, would especially enact embodied simulation of the emotion-fused thought, self-expressive speech, and purposeful action of Jesus, the disciples, and later apostles in both hearers and readers. Likewise, there would be activation of blends of miracle and suffering in the bodies of emerging Christians as they heard or read the stories in the gospels and Acts.

Snyder was a lone voice throughout the 1990s talking about the earliest visual material culture in the Roman world related to the New Testament (1985), and he emphasized the absence of imagery of the crucifixion, suffering, and death in the earliest Christian art. Jensen's *Understanding Early Christian Art* (2000) appeared at the beginning of the first decade of the new millennium, when an explosion of publications on the earliest art related to the New Testament was beginning to occur. She was interested in carefully disciplined analysis and interpretation of the many pictorial images that emerged during the third and fourth centuries CE. Balch (2003) countered Snyder's emphasis by focusing on suffering and death in Roman art, which would have been present to the earliest Christians on a daily basis. When Crossan and Reed published their volume (2004), they had a specific goal of demonstrating

33 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 546. For an introduction to iconotexts, see Peter Wagner, "Introduction: Ekphrasis, Iconotexts, and Intermediality—the State(s) of the Art(s)," in *Icons—Texts—Iconotexts: Essays on Ekphrasis and Intermediality*, ed. Peter Wagner, European Cultures: Studies in Literature and the Arts (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1996), 1–40; cf. S. Horstkotte and K. Leonhard, "Einleitung: 'Lesen ist wie Sehen'—Über Möglichkeiten und Grenzen intermedialer Wahrnehmung," in *Lesen ist wie Sehen: Intermediale Zitate in Bild und Text*, ed. S. Horstkotte and K. Leonhard (Cologne: Böhlau, 2006), 1–15.

that Paul's letters presented anti-Roman gospel. For them, Paul's Jewish heritage was part of his assault on Roman propaganda in support of its own practices and conceptuality.

When Weissenrieder, Wendt, and von Gemünden published their substantive volume of essays (2005), they were interested in developing a disciplined academic tradition of interpretation of the relation of text to works of art in Christian tradition. Their iconographic and iconological guidelines in the study of visual material culture helped to give rise to Robbins's coining of the terms *rhetography* and *rhetology* to nurture more-specific methodological discussions and approaches to images and texts in the social, cultural, and ideological environment of the emergence of Christianity. Kahl's *Reimagining Galatians* (2010) and the book by her student Lopez (*Paul and the Vanquished Nations*, 2008) present investigation of New Testament texts with highly developed semiotic and feminist theory to read Paul's Letter to the Galatians in the context of the Altar of Pergamon. The appearance of Elliott and Reasoner's *Documents and Images for the Study of Paul* in 2011 provided a landmark resource of texts and images of visual material culture for analysis and interpretation of the New Testament in the context of the Roman Mediterranean world. The vibrancy of analysis and interpretation of texts interactively with visual material culture is well-displayed with specific methodological strategies for rich exegetical interpretation of New Testament texts in works such as Canavan's *Clothing the Body of Christ at Colossae* (2012) and Maier's *Picturing Paul in Empire* (2013). We can expect many more to appear in the coming years.

VISUAL INTERPRETATION:
BLENDING RHETORICAL ARTS IN COLOSSIANS 2:6–3:4

Roy R. Jeal

We begin with a photograph, a “writing of light” ($\phi\omega\tau\acute{o}\varsigma + \gamma\rho\alpha\phi\acute{\eta}$),¹ which is, of course, like a painting or movie screen, of only two dimensions, having length and width, not depth. But allow your eyes and your imagination (i.e., your brain) to visualize the illusion of depth, the third dimension, as we humans easily and normally do when we look at paintings, photographs, or films. Allow your mind to enter the symbolic world, to grasp and understand the geometry of space, of three dimensions.

This is Moses:



Figure 1. *Moses* by Leo Mol (1915–2009)

“So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.” But Moses said to God,

1. Where $\phi\omega\tau\acute{o}\varsigma$ is the genitive of $\phi\acute{\omega}\varsigma$.

Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt? He said, "I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain."

But Moses said to God,

If I come to the Israelites and say to them, "The God of your ancestors has sent me to you," and they ask me, "What is his name?" what shall I say to them?

God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." He said further, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" God also said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'The LORD, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you': This is my name forever, and this my title for all generations. Go and assemble the elders of Israel, and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying: I have given heed to you and to what has been done to you in Egypt. I declare that I will bring you up out of the misery of Egypt, to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey.' They will listen to your voice; and you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt and say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us; let us now go a three days' journey into the wilderness, so that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.'"

Then Moses answered,

But suppose they do not believe me or listen to me, but say, "The LORD did not appear to you."

The LORD said to him, "What is that in your hand?" He said, "A staff." And he said, "Throw it on the ground." So he threw the staff on the ground, and it became a snake; and Moses drew back from it. Then the LORD said to Moses, "Reach out your hand, and seize it by the tail"—so he reached out his hand and grasped it, and it became a staff in his hand—"so that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you." Again, the LORD said to him, "Put your hand inside your cloak." He put his hand into his cloak; and when he took it out, his hand was leprous, as white as snow. Then God said, "Put your hand back into your cloak"—so he put his hand back into his cloak, and when he took it out, it was restored like the rest of his body—"If they will not believe you or heed the first sign, they may believe the second sign. If they will not believe even these two signs or heed you, you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground; and the water that you shall take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground."

But Moses said to the LORD,

O my Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor even now that you have spoken to your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.

Then the LORD said to him, “Who gives speech to mortals? Who makes them mute or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you are to speak.” But he said,

O my Lord, please send someone else.

Then the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses and he said, “What of your brother Aaron, the Levite? I know that he can speak fluently; even now he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you his heart will be glad. You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth; and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and will teach you what you shall do. He indeed shall speak for you to the people; he shall serve as a mouth for you, and you shall serve as God for him.” (Exod 3:10–4:16)²

Reality is a slippery thing. What we might wish for and aim for, based on a historical-critical paradigm, is certainty or at least a high level of certainty. We wish to understand reality. But reality (like human life) is very slippery, and things cannot be easily grasped, and they move off in uncontrolled and unexplainable directions that are both wondrous and troubling. What we must do, therefore, is what we actually always do: we must interpret. Moses is interpreted by the artist as innumerable images have been used to interpret the Bible or parts of it. We must interpret at least in part by considering the imagery that biblical texts evoke in listeners’ and readers’ minds.

Visible, written texts, comprised of recognizable letters of alphabets shaped into words and grammaticalized into clauses, sentences, and paragraphs, and the sounds that correspond to the words, sentences, and paragraphs when they are read aloud or heard, are things that we learn to understand from childhood onward. What we see in texts with our eyes (or hear with our ears or perceive through other senses) is interpreted by our minds to have meaning values that can be articulated. When people read (or listen to) literature of all kinds—such as novels, dramas, short stories, poetry, nonfiction, biographies, letters, technical materials, but, in our case, biblical texts—they are drawn into the visuality, into what amounts

2. All quotations of Scripture are from the NRSV unless otherwise noted; the addition of italics is mine.

to the *visual art*, of the texts. They *see* scenes and visualize persons, places, and things; they *hear* sounds, notice colors; they visualize and hear and feel the emotions.³ These things contribute to their understanding of the text and the information (meaning) it conveys. The written art (words) and the visual art (pictures) intersect in the mind, in the visual imagination.⁴ This visual space in the mind is often blurred or muted because interpreters become conditioned to analyzing the words and avoiding the images evoked in the mind. Content becomes separated from form. There are nevertheless spaces of rhetorical blending, the “intermedia,” of words and pictures that call us to examination and analysis. Texts are themselves visual things that, when they are most effective, evoke or cause the mind to recall the visual.⁵ Interpretation of the imagery is visual exegesis.

There are many questions to ask in the process, but I suggest that overarching ones are: Where does the visual evoked by texts *take* people? What is the visual meant to *do*? How can interpreters go about their interpretive task? In what follows, I attempt to do two things. First, I offer a theoretical foundation for the visual in New Testament texts, so far as I have come to understand it. Second, I present a visual description and interpretation of Col 2:6–3:4. I am interested in trying to *see* what images a biblical text places in the imagination and what the images do and where they lead.⁶ The text itself is the primary source and the conveyer of images that are recognized by audiences. What I do *not* do here is consider the intertextual connections with other texts or the social and cultural intertextures of visual material realia of the time of the letter.

3. There are exceptions. Apparently a small percentage of people do not see things in the visual imagination when they read or listen to texts. For example, some have *prosopagnosia* or “face blindness” that prevents them from recognizing faces visually.

4. See my essay “Blending Two Arts: Rhetorical Words, Rhetorical Pictures and Social Formation in the Letter to Philemon,” *SiCS* 5 (2008): 9–38. On the “visual imagination,” see especially Martin O’Kane, “The Bible and the Visual Imagination,” in *Painting the Text: The Artist as Biblical Interpreter*, ed. Martin O’Kane (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2009), 1–33.

5. Particularly for modern people, who generally read texts individually and silently. The first audiences of New Testament texts heard them read aloud.

6. At least that is what I am doing in this essay. I am also interested in intertextual images from around the time of the production of the texts and how they assist interpretation and understanding.

ARISTOTLE

In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle speaks of employing metaphors that “set things before the eyes” (3.11.1) in order to create a sense of reality in audience members’ minds. He had in mind the notion that words, rhetoricized combinations of words have a visual aspect and a visual function that elicit mental images that human minds employ for understanding.

I mean that things are set before the eyes by words that signify *actuality*. (ἐνέργεια, 3.11.2)

Words can convey both actuality and metaphor according to Aristotle (3.11.2), and he provides a series of examples (3.11.3–4). The idea is that words “give movement and life to all, and *actuality is movement*” (κινούμενα γὰρ καὶ ζῶντα ποιεῖ πάντα, ἡ δ’ ἐνέργεια κίνησις, 3.11.4). This means that things are *seen* in the imagination to be energized, working, functioning, active.⁷ When he begins his discussion of style (λέξις), Aristotle states that it is necessary to give attention to it in order to make things clear, visible, by presenting φαντασία—that is, a show, an impression, an appearance in the imagination (3.1.6). This is to say that, in Aristotle’s view, rhetoric, words and literature, elicit visual images in the mind that are linked, indeed necessary to understanding (belief) and action (behavior). Much later, when Quintilian addressed how eloquent speech functions, he spoke of the importance of awakening the emotions of the audience so that they are drawn into symbolic worlds where they understand ideas (Quintilian, *Inst.* 6.2.24–36). How is this accomplished? Quintilian says:

The prime essential for stirring the emotions of others is, in my opinion, first to feel those emotions oneself.... Consequently, if we wish to give our words the appearance of sincerity, we must assimilate ourselves to the emotions of those who are genuinely so affected, and our eloquence must spring from the same feeling that we desire to produce in the mind of the judge. (6.2.26–27)⁸

7. ἐνέργεια appears as “actuality” in the LCL version translated by J. H. Freese, quoted here (Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*, trans. John Henry Freese, LCL 193 [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982]). The word means activity, energy, working, function, action.

8. Translation by H. E. Butler, *The Institutio Oratorio of Quintilian*, LCL (London: Putnam, 1922).

How can these emotions be produced in the speaker? Quintilian goes on to say:

There are certain experiences which the Greeks call *φαντασται*, and the Romans visions [*visiones*], whereby things absent are presented to our imagination with such extreme vividness that they seem actually to be before our very eyes.... From such impressions arises that *ἐνέργεια* which Cicero calls illumination and actuality, which makes us seem not so much to narrate as to exhibit the actual scene, while our emotions will be no less actively stirred than if we were present at the actual occurrence. (6.2.29, 32)

In a convincing essay (from which some ideas here are drawn), Ned O’Gorman demonstrates, by reading Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* together with *De anima* (Περὶ Ψυχῆς; *On the Soul*), that there is a visual aspect to Aristotle’s rhetorical theory.⁹ According to *De anima*, sight is the most developed sense (429a). *Phantasia* (φαντασία), brought on (primarily) by visual perception, conveys understanding to the mind and, indeed, to the soul (ψυχή).¹⁰ *Phantasia* brings what is not seen in visual reality to the human mind in the visual imagination.¹¹ By it, things are interpreted to be meaningful, to be right or wrong, and it is critical to perception, deliberation, and understanding (428a–431b).¹² The image in thought can represent the abstract things about which a person is reasoning.¹³ It seems obvious that *phantasia* does not always see things correctly, and what is seen might

9. Ned O’Gorman, “Aristotle’s *Phantasia* in the *Rhetoric*: Lexis, Appearance, and the Epideictic Function of Discourse,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 38 (2005): 16–40. See also the analysis of “rhetorical vision” (*phantasia*) in Debra Hawhee, “Looking into Aristotle’s Eyes: Toward a Theory of Rhetorical Vision,” *Advances in the History of Rhetoric* 14 (2011): 139–65. See also now Deborah K. W. Modrak, “Aristotle on *Phantasia*,” in *Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Imagination*, ed. Amy Kind (London: Routledge, 2016), 15–26.

10. *Phantasia* is also brought on by sound, smell, taste, touch, and other senses. The sensibilities affected are visual, oral, aural, olfactory, tactile, gustatory, textual, prosaic, poetic, intellectual, and others. Sound is particularly important for ancient Mediterranean documents, since they were first spoken, then transcribed, then read aloud to their audiences. Sound evokes the visual. See O’Gorman, “Aristotle’s *Phantasia*,” 17, 19.

11. *Ibid.*, 20.

12. *Ibid.*, 20–21.

13. See Modrak, “Aristotle on *Phantasia*,” 18–20.

be distorted or misleading.¹⁴ The human mind (νοῦς) supplies, sometimes mistakenly, things not actually there or leaves out things that are there. This indicates, actually very helpfully, that human minds are not passive but are active interpreters of information. Figures 2–3 point this out.

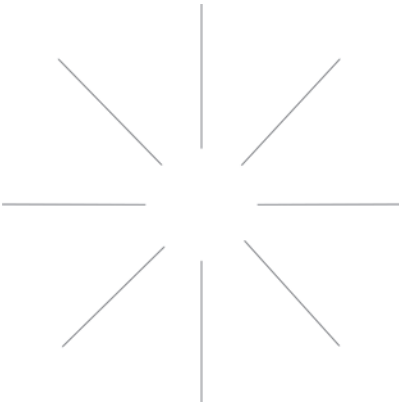


Figure 2. The circle is an illusion. There are in fact eight radial lines. <http://tinyurl.com/SBL4819j>.

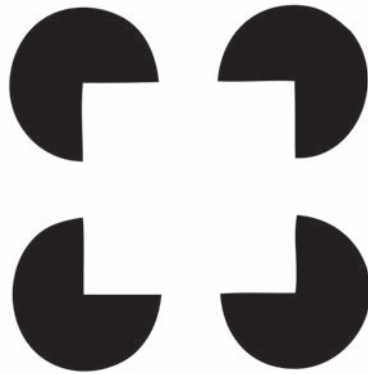


Figure 3. The square is an illusion. There are in fact four three-quarter circles. <http://tinyurl.com/SBL4819a1>.

This does not mean, however, that the visual interpretation is not necessary or by any means wholly unreliable. Lack of exact correspondence to reality does not prevent the mind from engaging in careful and rational reasoning while taking *phantasia*, metaphor and imagery, into account.¹⁵ This is art as much as (more than?) it is empirical analysis.

According to Aristotle, style (λέξις) evokes *phantasia* for the purpose of clarity of idea and understanding (“but all this [i.e., style] is appearance/imagery for the listener/audience”; ἀλλ’ ἅπαντα φαντασία ταῦτ’ ἐστι καὶ πρὸς τὸν ἀκροατήν, *Rhet.* 3.1.6).¹⁶ Style is what brings things before the eyes. The mind visualizes and blends scenes, persons, actions, and material

14. See *ibid.*, 16–17.

15. Interpretation is always a multiple-accounts evaluation.

16. See O’Gorman, “Aristotle’s *Phantasia*,” 22–27. The LCL translation by J. H. Freese mistakenly renders the line “But all these things are mere outward show for pleasing the hearer.”

things that appear to be but are not material realia. Such mental imagery/blending has a rhetorical function. It has emotional, *pathos* effect that leads to the development of opinion.¹⁷ It is an integral part of persuasion and the development of correct judgments and correct behaviors.

LONGINUS

Longinus in *On the Sublime* (Περὶ Ὕψους) speaks of εἰδωλοποιΐα, the formation of images in the mind of readers and listeners (15.1).¹⁸ Images (φαντασίαι), which for Longinus can be thoughts of any kind, produce speech and aim to move people, authors/speakers, and audiences, to see the images mentally:

In a general way the name of *image* or *imagination* [φαντασία] is applied to every idea of the mind, in whatever form it presents itself, which gives birth to speech. But at the present day the word is predominantly used in cases where, carried away by enthusiasm and passion, you think you see what you describe, and you place it before the eyes of your hearers. (15.1)¹⁹

The making or production of such mental images is the εἰδωλοποιΐα.²⁰ The intention is to affect audiences by means of “vivid description,” to arouse the emotions:

Further, you will be aware of the fact that an image has one purpose with the orators and another with the poets, and that the design of the poetical image is enthrallment, of the rhetorical—vivid description. Both, however, seek to stir the passions and the emotions. (15.2)

Longinus offers a series of examples from Greek literature (Euripides, Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Demosthenes) to demonstrate that images presented by words compel people to visualize them in their minds, so

17. On this, see Hawhee, “Looking into Aristotle’s Eyes,” 149–52.

18. *On the Sublime* dates from the first or third centuries CE. While it is attributed to someone named Longinus, its actual author is unknown. The work addresses rhetoric and, in ch. 15, the employment of images.

19. Translation by W. Rhys Roberts, *On the Sublime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907).

20. Note the cognate verb form εἰδωλοποιέω, “to form an image in the mind” (LSJ, 483–84).

much so that they (writer and readers/listeners) mentally enter the symbolic world(s) created by the visualizations (cf. 15.4). Visualized imagery combined with argumentation “not only persuades the hearer but actually makes him its slave” (οὐ πείθει τὸν ἀκροατὴν μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ δουλοῦται, 15.9). Argument may not be explicit in the mental images created by words, but the visualizations nevertheless make the point clearly (cf. 15.10–11).

EZRA POUND: *PHANOPOEIA*

Poet and literary critic Ezra Pound employs the evocative term *phanopoeia* to describe “the casting of images on the visual imagination.”²¹ Pound claims that “great literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree”²² and goes on to say that to understand it correctly and in its power readers should “chuck out the classifications which apply to the outer shape of the work, or to its occasion” and “look at what actually happens.”²³ He is critical of people he thinks fail to read literature properly.²⁴ Interpreters should recognize that language is “charged” or “energized” by the rhetorical power of what he called *melopoeia*, *phanopoeia*, and *logopoeia*.²⁵ *Melopoeia* is musical or sound organization that moves readers or listeners by its appealing patterns.²⁶ *Logopoeia* has to do with the direct meanings of words and with how their implicit meanings and allusions are drawn out of audience memory. It has contextual and intertextual effects that depend on the recognition of words that are remembered, and on the knowledge of the rhetoric already observed in a text.²⁷ *Melopoeia* and *phanopoeia* have powerful sensory effects that stimulate psychological events where meaning is apprehended and a mindset or way of understanding things (“to give people new eyes”) is

21. Ezra Pound, *How to Read* (New York: Haskell, 1971), 25–26. See also Pound, *The ABC of Reading* (London: Faber & Faber, 1961), 37. The date of writing of *How to Read* is uncertain. According to a footnote in T. S. Eliot, *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound* (New York: New Directions, 1954), 15, it was first published by the *New York Herald* in 1927 or 1928. It has been republished a number of times.

22. *Ibid.*, 21.

23. *Ibid.*, 25.

24. *Ibid.*, 5–11, 21, 49–50.

25. *Ibid.*, 25–26.

26. *Ibid.*, 25.

27. Marianne Korn, *Ezra Pound: Purpose, Form, Meaning* (London: Pembrige, 1983), 93.

produced.²⁸ *Melopoeia* arouses the “aural imagination” to anticipate that rhythmic sounds and arrangements will continue and will guide meaning.²⁹ *Phanopoeia* is the rhetorical phenomenon that provides word pictures and representations, but also employs graphic mental imagery that can “create a flash of understanding,” that elicit “an affective psychological event,” which provides growth and helps audiences move ahead.³⁰ Pound is therefore more concerned with the direct emotional effects of literature than about detailed literary analysis.

Pound’s ideas are about understanding the rhetorical function and meaning of language. He strongly dislikes what he calls the “loose use” of “bloated” words that do not add meaning.³¹ He insists that literature should have a moral purpose: “It appears to me to be quite tenable that the function of literature as a generated prize-worthy force is precisely that it does incite humanity to continue living; that it eases the mind of strain, and feeds it, I mean definitely as a nutrition of impulse.”³² In Pound’s view all literature is comprised of *melopoeia*, *phanopoeia*, and *logopoeia*.³³ His interest is in how these rhetorical features function as “the art of getting meaning into words.”³⁴

Phanopoeia, as Pound describes it, demonstrates how the visual imagination prompts emotional responses that move people toward belief and specific behaviors. Texts arouse visual images in the mind that people can “see.” The *ethos* of the visually energized language elicits a *pathos* response.³⁵ This is to say that images generate an emotional disposition of mind in people that leads them to recognize particular points of view, accept certain beliefs, and practice specific behaviors.³⁶ In Pound’s view,

28. Ibid., 91–92.

29. Ibid., 68–69.

30. Ibid., 78.

31. Pound, *How to Read*, 18.

32. Ibid., 16.

33. Ibid., 28. Although Pound was primarily concerned with poetry, he recognized that *melopoeia*, *phanopoeia*, and *logopoeia* occur in prose and spoken language, but require a greater amount of language to convey the same power (ibid., 27–28).

34. Ibid., 39.

35. Thomas H. Olbricht (“*Pathos* as Proof in Greco-Roman Rhetoric,” in *Paul and Pathos*, ed. Thomas H. Olbricht and Jerry L. Sumney [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001], 7–22) has pointed out that there is very little available from scholars on how *pathos* may be analyzed.

36. This is like what Aristotle discusses in *Rhet.* 2.1.3–4, 8–9 and 2.2.27. Audi-

the *phanopoeia* elicited by texts needs careful analysis precisely because of its power to elicit sensory and intellectual effects on audiences.³⁷ Language energized by *phanopoeic* visualization has dynamic force. Things in the visual imagination seem to be real. Interpreting the mental representations is visual exegesis. The imagery evokes sensory responses that shape the ways realities are understood and the ways humans behave.

VERNON K. ROBBINS: RHETOGRAPHY

Vernon K. Robbins's employment of *rhetography* (an elision of "rhetoric" and "graphic") struck me as having a meaning very close to Pound's *phanopoeia* when I first heard him using the term. Robbins explains rhetography fully and clearly in his article "Rhetography: A New Way of Seeing the Familiar Text," where he defines it as "the graphic images people create in their minds as a result of the visual texture of a text."³⁸ He links the visual to "context" by stating that "a speaker or writer composes, intentionally or unintentionally, a context of communication through statements or signs that conjure visual images in the mind which, in turn, evoke 'familiar' contexts that provide meaning for a hearer or reader."³⁹ The employment of language, oral or written, presupposes the spatial context of the speaker or writer and of the listener(s) or reader(s). This contextualization has implications for the rhetoric and the reception of the language that can be analyzed by interpreters.⁴⁰ Robbins goes on to point out that a major function of rhetography is that it reveals the spaces or "social-cultural-ideological locations"⁴¹ in which early Christian and New Testament argumentation occur, and the kinds or "modes" of discourse typically employed and blended in those spaces. These spaces,

ences need to be led to take on a frame of mind, which is part of what persuades them to take a particular point of view or decision and to act on it.

37. For more on Pound's views and their interpretive implications, see my essay "Melody, Imagery and Memory in the Moral Persuasion of Paul," in *Rhetoric, Ethic and Moral Persuasion in Biblical Discourse*, ed. Thomas H. Olbricht and Anders Eriksen (New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 160–78.

38. Vernon K. Robbins, "Rhetography: A New Way of Seeing the Familiar Text," in *Words Well Spoken: George Kennedy's Rhetoric of the New Testament*, ed. C. Clifton Black and Duane F. Watson (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008), 81.

39. *Ibid.*, 81. Robbins notes significant supporting bibliography (see 81–82).

40. *Ibid.*, 83.

41. *Ibid.*, 86.

in early Christian and New Testament context, have moved beyond the classical rhetorical locations of judicial, political, and ceremonial discourse.⁴² As Robbins points out, the spatial and discursive contexts are “available to us through the rhetography of the discourse, provide the cultural frames for understanding and negotiating the meanings in early Christian argumentation.”⁴³ Rhetography is about how these rhetorical contexts are envisioned in the mind by speakers/authors of the texts, and by listeners/hearers who encounter them.⁴⁴ A rhetograph will have, like all visual spaces, a foreground, a mid-ground, and a background, and characters and objects may be situated at the center, at the sides, or above or below the plane of observation. It can display multiple images individually or simultaneously. It will portray a story or narration that will indicate life and activities. It will have multiple effects on audience members. Characters and objects may move or be moved, communicate, indicate ethos, show emotion, or engage in any activity. The visual presentation, what is cast on the imagination, can itself make an argument that can be understood by someone visualizing it. This now suggests that interpretation is not flat, is not a two dimensional, length and width, undertaking but is genuinely geometric, three dimensional, where depth must be taken into account. We must therefore ask, what does the rhetography *do* to its audiences? What images are evoked? What kinds of rhetorical discourse are brought into view? What are the features of the visual rhetoric that are socially or religiously formative and bring about reader/listener responses?

MARGARET VISSER: GEOMETRY

In her wonderful book *The Geometry of Love*, Margaret Visser gets at visual exegesis and interpretation by examining art in the form of the architecture of an ancient church, Sant’Agnese fuori le Mura (Saint Agnes Outside

42. That is, of judicial, deliberative, and epideictic discourse or oratory.

43. Robbins, “Rhetography,” 86–87.

44. The spaces and discourses (which Robbins and SRI call *rhetorolects*) comprise at least these six (there are more): earthly kingdom—prophetic rhetorolect; the imperial court—apocalyptic; the human body—miracle; the family household—wisdom; the imperial household—precreation; sacrificial-temple—priestly. See Robbins, *ibid.*, 87–98.

the Wall), in Rome.⁴⁵ Here the geometry is filled out into a complete interpretation. She begins with the visual and moves toward the written text that the visual evokes (i.e., her book), while interpreters of the Bible can begin with the text that evokes the visual.⁴⁶ A major concept that Visser teaches us is that we must learn to see what we are looking at—at what visual art or texts or anything visual has to teach us.⁴⁷ She pushes us to see and interpret and understand what we see. “Learning to ‘read’” what is seen or visualized is foundational to understanding the rhetoric.⁴⁸ We can refuse to see the images or fail to interpret them but only to our own loss and the loss of those who might learn from us.

Visser points out that the usual critical questions—When was it written/made? What are the dimensions? What are the features or textual items of particular note? Who is the author/artist/maker? Is it genuine? Is it pseudonymous? What is the occasion or *Sitz im Leben*? How long is it? Does it present or reflect real historical events?—while critically important, can miss the point:

I remember sitting at the back of a tiny, isolated church some years ago, on top of a hill in Spain. A Japanese tourist was driven up to the front door and led around the building by a guide he must have hired in the town some distance away. The guide told him, in English, the dates of various parts of the building and then proceeded to dilate upon the superb stone vaulting. The tourist did not even raise his head to look at this. He stared aghast—as well he might—at a horrific, life-sized painted carving of a bleeding man nailed to two pieces of wood. When the guide had stopped talking, the man gestured wordlessly towards the

45. Margaret Visser, *The Geometry of Love: Space, Time, Mystery and Meaning in an Ordinary Church* (Toronto: Harper Perennial, 2000).

46. Or that is what I am doing in this essay. Some begin with studies of material, political, and social culture of the ancient Mediterranean and then apply it to the New Testament (cf. Longinus, *Subl.*, 15.1). That is a perfectly good way to approach visual exegesis, but it is not what I am doing here. See Harry O. Maier, *Picturing Paul in Empire: Imperial Image, Text and Persuasion in Colossians, Ephesians and the Pastoral Epistles* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013) and Rosemary Canavan, *Clothing the Body of Christ at Colossae*, WUNT 2/334 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 31–41, 115–33. Many commentaries, beginning (in English) particularly with J. B. Lightfoot (1875), take the view that the historical situation must be understood first before adequate interpretation can begin.

47. Visser, *Geometry of Love*, 11–12.

48. *Ibid.*, 4. See above on Pound's ideas about how to read.

statue. The guide nodded, smiled, and told him in which century it had been carved.⁴⁹

Dates, historical circumstances and other measures are fundamental and indispensable, but they do not provide full access to what a text is about. With the visual, whether real or envisioned mentally, the questions and the analysis cannot be only about *what it is* but must also be about *what it says*, *how it says it*, and *what it does*.⁵⁰ Texts, whether heard or read, set images in the mind. What are the images saying? What is the geometry? All of this is, of course, about studying the rhetoric of the texts.

Those who see the *rhetographs* in their visual imaginations, the audiences or recipients (whether *θεωροί*, “spectators,” or *κριταί*, “judges”) of the images, draw on their memories of things they have encountered before.⁵¹ In other words, they recognize or at least are able to connect with the pictures via things they know. They are led by the presentation of texts (heard or read) or by actual objects. As such, they are active participants in the presentation. They are not passive.⁵² They watch, listen, are moved emotionally and physiologically, and become engaged with the symbolic worlds of the imagery. But, unlike the theater (or film or other visual, aural, and other sensory arts) where there is a distance between the play (i.e., the performers and the words and images) and the audience that is increased after the play has ended and the audience is no longer engaged, the images cast in the mind by the New Testament (and no doubt other religious) texts are meant to stay with the participating audience members, because “the whole point of the proceedings is to help them change the orientation

49. Visser, *Geometry of Love*, 1.

50. Visser (*ibid.*, 2) points out that this means considering things such as history, politics, theology, anthropology, art history, technology, iconography, hagiography, and folklore. We could add to the list psychology, physiology, cognitive theory, spatial theory, geography, literature and literary theory, acting and theater, and a range of other disciplines. Visser (2–3) also claims that a subject must be investigated from the “inside,” not, as many claim, from the “outside” as a nonparticipant. “It is no longer *de rigueur* to discount what the ‘natives’ are telling you is going on.... It is detrimental to truth to claim total objectivity.”

51. See Pound’s notion of *logopoeia*, implicit memories recalled by texts (cf. Visser, *Geometry of Love*, 9). Audiences may be comprised of both spectators (*θεωροί*) and judges or critics (*κριταί*), sometimes in the same persons, who are affected by what they hear and see.

52. See Visser’s description of the theater (*ibid.*, 12–13).

of their souls, even though they are also confirming the foundation of their beliefs.”⁵³ The words of New Testament texts are not meant to be observed from some “aesthetic distance”;⁵⁴ they are speaking to people’s minds and hearts in order to orient them in particular directions. “The [text] is trying to speak; not listening to what it has to say is a form of barbarous inattention, like admiring a musical instrument while caring nothing for the music.”⁵⁵ The texts communicate things beyond themselves *in what they picture*. The language is not only the language of words; it is the language of the visual imagination. This is the dimension beyond length and width. This points us to the full geometry of “sacred texture,” which aims toward God, Christ, and holy, faithful fellowship and behavior. This geometry is the orientation toward getting people’s lives to align with their beliefs, something very difficult to do consistently.⁵⁶ In the New Testament this is about believing and behaving in accord with the Christian understanding that Christ has changed the world.⁵⁷ In the Letter to the Colossians, it means that Christ, not Caesar, is the image of God in whom God’s fullness dwells (Col 1:15–20; 2:9–10) and that being raised and living with Christ alters both outlook and behavior (3:1–4).

This is where Visser has helped me, I think immensely, even though she writes about the visuality (in its architecture, art, and function) of an ancient church building, not an ancient Mediterranean religious text (though the building *is itself* a text). She shows that there is depth, a kind of third dimension, more than an elevation; rather, a trajectory or a geometric space that extends out from the more linear “textures” described by Robbins. The rhetoric of the New Testament (and, surely, of ancient Mediterranean religion more generally) was trying to take people toward the sacred. The emerging modes of Christian discourse, have the same (kind of) function. It must be made clear, however, that the sacred dimension is about movement, outward movement, in multiple directions. It is

53. Ibid., 13.

54. Ibid., 14.

55. Ibid., 14. Rather than [text], Visser wrote “building.”

56. On the idea of “orientation,” see *ibid.*, 15–17.

57. Visser (*ibid.*, 31–32) points out that the Roman view of fate (Lat. *fatum*)—that the things of one’s life are bound to happen, that “an event that is fated cannot not happen,” that life is out of control—is replaced by Christianity with destiny: “Destiny is life with God, a personal God, who cares about what happens to human beings.” This is sacred texture.

not simple and straightforward depth; it is not static but is a dynamic, kinetic trajectory that goes off in many directions—not wildly or chaotically so, but in careful, logical directions. The pictures cast on the imagination reveal and show and, hence, are a *φαντασία* of the sacred space and what things are like there.

DANIEL KAHNEMAN

An interesting and helpful psychological explanation of the visual force of words is presented by Daniel Kahneman in his book *Thinking, Fast and Slow*.⁵⁸ While Kahneman's overall presentation is very complex, he does seem to demonstrate how words elicit visual and other mental and physiological responses.⁵⁹ Indeed, he points out that there is "a complex constellation of responses" that occur "quickly, automatically and effortlessly" when words are observed and recognized. This is "associative activation" which occurs when "ideas that have been evoked trigger many other ideas, in a spreading cascade of activity in the brain."⁶⁰ Words elicit memories, which, in turn, arouse images in the mind and other physiological responses.⁶¹ The images cast on the mind by words of a text heard or read are an "attenuated version" or "attenuated replica" that is a visual interpretation of the situation under consideration.⁶² The mind and the body are trying to make sense of the situation.⁶³ What is seen, whether in actual or

58. Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 2011). On a more popular level, see Malcolm Gladwell, *Blink: The Power of Thinking without Thinking* (New York: Back Bay Books/Little Brown, 2005).

59. See particularly Kahneman's ch. 4, "The Associative Machine," in *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, 50–58. Kahneman places the words *bananas* and *vomit* visually next to each other (50) and points out the range of responses people have to the arrangement.

60. *Ibid.*, 51.

61. Kahneman (*ibid.*, 52) refers to "associative memory," which seems like Pound's notion of *logopoeia*.

62. See above, the section on Aristotle, which notes how the mind fills in images that may not exist in reality.

63. Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, 50–51. On the more philosophical connections of mind and body (the "intersubjectivity of body and mind"), see the dense ideas of Maurice Merleau-Ponty in, for example, his essay "Eye and Mind," trans. Carleton Dallery, in *The Primacy of Perception*, ed. James M. Edie (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 159–91.

mental images, can influence behavior.⁶⁴ Although the mental images are attenuated, they nevertheless are interpretations that lead people along to understanding and action. The more vivid the images become because of the vividness of the language that evokes them (*ἐκφράσις*), the more effective they become in affecting how people behave.⁶⁵

Below I offer a description and analysis of the visual images cast on, elicited in, or evoked by the imagination—the rhetography or *phanopoeia*—of Col 2:6–3:4. I recognize that other interpreters and surely the intended and actual first audiences of this passage are likely to have seen things differently. Still, we can see enough to track the ideas and grasp the scene clearly in order to understand the argument being made.

CONTEXTUALIZING THE VISUAL TEXTURE OF COLOSSIANS 2:6–3:4

Colossians 2:5–3:4 is the Core Argumentative Rhetoric of the letter. It is here that it comes to its central concerns and argues for how they should be addressed and resolved. It is preceded by Introductory Rhetoric (1:1–2:5) that casts a comprehensive visual image on the minds of listeners to the letter. In the first section (1:1–23), listeners/readers observe a happy scene where Paul (and Timothy) addresses faithful, loving members of the church community in Colossae among whom the gospel is producing much fruit. Paul is observed in continuous prayer for these people, envisioning as he does so their ongoing fruitful lives and their growing knowledge of God. The lines of sight are drawn upward with the visualization of Jesus Christ, the preeminent, preexistent (precreational) son of God, who, strikingly, has in the death of his own flesh brought about the cheerful scene of reconciled persons. What has developed is a visual conception that draws audience members' minds to a scene where the various players exist in a community where there are good relationships among all. These persons must be sure that they remain as participants in the scene that they are called to visualize. This introductory picturing sets the visual imagery for the letter.

The second section of the Introductory Rhetoric (1:24–2:5) focuses on Paul at the center of the picture. He is seen in multiple roles or images: proclaimer/preacher/prophet; servant; sufferer; struggler; comforter; a

64. See Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, 53–58.

65. See *ibid.*, 323–28.

working, struggling, very serious, committed person. He is committed to the apocalyptic vision of Christ as the revealed mystery. He proclaims this vision prophetically but always with a view toward wisdom—that is, toward the knowledge and behavior and maturation of people who, like the Colossians, have heard and received the proclamation. He is seen to be wary of false, antiprophetic, and antiwisdom teachers and teaching. He sees and projects the complex imagery of Christ in the believers and the believers in Christ, and of Christ being the place of treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He rejoices in what he observes among his audience members. Paul says he is rejoicing at the beginning and ending of this section (Νῦν χαίρω, 1:24; χαίρων, 2:5), suggesting that a joyful person is to be imagined by his readers/listeners. The joyful Paul, however, cannot be separated from the prophetic Paul: each step in this section begins with prophetic, proclamatory language (1:24, 28; 2:1, 4).

RHETOGRAPHY OF THE CORE ARGUMENTATIVE RHETORIC:
COLOSSIANS 2:6–3:4

Step One: Colossians 2:6–7

Paul continues to be seen and his prophetic voice continues to be heard, but he is seen and heard one step removed from his previous position due to a visual shift at this step from the first-person focus on himself to the second-person “you,” thereby bringing the letter’s recipients into the foreground. This shift brings wisdom rhetorolect and its emphasis on faithful activity into play.⁶⁶ There is a move from looking at the space occupied by Paul to the space occupied by the letter’s audiences. The viewers of the mental imagery see Christ Jesus the Lord once more (cf. 1:3, 10), though now they themselves are centrally visualized as people who have received this Christ Jesus (Ὡς οὖν παρελάβετε τὸν Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν τὸν κύριον). This image of receiving will remind of, and so appear as, the earlier rhetographs of themselves in Christ and Christ in them (1:27–28), particularly because of the clause “walk in him” (ἐν αὐτῷ περιπατεῖτε). The walking, a wonderful pictorial way of describing living or moving through life, is to be done “in him,” in Christ. This walking motion is given stability and strength by “being rooted and built in him” (ἐρριζωμένοι καὶ ἐποικοδομούμενοι ἐν αὐτῷ)

66. The grammatical and structural shift is indicated in the words Ὡς οὖν.

and by “being confirmed [secured, established] in the faith” (βεβαιούμενοι τῇ πίστει). The listeners observe themselves to be moving along very confidently because of their location in Christ. The horticultural (rooted) and construction (built) images show them to be well founded and immovable in their connection with Christ. As persons who are well established in their faith, confident in their faith, they are observed to be walking/living in Christ in accord with what they had been taught, perhaps bringing the image of Paul or Timothy or Epaphras or another teacher to the imagination again. As they walk they are observed to be engaged in an overflowing of thanksgiving (περισσεύοντες ἐν εὐχαριστίᾳ). The rhetograph here presents an appealing scene of strong faithful people, encouraged now by what Paul is picturing to them of the wisdom life in the apocalyptic Christ Jesus. The abundant overflow of thanksgiving enhances the imagery by visibly indicating to all observers how thankful they are in their location in Christ. The visual scene itself makes an implicit visual argument: what they see mentally is what they must be in reality.

Step Two: Colossians 2:8–10

With this step the images in the picture are altered again with the listeners shifting their own vision, at Paul’s call (βλέπετε), to a person introduced into the scene for the first time.⁶⁷ The new person in the portrayal is not recognized by physiological appearance or by name. Rather, this person appears in negative, possibly violent, imagery as someone who is attempting to capture the Colossians (βλέπετε μή τις ὑμᾶς ἔσται ὁ συλαγωγῶν) by using “philosophy” and “empty deceit” (διὰ τῆς φιλοσοφίας καὶ κενῆς ἀπάτης), things that in this case operate “according to human tradition” and “according to the elements of the world” as over against things that operate “according to Christ” (κατὰ τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, κατὰ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου καὶ οὐ κατὰ Χριστόν). This attempted action of capturing is visually instigated by a person but is accomplished intellectually and emotionally by affecting how the audience members themselves think and act. This coloring immediately suggests the presence of danger.⁶⁸ The rhetograph displays a threat to believers in Colossae (and elsewhere) that aims to intimidate them with words or messages from some person other

67. The grammar is singular, a person. It may be likely, though it is not necessarily the case, that in Colossae this “person” was a number of persons or false teachers.

68. The verb βλέπετε has the force of “beware.”

than Paul who addresses them persuasively with information counter to what they have learned about Christ (cf. 1:15–20, etc.), information that comes solely from human and cosmic sources.⁶⁹ The readers/listeners will appear to become wary of this person and the person's message. Also cast on the imagination are visualizations of "philosophy and empty deceit," "human tradition," and "the elements of the world."⁷⁰ These are abstract conceptualizations, but the implied emotional and intellectual power of the conceptualizations suggests images that are to be observed outside of Christ, in whom listeners are located and who is located in them, and that they stand against both Christ and the audiences in an adversarial way. They are not "according to Christ" (καὶ οὐ κατὰ Χριστόν); thus, they are adversarial notions and have a threatening appearance. Each of these adversarial images picture human, present-age concerns, rather than the picture of the precreational and apocalyptic Christ and the focus on the heavenly hope that has been in view since 1:5 (cf. 1:12–13). What occurs in 2:8 is that the space of the audience members is blended with the space of the person attempting to capture them to produce a third space of caution in the presence of a threat.

Christ, against whom the threatening ideas stand and in whom the listeners are located, is next portrayed as the one in whom the fullness of deity dwells bodily (ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος σωματικῶς, 2:9). In sight is the precreational Christ seen already in 1:15–18a and 1:19, now brought into focus again. This picturing of the precreational Christ—against whom stands the one threatening capture—shows him being inhabited by the fullness of deity; thus, the image portrays Christ as the one who reveals everything about God to viewers and as the one who offers all that is needed to be known about life in the overall scene for

69. Their information does not, therefore, come from the precreational or apocalyptic Christ source, which is the authority Paul recognizes (see 1:15–20).

70. Translation of τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου in the NRSV and other English translations is inaccurate and misleading. Greek does not say "the elemental spirits of the universe"; it says "the elements of the cosmos." There is no fully compelling reason to add the notion of "spirits" here. The identity of the *stoicheia* is, of course, a matter of ongoing debate. But the proximity of the term to "philosophy and empty deceit" and "human tradition" in the larger context of Colossians suggests that the *stoicheia* are connected with the *present-age* issues that arise for humans: eat/do not eat; drink/do not drink; participate/do not participate; love/hate; love/not love; slave/free; circumcision/uncircumcision; Jew/gentile; power/powerless; submit/do not submit, etc. See on this J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians*, AB 33A (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 389, 393–406.

them. Christ stands against not only the person attempting to capture the Colossians, but also against the intellectual, emotional, present-age forces that are used to accomplish capture. The rhetograph makes it clear that the audience members should have their confidence in the precreational Christ—where deity fully resides—and not in the human and earthly teachings. With the inclusion of the word “bodily” (*σωματικῶς*), it becomes clear that the precreational Christ is portrayed in physiological form and is the apocalyptic Christ still now present. Christ is the apocalyptic one in whom precreational deity resides. To display the fullness of deity is to display the fullness of divine existence, here portrayed in the present. This bodily presence of the fullness of deity in Christ brings about the fullness of the audience members, who are next seen in the rhetograph as those who are full beings in Christ (*καὶ ἐστὲ ἐν αὐτῷ πεπληρωμένοι*, 1:10).⁷¹ They are viewed as being full in the apocalyptic Christ, who is full of deity bodily. Their fullness displays them as persons who should not be persuaded by the adversarial philosophy and empty deceit of human traditions and the elements of the world precisely because they have already been filled with all they need, namely, Christ. Christ and the fullness they already display are all that is needed to make a complete and full picture. The picturing conveys the message that neither they nor Christ lack anything required for the continuation of their hope of heaven and their life in the kingdom.

This step is completed with yet another view of the precreational, apocalyptic Christ, who now is seen as “head of every power and authority” (*ὅς ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας*). As “head” Christ is here to be seen as superior to and ruling over every (other) power and authority that can be visualized by the audiences. This is reminiscent of the picturing of 1:16 and 1:18, where Christ was seen to be superior to all powers and to be head of the body-church. It also previews the description of Christ’s apocalyptic work indicated in 2:15. The image is of the powerful, authoritative, superior Christ, who is visibly sufficient, thereby indicating the insufficiency of the forces being used in the attempt to capture the faithful.

Step Three: Colossians 2:11–15

Although the sentence that began at Col 2:8 continues through to 2:15, there is a shift or a step in the progression of images here. Christ is pictured again

71. Perfect passive participle, indicating they have already been made full in him.

as the one “in whom” (ἐν ᾧ) the listeners are located, but this image is elaborated (ἐκφράσις) graphically by casting the visualization of circumcision on their imaginations. The faithful have been circumcised in Christ (ἐν ᾧ καὶ περιετμήθητε). The result of the physical surgery of circumcision can be readily visualized by people (not literally examined in a church setting) and would likely be recognized as the Jewish covenantal sign (or, by gentiles, at least as a Jewish peculiarity). The circumcision seen here, however, is visualized in a different way because it is “made without hand” or “not handmade” (περιτομῇ ἀχειροποιήτω)⁷² but nevertheless involves the imagery of circumcision in the stripping off of the body of flesh (ἐν τῇ ἀπεκδύσει τοῦ σώματος τῆς σαρκός). “Flesh” here quite clearly is not the physical flesh of the foreskin but is the metaphorical—but still visualized—cutting away of the body of flesh that is meant to portray the removal of the life of the former time in darkness and the transfer into the kingdom of God’s son, in whom is redemption and forgiveness of sins (1:13–14). The former life has been cut away, and the life of fullness in the apocalyptic Christ is now in view. This particular image of “circumcision” is “the circumcision of Christ” (ἐν τῇ περιτομῇ τοῦ Χριστοῦ); that is, it is brought about by the apocalyptic work of God in Christ. Thus, while the listeners recognize that the rhetograph describes what has happened to them, they also see, as they have before, that Christ is at the center foreground of the portrayal and is the active figure in bringing about their circumcision. His apocalyptic presence is the visual indicator of the reality of their circumcision.

Overlaid on or interwoven with the picture of circumcision is the picture of burial and resurrection of the audiences with Christ, which picture itself is interwoven with the image of their baptism (συνταφέντες αὐτῷ ἐν τῷ βαπτισμῷ, ἐν ᾧ καὶ συνηγέρθητε). The circumcision of Christ not made with hands, the stripping off of the body of flesh, is seen together with the burial of the listeners with Christ’s burial and resurrection (their death is implicit here but comes explicitly into view in 2:13)⁷³ and is visualized in the recollection of the concrete reality of their baptism. In the visualization of their baptism, they will also now see their resurrection with Christ. Death, burial, and resurrection with Christ are seen as a complex unity in and necessarily with Christ.⁷⁴ The actual burial and resurrection (i.e., the

72. The NRSV mistranslates with the interpretive rendering “with a spiritual circumcision.”

73. Compare the death of Christ mentioned already in 1:20–22.

74. Contra a frequent interpretation, the pronomial phrase ἐν ᾧ in 2:12 should

circumcising, saving work) is brought about “through the faith of the [i.e., the faithful] action of God who raised him [Christ] from the dead” (διὰ τῆς πίστεως τῆς ἐνεργείας τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἐγείραντος αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν).⁷⁵ The image of the circumcision made without hands is here visually explained: it is the action of God, performed in the same way that God raised Christ out of death. The baptism of the recipients of this rhetograph analogously lays out the reality of God’s action and of the circumcision of Christ.⁷⁶

There is an amazing blending of images in this picture. Physical circumcision is blended with a nonphysical circumcision and with the cutting away of the former existence in darkness. Nonphysical circumcision is blended with the audience members’ burial and resurrection with Christ brought about by God. The imagery of burial and resurrection is blended with baptism. This blending produces a quite marvelous visualized space, where the circumcision–stripping off of the body of flesh–burial–resurrection sequence is seen comprehensively and at once. The comprehensive vision is imagined to be located in Christ and brought about by the working of God. The imagery is highly complex, but the complex picture presents a reality that audiences of Colossians will grasp. It can be understood precisely because it is a picture to be visualized. In other words, the picture makes the argument directly.

The image of death becomes explicit finally in 2:13. The Christ-believers in Colossae remain at the center of the visualization but now are viewed in their former condition—that is, prior to being raised with Christ—as dead and, following the circumcision imagery, they are viewed in their former condition of being “uncircumcised” by the circumcision of Christ (καὶ ὑμᾶς νεκροὺς ὄντας ἐν τοῖς παραπτώμασιν καὶ τῇ ἀκροβυστίᾳ τῆς σαρκὸς ὑμῶν). Death and dead bodies in the Greco-Roman era were considered to

not be understood as “in which” (i.e., in baptism) but as a repetition of “in whom.” Baptism stands here (and in Rom 6:4) for burial—that is, for *immersion*, and not for resurrection—that is, for *emersion*. See James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 160; Andrew T. Lincoln, “The Letter to the Colossians,” *NIB* 11:624. Baptism symbolizes union with Christ in death and burial.

75. The line διὰ τῆς πίστεως τῆς ἐνεργείας τοῦ θεοῦ is taken here as a subjective genitive: through the faithful activity of God, *not* through faith *in* the activity of God. This fits the context, where all the saving activity is performed by God in Christ.

76. If the recipients are wondering about a need for circumcision, they should stop. They have been circumcised by the action of God.

be repugnant and defiling.⁷⁷ Family members were responsible to look after their own dead. The former condition of being dead envisions this detestable condition and, simultaneously with the uncircumcised condition, is seen as being “in trespasses,” that is, in sins that “cause one to lose footing.”⁷⁸ The entire picture of 2:13 implies that they are alive in a present view. This implication is immediately explicit in the image of the audience having been “made alive with” Christ (συνεζωποίησεν ὑμᾶς σὺν αὐτῷ). The audience is viewed distinctly as being alive, although in another view of the same tapestry they are seen to have been dead. The image of being made alive “with him” corresponds to the continuing overlaid image of Christ and believers. The now living Christ and the now living believers go together inseparably. The complexity of the scene increases with the addition of the image and tone-coloring of forgiveness of trespasses (χαρισάμενος ἡμῖν πάντα τὰ παραπτώματα), which contrast with the more sinister images of “in trespasses” and “uncircumcision.” Now the visualization brings Paul (and Timothy and, presumably, others) back into direct focus along with the audience with the reappearance of the plural pronoun ἡμῖν. The broader focus on “we” and “us” pictures the forgiven senders of the letter and its audiences as liberated people in a liberated setting, where no authoritative record or authoritative powers (cosmic or human-political; cf. 1:16) stand against them or make requirements of them (ἐξαλείψας τὸ καθ’ ἡμῶν χειρόγραφον τοῖς δόγμασιν ὃ ἦν ὑπεναντίον ἡμῖν, καὶ αὐτὸ ἤρκεν ἐκ τοῦ μέσου προσηλώσας αὐτὸ τῷ σταυρῷ· ἀπεκδυσάμενος τὰς ἀρχὰς καὶ τὰς ἐξουσίας ἐδειγμάτισεν ἐν παρρησίᾳ, θριαμβεύσας αὐτοὺς ἐν αὐτῷ). The record of human actions that people imagine to stand against them is seen to have been erased—there is a blank space where the record was set previously—and the powers have been disarmed. The action of the erasure is visually described as accomplished by God’s action of removing the record (αὐτὸ ἤρκεν ἐκ τοῦ μέσου—literally, “he took it out of the middle”; thus, idiomatically, “he removed it”) by “nailing it to the cross” (προσηλώσας αὐτὸ τῷ σταυρῷ). The cross and nailing imagery places Christ at the center of the scene (since it is obvious in context that Christ was the one nailed to a cross) and imagines the action of nailing as the metaphor for the action of erasure or removal of the record of rules that stood against people. This vivid activity (nailing, crucifying, erasing, removing) is simultaneously visualized as a “disarming” and a “disgracing”

77. See the discussion in Visser, *Geometry of Love*, 48–52. Interestingly, people did like to visit and care for the graves of family members.

78. παραπτώμα, literally, “beside the body/corpse.”

of and a “triumphing over” the adversarial “powers and authorities.” Once again the complexity of the picture is striking, with several actions being viewed simultaneously. The composite image indicates the work of God, the power of the cross, the liberty of people and the powerlessness of the things and beings that stand against humans. The picture indicates, in a complex artistic way, that the threat of violent capture (2:8) is to be observed and resisted because the powers it attempts to use to perform the capture are impotent. The powers appear to be dramatically weakened and to be in a state of disgrace. For the pictured listeners to succumb to such impotent powers would be tragic and unnecessary. They are visualized in a position of strength. God in Christ has provided everything required for liberty. No further human action of any kind is required; the picture is complete as it stands. The argument is clear in the picture itself.

This step presents a complex blending of images from multiple spaces that is founded in apocalyptic action and discourse. Argumentatively, the very highly rhetographic images of 2:11–15 are apocalyptic portrayals that convey an apocalyptic rationale. The addressees (“you”) are the recipients of God’s apocalyptic work in Christ, which has brought about the current scene, where records of their observance of rules and various powers and authorities are irrelevant, and the listeners are free and should not surrender to any lingering pressure to conform to the former “uncircumcised,” unresurrected, unbaptized, dead condition. They are now “full” in Christ (2:10). The persuasive imagery of 2:11–15 displays this reality, sets it before the eyes. The blending brings in metaphorical and literal aspects of the listeners’/readers’ lives: the metaphorical/theological spaces of the circumcision of Christ, death in sins, burial, and resurrection with Christ; and the literal/theological space of their own baptism, an event that would be clear in memory. The complex yet focused imagery delivers a clear notion: God through Christ has brought about the new envisioned and sacred situation; no one and nothing else is necessary or helpful in the Christian walk.

Step Four: Colossians 2:16–17

Argumentatively, this step draws a conclusion (Μὴ οὖν) based on the foregoing picturing. But it pictures Paul at center stage again, calling to his audience to refuse to allow anyone to judge them (μὴ οὖν τις ὑμᾶς κρίνῃτω)⁷⁹

79. A singular judge; see above on 2:8.

with regard to their eating and drinking, or in their nonobservance of feasts or new moons or Sabbaths (ἐν βρώσει ἢ ἐν πόσει ἢ ἐν μέρει ἐορτῆς ἢ νεομηνίας ἢ σαββάτων). This recalls and reinforces the imagery of Col 2:8–10, where Paul calls for them to “look” so that no one will capture them (Βλέπετε μή τις ὑμᾶς ἔσται ὁ συλαγωγῶν). The view shifts from Paul to the listeners, who are now to see themselves resisting such a judge, who is visible along with them in the picture. It becomes clear as the picture is envisioned that the judge expects people to practice the observances related to eating and drinking, participation in (probably specific) feasts, lunar (monthly?) cycles, and in Sabbath practices.⁸⁰ The pressure imposed by the judge to practice the observances is resisted by the audience because, as Paul portrays in an additional image, the observances are “a shadow⁸¹ of the coming [time]” (ἃ ἐστὶν σκιὰ τῶν μελλόντων), not realities of the time that has arrived—that is, of the apocalyptic time of Christ, the time of existence in the kingdom of God’s son, in redemption (1:13–14). The actual “body” in view, to which the shadow envisioned alludes, is Christ himself, now brought into central focus again (τὸ δὲ σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ). The audience, at Paul’s direction, is observed to be standing against the “shadow,” not participating in it. The people stand in light, not in darkness (cf. 1:12–13) and so are portrayed avoiding the shadow.

The picturing of shadow and body is very complex. The body of Christ casts the shadow while, at the same time, the shadow alludes to Christ. The pressure to focus on the shadow (i.e., to accept the judge’s demands to practice the observances) is to be resisted; thus the shadow itself, while indicating that a body casts it, is not, at least not now in the arriving apocalyptic time, important. Only the body itself is now important as the focus of concern in this particular image. The apocalyptic language ἃ ἐστὶν σκιὰ τῶν μελλόντων, τὸ δὲ σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ has in view the incarnate, bodily formed Christ (Jesus), who has in fact always been visible in the portrayal (since 1:1). The precreational Christ was already casting the shadow/allusion (1:15–18a, 19; 2:9), indicating protologically the presence of God and the redemptive activity of God in the creation. Now in 2:17 Paul elicits the visualization of the bodily formed Christ, with whom the audience has been raised (2:12) and in whom the people in the audience live, to

80. Because 2:17 states that such observances are “a shadow,” it is clear that this shadow is one about which the judge pressures the Colossians. The implication is that neither the observances nor the judge are as important as the judge thinks.

81. Singular noun.

convey the understanding that judgments regarding shadow observances are inconsequential and to be refused.

Step Five: Colossians 2:18–19

The call for resistance against the pressure to conform to “shadow” practices continues, but it shifts in this step from the previous images of attempts at capture (2:8) and judgment (2:16) to the image of attempts to cheat or rob the listeners of a possession (μηδεὶς ὑμᾶς καταβραβεύτω).⁸² Paul is in the direct line of sight again, calling for the Colossians to resist the efforts of anyone attempting to cheat them, anyone gaining satisfaction or taking pleasure in their apparent religious condition and activities (θέλων ἐν ταπεινοφροσύνῃ καὶ θρησκείᾳ τῶν ἀγγέλων, ἃ ἐόρακεν ἐμβατεύων, εἰκῇ φυσιούμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ νοδὸς τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ), rather than maintaining the correct focus on the head, Christ (καὶ οὐ κρατῶν τὴν κεφαλὴν). But the cheater/thief is also visible.⁸³ This person appears as one who takes an implicitly perverse pleasure in promoting the humility and worship and religious visions of people such as the Colossians—doing so for his own, conceited self-satisfaction (εἰκῇ φυσιούμενος)⁸⁴ based on “the mind of his flesh” (ὑπὸ τοῦ νοδὸς τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ)—that is, from selfish motives. Being defrauded in this way would make the Colossians appear to be very religious, but it would be merely an appearance, an artifice intended for the pleasure of others. The cheater is envisioned as a moralizer of the worst sort. He is a moral, behavioral, religious power figure who does not have the interests of the Christ-believers genuinely at heart. The tone-coloring of the rhetography portrays this shrewd person very negatively, darkly. The readers/listeners are viewed brightly, in resistance to the pressure.

While the false piety indicated by the humility, the worship of angels, and the experience of visions can appear to be attractive because people practicing these things are imagined to be adding to their redemption (helping themselves, doing the right things), the actual visible result is seen in the “puffing up,” the inflation, of the cheat. This person is not “holding to the head” (οὐ κρατῶν τὴν κεφαλὴν), a statement that refocuses sight on Christ. The rhetograph here is moving toward a head and body imagery

82. Καταβραβεύω—a *hapax legomenon* here in the New Testament meaning cheat, rob, defraud, disqualify—is being used parallel to the verb κρίνω in 2:16.

83. Singular, a person.

84. Literally, “puffed up without cause.”

that now takes over the central space of the picture. The head (i.e., Christ, 1:18) is now centrally in sight, and it is out of this head that the entire body is nourished, with a view toward the growth of the body (*ἐξ οὗ πᾶν τὸ σῶμα διὰ τῶν ἀφῶν καὶ συνδέσμων ἐπιχορηγούμενον καὶ συμβιβάζόμενον αὖξει τὴν αὖξησιν τοῦ θεοῦ*). The picturing now is a visualization of Christ's head and body.⁸⁵ This body is, as it is being viewed, growing the growth of/from⁸⁶ God (*τὴν αὖξησιν τοῦ θεοῦ*), visibly supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews (*διὰ τῶν ἀφῶν καὶ συνδέσμων*). The problem visualized in the picture is that the cheat is not holding to or grasping the head, not appropriately honoring the head, thereby presenting a dangerous situation for the Colossians. The Colossians are viewed as standing against the cheat, refusing to be cheated by him.⁸⁷

This step, like the previous one, has a wisdom concern. Paul does not want the readers/listeners to be cheated by the selfish actions of a false teacher who demands adherence to particular religious observances. The observances appear to be pious and important, but the picturing shows that their net result is the loss of something important for the audience members and envisions the artificial inflation of the promoter of the observances. Paul will not stand for the self-righteous moralizing religion promoted by the cheater. The listeners should avoid it, too. Blending of the at-first attractive space of the observances and the space of the cheater produces a third space, where both observances and cheater are to be resisted.

Step Six: Colossians 2:20–23

This step begins with an apocalyptic image and then shifts to a wisdom image. The apocalyptic statement *Εἰ ἀπεθάνετε σὺν Χριστῷ ἀπὸ τῶν στοιχείων τοῦ κόσμου* reenvisions images already evoked by 2:8–10 and 2:11–15, where the audiences appear in apocalyptic space as people who are full in Christ and who are raised and alive with him and exist beyond the power of all cosmic and human authorities, over which Christ has triumphed.⁸⁸ In

85. See 2:17. There is a repetitive texturing of *τὸ σῶμα*, 2:17, 19.

86. With *τοῦ θεοῦ* understood as an ablative, from God.

87. Who is the cheater? Is he a real person? Are real, known, self-centered persons in view in 2:8, 16, 18? Are these characters currently (at the time of writing) real and active persons in Colossae? They might not be real persons, but appear as a feature of broad wisdom discourse warning against the possibility.

88. Looking ahead slightly, the *Εἰ ἀπεθάνετε σὺν Χριστῷ* clause that begins step

this scene, the Christ-believers are reapprised of the image of their separation from (ἀπό) the adversarial “elements of the world” (τῶν στοιχείων τοῦ κόσμου, cf. 2:9) by means of their death with Christ. This brings Christ’s body, his death on the cross, the nailing, and the condition-altering effects of these things back into central view, along with the audience’s own participation in these images. They are visualized as having died with Christ and therefore now stand in Christ, nourished from his head, free from the former life scene where sin and the things of the cosmos prevailed. This apocalyptic imagery also continues to view them in a space of resistance against any who are attempting to deceive, cheat, or bind them to the things of the present age. This apocalyptic—but still very real—image evokes a question (τί ὡς ζῶντες ἐν κόσμῳ δογματίζεσθε) that visualizes the ongoing existence of the audience. They are seen resisting the things of the present age, the “elements of the world” (ἀπὸ τῶν στοιχείων τοῦ κόσμου), but at the same moment they are seen to be “living in the world” under some specific restrictions.⁸⁹ The active resistance is visualized simultaneously with a passive submission to restrictions,⁹⁰ which creates a slightly disorienting angle on the picture: since people are presented as free from rather dangerous and restrictive influences, why are they seen to be living with the specified restrictions “do not handle, do not taste, do not touch” (Μὴ ἅψη μηδὲ γεύσῃ μηδὲ θίγῃς)? The readers/listeners are now observed in a narrow, forbidding light, where they are being very cautious, avoiding participation in anything that might be thought to be questionable according to present-age elements of the earth-ideology. The portrayal reveals a puzzling and biting irony: resistance to the present world with simultaneous obligation to the present world. Viewers of the picture are to be shocked and to ask why it is so. The very actions/behaviors that readers/listeners are seen to be obligated to avoid are distinctly visualized as being consumed with a view toward their destruction (ἃ ἔστιν πάντα εἰς φθορὰν τῇ ἀποχρήσει). They are human precepts and teaching (κατὰ τὰ ἐντάλματα καὶ διδασκαλίας τῶν ἀνθρώπων), so they are visualized as coming from human sources like those that the audience is to resist (2:8, 16). Humans can be observed, somewhere away from the center of the visualization, where they are calling out, “Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!” This is meant to stir up

six here is paralleled by Εἰ οὖν συνηγέρθητε τῷ Χριστῷ at the beginning of step seven in 3:1. See step seven, below.

89. Note repetitive texturing of the word κόσμος.

90. δογματίζεσθε is a permissive passive implying subjects’ consent.

retorical concern and questioning: why are people seen to accept the call to obligations and restrictions? The imagery implies that they should not accept it. The reasoning for refusing it is clear. They visualize themselves as having died with Christ, as raised with Christ, as circumcised with the circumcision of Christ. The shadow is seen to be only a representation of Christ, in whom they now exist. They are distinctly Christ-believers, who live in the kingdom of God's son (1:13). There is no need for them to be visualized as they are, living with narrow restrictions.

Overlaid with this imagery, paradoxically and simultaneously again, the restrictive obligations appear to present a logic (λόγος) that has wisdom in the ways that it provides visual impressions of self-imposed piety, humility, and unsparing treatment of body (*ἅτινά ἐστιν λόγον μὲν ἔχοντα σοφίας ἐν ἐβελοθησικίᾳ καὶ ταπεινοφροσύνῃ καὶ ἀφειδίᾳ σώματος*). The readers/listeners who are seen to observe the restrictions do, from a human point of view, appear to be very religious and very cautious of the *body* dangers of handling, eating, and touching.⁹¹ “Body” just here is envisioned in a very questionable light as part of the world that requires restrictions. The picture portrays, however, the reality that these restrictions have no value relative to the gratification of the flesh (*οὐκ ἐν τιμῇ τινι πρὸς πλησμονὴν τῆς σαρκός*). Though they seem to indicate appropriate religious observance, they do not demonstrate real results. Nothing happens. The vision of real results is found in the dying, rising, crucifying, nailing, baptizing, circumcising images of Christ seen previously. The pressure to observe the restrictions is a visual reminder of the cheater seen in 2:18. Self-imposed or deceiver-imposed observances are ineffective. The visible action of Christ and the unity of believers with and in him are what work in this picture.

This step shifts from an apocalyptic space, where believers in Christ are observed again to have died with him, to a wisdom space, where restrictions against certain behaviors are seen to be ineffective. Although the restrictions appear to be attractive, they have no real value. Paul wishes for the audiences to continue resisting the pressure to conform to humanly contrived rules—just as in the imagery of 2:8–10 and 2:11–16—and to know that the apocalyptic actions of Christ who existed precreationally are what actually free them from all authorities and obligations.

91. Handling, eating, touching might be metaphors for participation in behaviors of many kinds.

Step Seven: Colossians 3:1–4

This final pictorial step in the core argumentative rhetoric of Colossians is visually parallel to but also directionally opposite the previous one. The parallel picturing is indicated explicitly in the language employed in 2:20 and 3:1, both of which begin with *Ei οὖν*, “if therefore,” and both employ the preposition *σύν*. The directional movement appears differently in each parallel statement because the action in 2:20 is envisioned as dying with Christ, while the action in 3:1 is envisioned as being raised with Christ.⁹² This step, then, in parallel yet with an opposing motion, pictures the Colossians being raised out of death with Christ and impresses that vision on the mind as the apocalyptic, argumentative base (as in 2:20) for the wisdom statements that follow. Paul and the Colossians are now again visualizing the scene indicated in 2:12–13. Their raised and living location with (and in) Christ is clearly in sight. This apocalyptic, raised positioning places them in a location where they can be directed to see themselves seeking “the things above” (*τὰ ἄνω ζητεῖτε*). This view looks up to the highest possible location, to where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God (*οὗ ὁ Χριστός ἐστὶν ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ καθημένος*). The visualization is thus drawn upward from seeing the image of the readers/listeners moving from death to life in resurrection with Christ, to seeing Christ in exalted position alongside God. The directive *τὰ ἄνω ζητεῖτε* in this way pushes the visioning upward to apocalyptic, exalted space. The view elicits a parallel wisdom scene that portrays a “thinking” rather than “seeking” image, where readers/listeners observe themselves thinking of “the things above” rather than thinking about things on the earth (*μὴ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς*). The visualization does not (yet) explicate “the things above” that are to be sought and thought about, although it does show Christ sitting on the preeminent right side of God. The nature of the imaging, however, clearly colors the things above as good, as things that do not need to be resisted and that pose no danger to the audience. The things above are also set in visual contrast to “the things on the earth.” The downward view that thinks about and visualizes the things on the earth and observes images of evil things in the imagination (things that are not made explicit until the contrasting material of the next section,

92. Dying is active; being raised is passive.

3:5–17) comes into sight;⁹³ and, though the downward view is possible, it is not one that should be taken.

The wisdom exhortation to seek and think of the things above is continued with a visual rationale in the next two clauses that reenvisions something the audiences have already seen: that they have died, and now their lives are hidden with Christ in God (*ἀπεθάνετε γάρ, καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ὑμῶν κέκρυπται σὺν τῷ Χριστῷ ἐν τῷ θεῷ*). This brings into the foreground yet again the image of dying with Christ (cf. 2:12–13) and embellishes the visual nature of the raised life the recipients now live in Christ (and Christ in them) by adding to the picture the vision of them being hidden with Christ who is in God. This is a complex image that does not *visibly* portray the readers/listeners, although they are informed that they are hidden in the picture, but does portray Christ in a new visual way, located “in God.” This opens the way for the anticipated visualization of the manifestation of Christ (*ὅταν ὁ Χριστὸς φανερωθῇ*), when the readers/listeners now hidden will be manifested with Christ. The mind’s eyes are drawn to a vision of glory. The future manifestation in glory alludes to the audience being “clothed with the new person which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of the creator where ... Christ is all in all,” indicated in the following verses (3:10–11). Envisioned is a time when Christ, who is visualized as their very own existence (*ἡ ζωὴ ὑμῶν*),⁹⁴ who represents their own lives, is manifested with the believers (*τότε καὶ ὑμεῖς σὺν αὐτῷ φανερωθήσεσθε ἐν δόξῃ*). The images of the manifestation of Christ and their own manifestation coincide. The glorious living Christ and the renewed believers will be seen in glory together. The pictorial narration of this step closes with images that transcend the images of caution and resistance against the dangerous persons and ideas of the present.

This step moves through an apocalyptic-wisdom-glory sequence. The apocalyptic reality of being raised with Christ and hidden with him in God presents the visual case for the wisdom behavior of seeking and thinking about the things above. The space above is the apocalyptic location of Christ, sitting at the right hand (side) of God. The apocalyptic space/reality is blended with wisdom space/reality to produce a third space, where the apocalyptic reality of being raised with Christ is lived

93. Where specified evil behaviors that are visible “on the earth” are to be “put to death.”

94. This matches the previous imagery of the audience “in Christ” and “with Christ.”

out in the present alongside pressures against it, anticipating in it the manifestation of Christ and believers together in glory, and Christ as “all in all.” The space of death moves to the space of resurrection and anticipates the space of glory. The constant in every space of blending is that the believers are always “with” (σύν) Christ.

CONCLUSION

Examining the images cast on the imagination by a biblical text and engaging in visual exegesis does not provide a full interpretation. There is more to do. But the pictures evoked by the text do provide a clear and visible way into a text in which humans characteristically, apparently naturally, engage. Humans see things in texts, whether they read them as individuals or hear them read aloud. Seeing the graphic nature of the text provides contextualization and actual understanding through the visualization of the creative *poeia*, the *phanopoeia* or rhetography presented to the imagination. What occurs is that the text, comprised of grammaticalized and nuanced words, when read or heard read aloud, converges and blends with pictures it evokes in the mind to produce new meaningful spaces (mentally envisioned spaces that transfer to real, physiological spaces in the cosmos) where the affective, emotional, and intellectual force of the blending leads to corresponding behavior. The texts communicate beyond themselves in the pictures they set in human imaginations. The complex pictures themselves can and frequently do make the argument directly. The argument, certainly in Colossians but also in other New Testament texts, is about social formation, where Christ-believers, on the one hand, live faithfully with heaven and good behavior in mind and, on the other hand, resist pressures to conform to the unnecessary and unhelpful behaviors demanded by some who wish to capture, judge, and cheat them. The visual argumentation therefore aims audiences toward the vision of the *wisdom* space of fullness in Christ that they already inhabit. This space of fullness negates any need for anything else. The argumentation has a moving, sacred texture that moves people to sacred understanding. The precreational and apocalyptic Christ Jesus presented in Colossians has rendered all opposing persons and powers impotent.

METHODOLOGY UNDERLYING THE PRESENTATION OF VISUAL TEXTURE IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

L. Gregory Bloomquist

INTRODUCTION

Specialists in rhetoric—especially those who deliver addresses, even more than those who analyze them—have long recognized the power of the image to get a point across. One of the first extant examples of sophistic practice, Gorgias's *Encomium of Helen*, uses words to set beautiful Helen before the audience's eyes, but also her case.¹ Aristotle's second book of his *Rhetoric* is devoted to the means of picturing and presenting character, primarily that of the speaker.² Examples of the power of imagery in contemporary rhetorical practice also abound, especially in the realm of advertising and preaching.³

1. See the section on "Gorgias," which includes the *Encomium of Helen*, in Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg, eds., *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Bedford, 2001), 42–46.

2. Grimaldi makes the excellent point that book 2 is almost always overlooked in favor of book 1, which deals with λόγος, and thus with logical argumentation. See William M. A. Grimaldi, *Aristotle: Rhetoric II* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1988), ix. This intentional or unintentional diminishment of classical rhetoric's own attention to imagery by modern scholars is consonant with Robbins's assertion that modern rhetorical analysis and biblical study have been intentionally or unintentionally oblivious to important or even crucial elements of the rhetorical employment of imagery in biblical materials.

3. Linda M. Scott, "Images in Advertising: The Need for a Theory of Visual Rhetoric," *Journal of Consumer Research* 21 (1994): 252–73. See also the classic work of Fred B. Craddock, *Preaching* (repr., Nashville: Abingdon, 2010). Craddock pleads for greater reliance on imagery in preaching than on propositional (logical) proofs.

Preaching is especially interesting to me, since preaching that does include imagery often works with imagery drawn from our contemporary world, as does advertising, but blends that imagery with imagery from the Bible, written centuries and even millennia before our own time. The blending of two worlds—the contemporary with the ancient biblical world—has been a challenge for Christian preaching since the beginning, but since the second century Christian scholars have also sought to give hermeneutical rigor to how this blending occurs. This rigor was achieved in a magisterial way in Saint Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*. There Augustine provided an alternative to classical rhetoric in both content and form.⁴

As a theologian involved in rhetorical analysis, I envision my task in continuity with Augustine, though I also recognize my significantly inferior contribution. Furthermore, I envision my task, all the while aware of significant changes to the rhetorical models that are now available in the world around us, but even more aware of the unique scientific insights that are available to us since the eighteenth century. Still, my task is not entirely dissimilar from that of Augustine, despite our differing gifts and despite the millennium and a half that separates us, since the Bible and extrabiblical materials that I am using remain for the most part the same ones that he, too, used. In fact, Augustine devoted much of his Christian scholarly life to the study and preaching of the very same Gospel of John, including especially a focus on its imagery, which is also my subject matter.⁵

Furthermore, as I follow in Augustine's massive footsteps, I am following the lead of Vernon K. Robbins, whose sociorhetorical project also intends to find a way to blend contemporary and ancient tools.⁶ My

4. Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, new ed. with an Epilogue (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 256–66. See also Robin M. Jensen ("Early Christian Images and Exegesis," in *Picturing the Bible: The Earliest Christian Art*, ed. Jeffrey Spier [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007], 76), according to whom Augustine provided a "holistic" approach to the presentation of Scripture.

5. See, for example, Craig S. Farmer, "Early Reformed Commentaries on John," *CH* 65 (1996): 367–68.

6. The origins of Robbins's project can be dated to the 1980s and 1990s with the appearance of the notion of sociorhetorical interpretation in Vernon K. Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher: A Socio-rhetorical Interpretation of Mark, with a New Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), followed by his two landmark works: *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-rhetorical Interpretation* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996); *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society*

modest contribution here is to show how the sciences of the brain and the mind enable us to use Robbins's insights for their maximum value.

The primary insight that has begun to shape current sociorhetorical interpretation (SRI) is that rhetoric privileges visual texture used for argumentative purposes, rather than logical argumentation. While there is no doubt that rhetorical analysis had imagery as a dominant concern in its classical, medieval, and many contemporary forms, it is also true that as a result of certain currents in modern rhetoric, currents that were influential on Protestant biblical scholarship, logic became a preeminent concern in both modern rhetoric and in modern biblical reflection.⁷ It is this primacy that Robbins has sought to challenge through SRI. Robbins has proposed that visual texture, not logical argumentation, is primary in most rhetorical address and that logical argumentation is more often than not in the service of the former. He has thus proposed that, in commentary on Scripture, we should first of all consider *rhetography*, by which he means "the features of a spoken or written communication that evoke a picture (graphic image) in the mind of a hearer or reader," or, as he later elaborated, "the progressive, sensory-aesthetic, and/or argumentative texture of a text ... that invites a hearer/reader to create a graphic image or picture in the mind that implies a certain kind of truth and/or reality."⁸ Rhetography, which is about getting at "the picture an argument evokes,"⁹ recovers its traditional place through SRI, but it does so by building on insights from contemporary cognitive science and psychology.

As I hope to show, the emphasis on rhetography picks up on important ideas that are in discussion in the larger scientific community about how minds work and how they both communicate and receive information. To show how this is so, I want to present some reflections on how I get at the visual texture in the Gospel of John in its argumentative use—

and *Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1996). These have now been followed by the first volume of his magnum opus: *The Invention of Christian Discourse: Volume 1*, RRA 1 (Dorset, UK: Deo, 2009).

7. In rhetoric, this is perhaps most clearly seen in the writings of Thomas Campbell. See Bizzell and Herzberg, *Rhetorical Tradition*, 807–9. In exegesis the tendency is seen most clearly in the Reformed traditions.

8. Vernon K. Robbins, "Rhetography: A New Way of Seeing the Familiar Text," in *Words Well Spoken: George Kennedy's Rhetoric of the New Testament*, ed. C. Clifton Black and Duane F. Watson (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008), 81–106; Robbins, *Invention: Volume 1*, xxvii.

9. Robbins, *Invention: Volume 1*, 17.

that is, in its rhetography. There are four methodological spheres that I have considered:

1. the physiological process of visualization;
2. images and memory;
3. how the mind works with visual imagery to create meaning through narrative; and
4. the power of rhetorical imagery.

It is important to note that I am looking at these four spheres in the service of assisting the SRI community in refining sociorhetorical interpretation. Thus, my interest is not primarily in physiology or neurology, in the science of memory, in cognitive psychology, or even in narrative or art. However, I believe that by drawing on all of these and more, we shall be able to ground and advance an enriched form of rhetorical analysis for broader use.¹⁰

VISUALIZATION

“Vision is the main way we collect information from the world.”¹¹ Visual perception gives us some raw data about the world. This raw data is, however, quite minimal, which means that our brain does a *maximal* amount of work on the *minimal* data given to it.¹² This minimalist approach to

10. Material in this essay is found in summarized form in my other essay in this volume, as well as in L. Gregory Bloomquist, “Visualizing Philipppians: Ancient Rhetorical Practice Meets Cognitive Science through Sociorhetorical Interpretation,” in *Paul and Ancient Rhetoric: Theory and Practice in the Hellenistic Context*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Bryan R. Dyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 265–84.

11. Benjamin K. Bergen, *Louder Than Words: The New Science of How the Mind Makes Meaning* (New York: Basic Books, 2012), 49.

12. “Although we experience the illusion of receiving high-resolution images from our eyes, what the optic nerve actually sends to the brain is just a series of outlines and clues about points of interest in our visual field. We then essentially hallucinate the world from cortical memories that interpret a series of movies with very low data rates that arrive in parallel channels. [According to Roska and Werblin,] ... the optic nerve carries ten to twelve output channels, each of which carries only a small amount of information about a given scene. One group of what are called ganglion cells sends information only about edges (changes in contrast). Another group detects only large areas of uniform color, whereas a third group is sensitive only to the back-

visual perception allows either for a basic computational understanding of human cognition or for a more elaborate understanding of the human mind.¹³

The computational theory continues to ground “the copy theory” of visualization, by which we think that our vision provides us simply with a copy of the real world. There are, however, several problems with the copy theory, not least of which is that we actually already have complex imagery in the mind *when* we either see something or when we hear something named but do not see it.¹⁴

For example, no one doubts that two people walking down a street together and who see a dog will, according to the computational theory, see an animal that we can call a “dog” in whatever language we identify it and with some room for assessing whether it is a dog or a coyote, or

grounds behind figures of interest. ‘Even though we think we see the world so fully, what we are receiving is really just hints, edges in space and time,’ says Werblin. ‘These 12 pictures of the world constitute all the information we will ever have about what’s out there, and from these 12 pictures, which are so sparse, we reconstruct the richness of the visual world’ (Ray Kurzweil, *How to Create a Mind: The Secret of Human Thought Revealed* [New York: Viking, 2012], 94, citing the work of Botond Roska and Frank Werblin, “Vertical Interactions across Ten Parallel, Stacked Representations in the Mammalian Retina,” *Nature* 410 [2001]: 583–87).

13. Steven Pinker details the outlines of the basic computational understanding: “The computational theory of mind ... says that beliefs and desires are *information*, incarnated as configurations of symbols. The symbols are the physical states of bits of matter, like chips in a computer or neurons in the brain. They symbolize things in the world because they are triggered by those things via our sense organs and because of what they do once they are triggered. If the bits of matter constituting another symbol are arranged to bump into the bits of matter constituting another symbol in just the right way, the symbols corresponding to one belief can give rise to new symbols corresponding to another belief logically related to it, which can give rise to symbols corresponding to other beliefs, and so on. Eventually the bits of matter constituting a symbol bump into bits of matter connected to the muscles, and behavior happens. The computational theory of mind thus allows us to keep beliefs and desires in our explanations of behavior while planting them squarely in the physical universe. It allows meaning to cause and be caused” (Steven Pinker, *How the Mind Works* [New York: Norton, 1997], 25).

14. “Reliance on the analogy between computer processing and human thought has led to a limited conceptualization of symbolic material in which discrete unities—like alphanumeric characters—are read and manipulated” (Scott, “Images in Advertising,” 269). But, as Scott goes on to note, they are not discrete, but neither are they simply strung together. They are contextualized or, as she says, “convention based.”

whether a Newfoundland dog is a dog in the same way, say, that a chihuahua is. If, however, one of those walking along is a North American, she might see the dog as a possible pet, while the other, say, a Nicaraguan, would see the dog as a threat.¹⁵ The complexity is magnified in speech. Hearing the word *dog* but not seeing a dog conjures up even more possibilities, since in English the word can be a noun or a verb, and, depending on the cultural context, might even refer to a person. But additionally that person might be someone who is not of my religion—perhaps even an enemy of my religion (cf. Phil 3:2a)¹⁶—or someone might be a hero of that very same religion (e.g., the name “Caleb” or “dog” as found in Num 13–14).

So, while the computational theory is an “indispensable” explanation of elements of the mind,¹⁷ how the mind uses visual imagery will likely require variants other than physiology or neurology for a fuller and more complex explanation of imagery in the mind. Nor is this a new idea. Some years ago, Benjamin Whorf had already noted that “the world is presented in a kaleidoscope flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds.”¹⁸ In other words, while our visual perceptions provide us with the fundamental data with which we work, it is our mind that constructs what we see. In fact, this is true not only of our visual perception but also of sensory perception per se: “Each of us lives within the universe—the prison—of his own brain. Projecting from it are millions of fragile sensory nerve fibers, in groups uniquely adapted to sample the energetic states of the world around us: heat, light, force, and chemical composition. That is all we ever know of it directly; all else is logical inference,”¹⁹ or perhaps more accurately, “inference by the mind.”

15. My daughter, who lives in Nicaragua, knows this from personal experience. The dog that she had in Nicaragua as a pet was always a target for Nicaraguans, who would throw stones at it or chase it with brooms or kick at it, even when my daughter was walking along with the dog and would try to stop them.

16. See also Hadith Sahih Bukhari 4.54.539: Narrated, Abu Talha: The Prophet said, “Angels do not enter a house which has either a dog or a picture in it.”

17. So Pinker, *How the Mind Works*, 25.

18. Benjamin Lee Whorf, *Language, Thought, and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*, ed. John B. Carroll, foreword by Stuart Chase (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1973). Whorf’s (original) 1956 work is cited by Bergen, *Louder Than Words*, 188.

19. Vernon B. Mountcastle, “The View from Within: Pathways to the Study of

When it comes to rhetorical material that is as complex as John's Gospel, it becomes very clear that neurological approaches to vision alone will not satisfy our desire for meaning and interpretation concerning imagery in the text. Nevertheless, it is the case that somehow the mental image of "lamb" or "birth" or "bread" will be used by the author and that these images will be drawn from things that characters in the text are narrated as seeing or hearing about. Specifically, we shall see that these visualizable or imaginable realities will be used by the author to set up counterfactual realities for the mind to grapple with: yes, a lamb, which you can picture, but not just a lamb that you picture in a field; yes, birth, which you can picture, but not a birth process that you have known before; yes, bread, which you can picture, but not the bread that hardens and dries out and decays, or even bread that you heard about that mysteriously appears and decays with the sun the next day; et cetera. In other words, the author of the Gospel of John *will* use immediate, sensory appearances of things just as they appear to the eye (e.g., bread, water, light, etc.) but will do so to show how misguided the hearer or seer is *if* s/he remains only at the level where that is *all* that s/he sees.

Before we can see how this happens, however, it is important to note how the Gospel of John uses what else is in the brain in order to move the audience beyond the computational connection between external thing, external stimuli, and mental image— namely, how people think and communicate thoughts by using what is in memory.

IMAGES AND MEMORY: HOW CULTURE SHAPES VISUAL IMAGERY

Eric Kandel has given us a remarkably lucid presentation of the scientific discovery of the physiological processes involved in memory and memory creation.²⁰ His work is highly significant for us because it is memory that provides the mind with images to be compared with other images, including images from external stimuli and those already in the brain. His work is also important because he has shown that it is memory that begins to provide a narrative, both individual and corporate, and

Perception," *Johns Hopkins Medical Journal* 136 (1975): 109–31, cited by Kurzweil, *How to Create a Mind*, 94.

20. Eric R. Kandel, *In Search of Memory: The Emergence of a New Science of Mind* (New York: Norton, 2006).

memory that allows for a structured blending of all the various images we have of our world.

To start with, memory is crucial for any kind of ongoing human experience, rather than just moment-to-moment lived experience, for “without the binding force of memory, experience would be splintered into as many fragments as there are moments in life.”²¹ Through memory the mind creates an extensive individual history that draws on an individual’s own memory and, as we shall see, on cultural memory—that is, the memory of others.²² That this is the case seems clear because, while brain activity is obviously fed by direct stimuli, it also functions in its absence. In other words, brain activity does not cease with the absence of external stimulus. Where external stimuli are available, they are blended with imagery from memory; where external stimuli are absent, images from memory are still blended.²³ I do not, for example, need to see a man to visualize a man in my mind; hearing the word *man* suffices to picture a man.²⁴

21. *Ibid.*, 10.

22. This history almost certainly begins during the prenatal period. See David B. Chamberlain, “The Fetal Senses: A Classical View,” *Birthpsychology.com*, <http://tinyurl.com/SBL4819n>.

23. According to Bergen, “Visual imagery works much like actual perception because when you recall objects, locations, events, and so on, you are re-experiencing sights you’ve seen and actions you’ve performed, using the same brain systems that were responsible for seeing those sights and performing those actions in the first place” (Bergen, *Louder Than Words*, 41). As we shall see, I will nuance Bergen’s assertion slightly but significantly: we do not actually reexperience the sights; we reconfigure the initial experience based on other stimuli and blends that have entered the cognitive process subsequently.

24. The physiological (neurological) process that explains why this happens is well understood: The brain does not simply gather and stockpile information, as a computer’s hard drive does. Facts are stored first in the hippocampus, a structure deep in the brain about the size and shape of a fat man’s curled pinkie finger. But the information does not rest there. Every time we recall it, our brain writes it down again, and during this restorage, it is also reprocessed. In time, the fact is gradually transferred to the cerebral cortex and is separated from the context in which it was originally learned. For example, you know that the capital of California is Sacramento, but you probably do not remember how you learned it (Sam Wang and Sandra Aamodt, “Your Brain Lies to You,” *New York Times*, 27 June 2008, <http://tinyurl.com/SBL4819l>).

Bergen proposes that the physiological explanation actually suggests that in these cases we are “immersed experiencers”; that is, hearing the word “man” and understanding it” is “in some way akin to actually being there” (Bergen, *Louder Than Words*, 66). “The immersed experiencer view claims that when you’re understanding

For the purposes of highlighting the importance of memory in relation to the rhetorical use of imagery, it is crucial to note that any picturing that we do necessarily draws on memory recall, whether external stimuli are present or not.²⁵ In fact, it is likely that “visual thinking is often driven more strongly by the conceptual knowledge we use to organize our images than by the contents of the images themselves.”²⁶ Though it may be true that “a picture is worth a thousand words ... that is not always such a good thing. At some point between gazing and thinking, images must give way to ideas,” and these ideas are essentially shaped by memory.²⁷

Memory, however, is not exclusively an individual creation, though for a long time it was viewed that way.²⁸ Recently, however, and on the

language, you simulate what it would be like to experience the scene that's described” (68–69). Bergen acknowledges his indebtedness to Rolf A. Zwaan (“The Immersed Experiencer: Toward an Embodied Theory of Language Comprehension,” in *The Psychology of Learning and Motivation*, ed. B. H. Ross [New York: Academic Press, 2004], 43:38), according to whom “comprehension is the vicarious experience of the described events through the integration and sequencing of traces from actual experience cued by the linguistic input.”

25. Bergen gives a helpful example of how this memory recall functions physiologically when he discusses how brain activity evidences the brain filling in the blanks in periods of silence when one would otherwise expect external stimuli, be it visual or auditory. Describing brain scans on such periods of silence, Bergen writes: “If you’ve ever driven through a tunnel while listening to the radio, you know that when you’re listening to a song you know, as soon as the music cuts out, you spontaneously ‘hear’ the music in your mind’s ear over the crackling of your radio. The brain activity measurements that the experiments took from the periods of silence showed ... activation in the brain areas responsible for audition.... The exact parts of the auditory system that were active during the periods of silence depended upon how familiar the music was to the participant and whether it had lyrics—just as you use different but closely related brain regions to hear different types of sound, so you use different brain regions to imagine sound” (Bergen, *Louder Than Words*, 35).

26. Pinker, *How the Mind Works*, 295.

27. *Ibid.*, 298. Why this should be so is explained by Pinker: because “people cannot reconstruct an image of an entire visual scene” but “only the surfaces visible from one vantage point, distorted by perspective,” images are “slaves to the organization of memory” (*ibid.*, 294).

28. Until recently, the two “basic principles” that have usually informed “scientific psychology’s approach to the study of cognition” have been (1) the presupposition of “a subject endowed with universal cognitive properties and, simultaneously, of objects possessing intrinsic properties” and (2) the presupposition that “individual cognitive productions and constructions are the result of the individual’s application of his/her

basis of the study of *the individual brain*, the social dimension of memory has become clearer.²⁹ These findings show that the individual does not create abstract, contextless mental representations based on individual experience alone; rather, s/he “processes and stores information to be later activated (either automatically or consciously), in order to act in the real world” with other people who are equally socially and culturally contextualized.³⁰ Individual memory appears to be designed or evolved to accommodate others and as such is designed to incorporate social knowledge into the creation of memory and narratives based on memory.³¹ This is no less true of picturing, which, as we have seen is dependent on memory,

universal properties to the object’s intrinsic characteristics.” Unfortunately, this has led to a situation in which “the possible social dimension of the processing under observation is either totally neglected, or understood solely from the standpoint of the object’s characteristics” (Jean-Marc Monteil and Pascal Huguet, eds., *Social Context and Cognitive Performance: Towards a Social Psychology of Cognition*, European Monographs in Social Psychology [Hove, East Sussex: Psychology Press, 1999], 1).

29. For example, the discovery of neural epigenesis—that is, the flexible execution of the activities of the human brain depending on individual circumstances rather than on mere evolutionary determinism of the human species—has suggested to at least some social psychologists that “every human being has inscribed in the very structure of his brain through particular neural networks, the special affective, social and cultural history that is his.” In fact, “the higher up the evolutionary ladder one moves, the more the epigenetic component gains importance in the construction of individuals.” The conclusion appears inescapable that, “if physical matter bears the mark of the individual’s social history, it becomes conceivable that a symbolic ‘engram’ of the social dimension might exist in long-term memory and might play a part in the development and the cognitive functioning of the human being.” For example, it appears that the bicameral structure of the Japanese brain shows hemispherical specialization for the use of the two different writing systems. “The alphabetical system, the Kana, relies on the left hemisphere, while the ideogrammatic system, the Kanji, relies on the right hemisphere.” Such studies have led Monteil and Huguet to talk about the human individual as “a *socially inserted neurophysiological and psychological system*” (Monteil and Huguet, *Social Context and Cognitive Performance*, 9, emphasis theirs).

30. Ibid., citing D. Lecourt, “Introduction,” in *La construction du cerveau*, ed. Alain Prochiantz (Paris: Hachette, 1989), 1–17.

31. If memories are encoded in the brain, they may easily be “activated and implemented in the form of a system of responses found in the individual’s behavioural repertoire. For this to happen, the individuals need only to find themselves in the presence of certain inputs or certain sociopsychological configurations acting as retrieval cues for knowledge related to previous social insertions.” Monteil and Huguet conclude that, as a result, “more of our attention should thus be directed towards con-

and thus, as we can suggest, must be dependent on social memory as much as on individual memory.

Robbins intuited this point early on in SRI by grounding SRI's understanding of *intertexture* in relation to the work of his colleague Bradd Shore, who insists on the cultural—that is, local—nature of rhetorical appeals to knowledge about the world around us.³² This knowledge is social in that it is more than individual, but it is not simply universal (in other words, true for all humans). The knowledge that humans draw on first of all is local, that is, cultural. As Shore notes, while it is true that “brain-culture interactions ... reveal ... the general cognitive processes of information,” it is also true that these interactions are not universally human but, rather, locally human, “the culturally diverse manifestations of those processes in action.”³³ As we shall see, any understanding of rhetorical discourse must address the fact that the audience in mind is the local audience rather than the universal audience of logical or scientific discourse.³⁴

What is the significance of this understanding of memory for our understanding of the imagery of the Gospel of John? As I note in my essay on John in this volume, the audience of John's Gospel understands itself, through identification with narrative characters in John, to be bereft of any reliance on external stimuli—especially visual stimuli—for understanding the world that Jesus speaks about. They are not, however, left without some clues. These clues derive from cultural memory, particularly, the memory of first-century Judaism that is imbued with the cultural memory of the Jewish Scriptures and their recitative contexts (e.g., the temple, the assembly, etc.). As such, throughout John we find abundant *echoes* drawn from the Jewish canon of Scripture and their imagery in the form of scriptural titles (“Lamb of God,” “Son of God,” “king of Israel,” etc.), persons (“Elijah,” “the one who is to come,” “Jacob,” “Moses,” etc.), places, and so on. In fact, it is impossible to understand John without access to that same cultural memory. This cultural memory provides an important set of clues

textual information of an episodic nature” (Monteil and Huguet, *Social Context and Cognitive Performance*, 13).

32. Bradd Shore, *Culture in Mind: Cognition, Culture, and the Problem of Meaning* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

33. *Ibid.*, 40.

34. This insight will, as I note, have a dramatic if unforeseen impact on the applicability of Robbins's notion of rhetorolects.

for understanding a world that, in light of that same memory, cannot be pictured—namely, the world or realm of the invisible God.

Strikingly, though, and as I will note, counterfactually, those most skilled at knowing these clues (the Jewish scribes and priestly class) appear least able to make sense of them in light of the subsequent key to the clues in the person of Jesus. It is this tension that the author sets up as the rhetorical situation addressed by the gospel. To analyze this situation, SRI's notion of *rhetography* is very useful because it brings us from the level of images, both visualized and visualizable through memory, to the level of a narrative in which these images are employed argumentatively to make meaning.

THE MENTAL CONSTRUCTION OF STORYLINES AND THEIR RHETORICAL PURPOSES

This process of the creation of communicable images for rhetorical purposes by drawing on conventional memory is, I believe, what Robbins is pointing to when he speaks of *rhetography* as “picturing based on seeing places and spaces through social and cultural experiences.”³⁵ Such picturing takes place within “cultural frames” that “evoke storylines containing a sequence of pictures in the context of pictorial narration.”³⁶ The individual brain is not only able to navigate the social world that has shaped it but, because “the brain is a creativity machine, which obtains incomplete information from the outside world and completes it,” we also shape our world by communicating new ideas when we imagine new possibilities and also when we create “illusions and ambiguous figures that trick our brain into thinking that we see things that are not there.”³⁷

Robbins has helped to envision how this happens through rhetorical invention of storylines, the narrative connections within which visual imagery is employed rhetorically. With my encouragement, the field of

35. Vernon K. Robbins, “Conceptual Blending and Early Christian Imagination,” in *Explaining Christian Origins and Early Judaism: Contributions from Cognitive and Social Science*, ed. Petri Luomanen, Ilkka Pyysiäinen, and Risto Uro, *BibInt* 89 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 162.

36. *Ibid.*

37. Eric R. Kandel, “What the Brain Can Tell Us about Art,” *New York Times Sunday Review*, 12 April 2013, <http://tinyurl.com/SBL4819e>: “In this sense, a task of figurative painting is to convince the beholder that an illusion is true.”

conceptual blending has become crucial to developing Robbins's understanding of how visual imagery is used in storylines.³⁸ The mind works with "input spaces" or "mental spaces," "small conceptual packets constructed as we think and talk, for purposes of local understanding and action. They are very partial assemblies containing elements, structured by frames and cognitive models," all of which are easily able to be pictured.³⁹ The "linking" of two or more conceptual packets results in a new picture or "blend." The "links" that allow these conceptual packets or "input spaces" to be connected are "vital relations" to thought and communication.⁴⁰ They include such mental relations as "change," "identity," "time," "space," and so on. The new "blended space" that results from packets being vitally linked contains the framed elements of the input spaces that are brought together in such a way as to present to the mind something that had not to that point existed in the mind, or at least could not exist without the blending of the original input spaces.

Elaborate blending requires "compression" and "decompression," by which a blend becomes more visualizable by being brought to "human scale" or less visualizable by becoming more abstract (for example, "justice").⁴¹ Such a process results in "elaborate integration networks."⁴² This is the "stuff" of sophisticated human communication—that is, conceptual blends *and* conceptual packets containing many spaces and many mappings creating "elaborate integration networks constructed by means of overarching general principles."⁴³ The mind composes these elaborate networks into memorable narratives or "storylines," which themselves gain power through regular and consistent use and which, by their memorable quality, are able to conjure up automatically (as it were) still other memorable networks or storylines that have some relationship to them.⁴⁴

38. Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic Books, 2003); Robbins, "Conceptual Blending and Early Christian Imagination."

39. Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 102.

40. *Ibid.*, 92.

41. Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, "Compression and Global Insight," *Cognitive Linguistics* 11 (2000): 291.

42. Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, "Rethinking Metaphor," in *Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*, ed. Raymond W. Gibbs Jr. (New York: Cambridge University, 2008), 53–66, <http://tinyurl.com/SBL4819d>.

43. *Ibid.*

44. Steven Pinker notes how these narratives and the process of connectivity are

Some of these networks are profoundly conventional, while others are dramatically new. The reason for the variety is that humans are capable of creating networks of meaning in several different contexts for similar or different purposes. The result may be conventionally structured or dramatically reconfigured and novel cognitive networks with “conventional parts, conventionally-structured parts,” or with new perspectives and shapings of these parts.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the fact is that, while the frames are cognitive networks that “cultures build ... over long periods of time that get transmitted over generations,” the networks themselves are most often “novel” in some way, too.⁴⁶

Robbins’s rhetorolects are essentially conventional, elaborate integration networks that he believes are found throughout the Mediterranean world and that are used to address particular rhetorical situations and particular exigences as warranted.⁴⁷ Unfortunately, while we can presuppose a priori pristine examples of rhetorolects, as Robbins has done, we do not actually find such pristine examples in human discourse. What we do find are only elements of rhetorolects, which can themselves only be envisaged in outline form and which have some relatively consistent features.

As a result, I have found rhetorolects very difficult to work with. I can understand the value of them: they are similar to Aristotle’s three genres of rhetorical discourse (epideictic, deliberative, and forensic), and they do provide a heuristic that some scholars have found helpful when talking about texts.⁴⁸ For my part, though, I have found it more valuable to explore

key elements of neural networks (see *How the Mind Works*, 104–9). Such networks are necessary for human communication to happen without having to rewrite scripts each time, in the same way that memory is required so that one does not always have to recreate the world on the basis of external stimuli.

45. As we shall see, Fauconnier and Turner call these reconfigurations “novel mappings and compressions” (“Rethinking Metaphor,” 2).

46. Fauconnier and Turner add that the very “techniques for building particular networks are also transmitted” (*ibid.*, 53).

47. For Robbins, rhetorolects are cultural frames, alternatively understood as idealized cognitive models (ICMs), that cultures build and transmit over generations of time. He sees four kinds of structural principles within their rhetoric: (1) propositional structure; (2) image-schematic structure; (3) metaphoric structure; and (4) metaphoric mappings (*Invention: Volume 1*, 90–120, esp. 104–9).

48. For example, they appear to have been very helpful for the work of Fred Long, Roy Jeal, and B. J. Oropeza in their commentaries on Ephesians, Colossians, and 2 Corinthians; see Roy R. Jeal, *Exploring Philemon: Freedom, Brotherhood, and Partner-*

“topical fields” in identifying rhetorical cognitive networks. Following the example of the convention of “semantic fields” in linguistics, I consider “topical fields” to be conventional constellations of topoi, the essential building blocks of rhetorical discourse.⁴⁹ Their use suggests an array of conventionally structured cognitive blends in conventional, cultural contexts within local frames that have their structure, in part at least, because of these blends.⁵⁰ Emphasizing topical fields has the great virtue of allowing for any number of combinations of these conventional blends to take shape and also of allowing for a stronger empirical basis on which to identify rhetorical cognitive networks.⁵¹ If this approach has validity, then topical fields may provide our clues for rhetorical integration networks that will indeed have some recurring shape (similar to Robbins’s rhetorolects) but that will also have a shape that will be quite varied and will be formally content-dependent rather than having an a priori form. The notion of topical fields will help exegesis to avoid having to lock texts into a priori rhetorical discourse forms. It will also encourage and welcome the discovery of dramatically new integration networks as we explore unique, rhetorical reconfigurations of such fields.

Independently, I believe that the discussion of topical fields within the realm of conceptual blending also promises to help us move the discussion on metaphor forward. There is no doubt about the centrality of metaphor

ship in the New Society, RRA 2 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015); B. J. Oropeza, *Exploring Second Corinthians: Death and Life, Hardship and Rivalry*, RRA 3 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016); Fredrick J. Long, *Exploring Ephesians: Pauline Proclamation amidst Imperial Power*, RRA 5 (Atlanta: SBL Press, forthcoming).

49. An excellent example of this approach for Indo-European semantic fields can be found at <https://lrc.la.utexas.edu/lex/semantic>.

50. The phrase *topical fields* has been used for a similar purpose, though with an emphasis on topos as the dynamic rule governing rhetorical argumentation, by Sylvie Bruxelles, Oswald Ducrot, and Pierre-Yves Raccach, “Argumentation and the Lexical Topical Fields,” *Journal of Pragmatics* 24 (1995): 99–114.

51. I initially explored the differences between elements within regionally based rhetorical dialects such as Mediterranean and non-Mediterranean rhetorical practice (in the form of Asian rhetorical practice) and the implications of these differences for our understanding of rhetorolects in L. Gregory Bloomquist, “The Role of the Audience in the Determination of Argumentation: The Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles,” in *Rhetorical Argumentation in Biblical Texts*, ed. Anders Eriksson, Thomas H. Olbricht, and Walter Übelacker, ESEC 8 (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002), 157–73.

in human thinking.⁵² According to Ray Kurzweil, “A key aspect of creativity is the process of finding great metaphors—symbols that represent something else.... Finding a metaphor is the process of recognizing a pattern despite differences in detail and context—an activity we undertake trivially every moment of our lives.”⁵³

However, I also agree with Pilar Alonso, who argues that conceptual blending promises to move our understanding forward and beyond where conceptual metaphor thinking had left us—namely, understanding “metaphorical thinking as an inherent component of human cognition.”⁵⁴ The reason she can assert this is, as Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner themselves note: “We need to face squarely the far greater complexity of integrations that lie behind observable metaphorical conceptual systems, we need to take into account their cultural history, and we need to account explicitly for the emergent structures they produce, both over cultural time and over individual time.”⁵⁵ As Fauconnier and Turner note, “Double-scope integration, which typically exploits clashes, is the hallmark of cognitively modern human beings. And metaphor is one of its most powerful products, one that often drives key aspects of art, science, religion, and technology.”⁵⁶

Conceptual blending moves us beyond the realm of metaphor, in part at least because it accounts for the emergent structure that arises from the very “clashes” that are actually at the root of conceptual blending. For even more important than metaphor for explaining integration is the notion of “counterfactual thinking.”⁵⁷ *Counterfactuals* reflect the cognitive mechanism that provides humans with the ability to imagine things other than “as they are.”⁵⁸ They give humans the ability to “pretend, imitate, lie, fan-

52. Pilar Alonso, “The Conceptual Integration Network Model as a Paradigm for Analysis of Complex Narrative Discourse,” *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature* 37 (2004): 161–82, <http://tinyurl.com/SBL4819a>.

53. Kurzweil, *How to Create a Mind*, 113, 115. According to Kurzweil, the neocortex is a great metaphor machine.

54. Alonso, “The Conceptual Integration Network Model.”

55. Fauconnier and Turner, “Rethinking Metaphor.”

56. *Ibid.*

57. “Counterfactuality is forced incompatibility between spaces” (Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 230). Counterfactuals are at the very heart of human creativity because they are the crucial mechanism by which “advanced conceptual integration happens.”

58. According to Fauconnier and Turner, evolution provided humans with the

tasize, deceive, delude, consider alternatives, simulate, make models, and propose hypotheses.”⁵⁹ As such, they provide the very emphasis for blending itself and for blending as the basis of rhetoric.

Counterfactuals do not achieve this result in any causal way. A counterfactual is not a logical statement: “If I were to do this, then this would be the result.” There is instead an element of wonder: “Were I to do this, I wonder what would happen?” or “Were I to think this, I wonder what it would mean?”⁶⁰ Rather, counterfactuals allow for a full range of mechanisms of “important aspects of understanding, reason, judgment, and decision.”⁶¹ “Counterfactual scenarios are assembled mentally not by taking full representations of the world and making discrete, finite, known changes to deliver full possible worlds but by conceptual integration which can compose schematic blends that suit the conceptual purposes at hand.”⁶² In other words, counterfactuals are an essential part of the dynamics of the creation of storylines, too.

Conceptual blending, elaborate integration networks, topical fields, and counterfactuals are all significant features of how humans make meaning and communicate that meaning to others. I will show briefly how each of these is significant for helping us understand John’s world of meaning and his rhetoric. I will expand on this demonstration in my article devoted to this topic and found elsewhere in this volume. Before providing this brief presentation, however, I turn to one last methodological element: namely, the power of rhetorical imagery that, even when it is not seen or

ability to “run off-line cognitive simulations so that evolution did not have to undertake the tedious process of natural selection every time a choice was to be made” (ibid., 217).

59. Ibid.

60. As such, counterfactuals touch on an element of logical thinking that was the subject of reflection by Charles S. Peirce—namely, “abduction.” On attempts to introduce “abductive” thinking into SRI, see L. Gregory Bloomquist, “A Possible Direction for Providing Programmatic Correlation of Textures in Socio-rhetorical Analysis,” in *Rhetorical Criticism and the Bible*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Dennis L. Stamps, JSNT-Sup 195 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 61–96.

61. Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 219. Fauconnier and Turner here are objecting primarily to assertions such as those found in the work of Neal J. Roese and James M. Olson, *What Might Have Been: The Social Psychology of Counterfactual Thinking*, ed. Neal J. Roese (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 1995).

62. Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 218.

explicitly enunciated, has a determinative role in the blended network of meaning.

THE POWER OF RHETORICAL IMAGERY

While rhetoric is primarily about the explicit use of words, whether they are used *rhetologically* or *rhetographically*, we now know that visual imagery is so powerful that it may covertly bias our thinking.⁶³ In all likelihood, rhetors have used knowledge of this covert power in their discourse strategies, including how they display and draw on or how they do *not* display but may still draw on visual imagery.

Daniel Kahneman's presentation of human cognition in terms of "system 1" thinking and "system 2" thinking is a helpful entrance point to this discussion.⁶⁴ According to Kahneman, system 1 thinking is the primary human approach to life, used by an expert to make "judgements and decisions ... guided directly by feelings of liking and disliking, with little deliberation or reasoning," as well as by common people to come to immediate and often the right decisions in matters as banal as avoiding something while driving.⁶⁵ System 2 thinking is engaged when "neither an expert solution nor a heuristic answer comes to mind" and we are forced to switch "to a slower, more deliberate and effortful form of thinking."⁶⁶ System 1 thinking is quick thinking, intuitive thought that leads to rapid responses. We incline to this form of thinking, which will help us survive. As Steven Quartz from the California Institute of Technology has said: "Our brain is computing value at every fraction of a second. Everything that we look at, we form an implicit preference. Some of those make it into our awareness; some of them remain at the level of our unconscious, but ... what our brain is for, what our brain has evolved for, is to find what is of value in our environment."⁶⁷ When we cannot immediately discover a

63. Wilhelm H. Wuellner, "Reconceiving a Rhetoric of Religion: A Rhetorics of Power and the Power of the Sublime," in *Rhetorics and Hermeneutics: Essays in Honor of Wilhelm Wuellner*, ed. James Hester and J. David Hester, ESEC 9 (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 23–77.

64. Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2011).

65. *Ibid.*, 10–13.

66. *Ibid.*, 13.

67. Cited in David Brooks, "The End of Philosophy," *New York Times*, 7 April 2009, A29, <http://tinyurl.com/SBL4819b>.

response for a problem or a connection to an issue or conversation we face, we move to system 2 thinking: a slower, logical, analytical way of thinking that may not only provide answers to our need but may also reveal that we were wrong about some other conclusions that we had reached on the basis of system 1 thought.

There are two primary reasons why a system 1 kind of thinking dominates in humans. First, according to Kahneman, our evolutionary ancestors needed rapid responses to new situations. As a result, the human mind developed a progressively more evolved capacity to respond quickly to most situations, a response capacity that did not demand extensive cogitation. Second, Kahneman notes, system 2 thinking is indeed hard work. The kind of cognition that relies on critical analysis of assertions through logical assessment is laborious or “ego-depleting.”⁶⁸ Humans simply do not want to have to do one logical calculation after another, which is why system 2 thinking cannot be sustained for long periods of time. We thus default to system 1 until we meet the next insurmountable challenge, and so on.

From what we know thus far about how the brain works and how the mind makes sense of stimuli and memory, it is likely the case that human communication will most often employ rhetoric, that is, the use of imagery for argumentative purposes, precisely because of the mind’s reliance on system 1 thinking. After all, the display of imagery requires little logical calculation to convince someone when his/her own survival or well-being is at stake.⁶⁹ Thus, understanding system 1 and system 2 thinking may help explain the primacy of visual imagery in rhetorical materials

68. Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, 41: Logical analysis is so time- and energy-consuming, the human body gets tired out and “is less willing or less able to exert self-control when the next challenge comes.”

69. Building on the same kind of insights as found in Kahneman’s studies, Brooks provided a helpful example: “Think of what happens when you put a new food into your mouth. You don’t have to decide if it’s disgusting. You just know. You don’t have to decide if a landscape is beautiful. You just know. Moral judgments are like that. They are rapid intuitive decisions and involve the emotion-processing parts of the brain. Most of us make snap moral judgments about what feels fair or not, or what feels good or not. We start doing this when we are babies, before we have language. And even as adults, we often can’t explain to ourselves why something feels wrong. In other words, reasoning comes later and is often guided by the emotions that preceded it. Or as Jonathan Haidt of the University of Virginia memorably wrote, “The emotions are, in fact, in charge of the temple of morality” (Brooks, “The End of Philosophy”). In terms

and the subordinated role of logical thinking. If so it is another confirmation of Robbins's initial intuition regarding the primacy of rhetography in rhetorical communication.

To this point, Kahneman's work can be seen to provide a helpful support to rhetography and is certainly not at odds with either the notion of the provenance of the minimal visual imagery that we have through visual stimuli (e.g., "I see a lion behind that bush") or the notion that the mind provides for a comprehensive refashioning of that imagery through complex blends (e.g., "What escape paths do I have available, or should I fight?"). But, how does Kahneman's work square with what we have said about memory? Interestingly, Kahneman addresses this point directly. He notes that human cognition is actually the work of two "selves" that are more or less coterminous with system 1 and system 2 thinking—namely, the experiencing self and the remembering self. The experiencing self is the self of immediate experience, dominated almost exclusively by system 1 thinking. In contrast, the self that remembers "is a construction of system 2," the system that works harder and takes more argument to be convinced.⁷⁰

Nevertheless, the overlap is not at all neat, as even Kahneman acknowledges.⁷¹ Though Kahneman does not resolve the issue, I do believe that for our purposes he has left us with some fruitful possibilities for understanding rhetography. Images created in the mind can be powerful enough to move our bodies into action immediately (e.g., a mob predisposed to riot that is shown the picture of a hated leader) or with some persuasion (e.g., when a nation is being urged to go to war for reasons that do not immediately impinge on them). In both cases, images are primary, but in the second case a fairly significant supplemental rhetography might be required, for example, to remind hearers of past experiences that are no longer immediate to them or to recall to them the glories of their forefathers (e.g., as is found in the various exempla in Heb 11) or a rhetology that explains why these past experiences matter (e.g., one notices in Heb 12

of Kahneman's work, we would say: "System 2 thinking comes later and is often guided by system 1 thinking that preceded it."

70. Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, 409.

71. *Ibid.*, 408. He notes: "The remembering self's neglect of duration, its exaggerated emphasis on peaks and ends, and its susceptibility to hindsight combine to yield distorted reflections of our actual experience." In this case, it is system 2 thinking that has led someone astray.

the intricate interweaving of rhetographical and rhetological language). In both cases, however, it is not so much real images or memories or a narrative that is presented to them but, rather, a constructed image or memory, a narrative, much like stained-glass through which one cannot look but by which one sees what the “church” wants one to see as one looks out. Such constructed images do not yield clear information about the world around us but, rather, a constructed cognition.

But there is also a dark side to this conclusion. As Kahneman has deftly shown, system 1 thinking actually biases us in ways of which we are not fully aware. As Kahneman learned from the work of Herbert Simon, people’s estimate of a situation and thus what to do in a situation is influenced often unwittingly by “anchors.”⁷² An anchor can, for example, unwittingly, even on the basis of apparently unrelated visual stimuli, sway what I presume to be my unbiased consideration of a subject and lead me to draw a conclusion or to assess a situation based not on the evidence but on the way in which the anchor itself has unwittingly influenced my thinking conclusion.⁷³

While anchoring has been empirically demonstrated by Kahneman and others, such a notion is not new to rhetoric. In a courtroom setting, a lawyer’s strategy for presenting her client in the most favorable light possible will almost assuredly include dressing him in his best suit and ensuring that his or her hair is artfully presented in a culturally “normal” way. This fashion statement will have nothing to do with the charges against the man or woman, but it can easily have a positive effect on a jury that might otherwise have been predisposed against the defendant based on the charges against him or her.

Once one’s perspective on a situation is successfully anchored, that anchoring can be maintained by means of confirmation biases. Confirmation biases reanchor the preexisting anchor in someone’s mind. Such biases may be self-generated—as is the case in a person who thinks he is no good at anything but continually engaging in activities that are beyond his abilities—or used by others to add image to image or proof to proof

72. Herbert A. Simon, *Models of Man, Social and Rational: Mathematical Essays on Rational Human Behavior in a Social Setting*, Continuity in Administrative Science (New York: Wiley, 1957).

73. Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, 127. Kahneman has shown how powerful an anchor can be even—or especially—when it has no clearly direct bearing on the subject that it eventually anchors (119–28).

to provide an inescapable conclusion, *not* necessarily on the basis of the evidence but on the basis of the anchor.⁷⁴ For example, in the courtroom setting, the defense attorney might seek to anchor her client's already positive reception by the jury—anchored by his clean-shaven, well-dressed appearance—with regular references to his behavior, his religious spirit, his family connections, and so on.⁷⁵

Analyses of anchors and confirmation biases are important for illuminating tacit clues in rhetorical discourse, clues that would otherwise be overlooked but that, once revealed, help us to see the rhetorical “frame” within which a rhetorical address operates, a frame that helps to make the conclusion to be drawn by an audience ineluctable. Anchors undergird and nourish simplifying and convincing frames suitable to first level thinking, smoothing the way for the rhetor, who is then able to present a less complex, more accessible, and appealing version of what might otherwise be a complex or contentious address.⁷⁶ The rhetorical use of imagery—that is, rhetography—is crucial in this process, for, while “human beings have only a weak ability to process logic, [they have] a very deep core capability of recognizing patterns” and a predisposition to go with

74. Excellent examples of the use of “confirmation bias” can be found in careful analyses of the O. J. Simpson murder trial. See, for example, Devon W. Carbado, “The Construction of O. J. Simpson as a Racial Victim,” *Harvard Civil Rights – Civil Liberties Law Review* 32 (1997): 49–103.

75. Thus, dressing a defendant in his best garb for a court appearance almost assuredly has nothing to do with the person or his character or the sense of propriety in front of the judge; however, it can easily have a positive effect on a jury that might otherwise have been predisposed against the defendant based on the charges against him. The “confirming bias” would supplement this initial, unwitting, positive assessment, without having much to do with a logical assessment of the charges against him.

76. *Framing* is a crucial notion for rhetography and builds on “the metaphor of a cropping frame around a picture. Thus, the elements within the frame are emphasized upon, while the border highlights and holds together certain aspects of reality.... In this way, a frame ‘simplifies and condenses the world out there’” (Aurora Iorgoveanu and Nicoleta Corbu, “No Consensus on Framing? Towards an Integrative Approach to Define Frames Both as Text and Visuals,” *Romanian Journal of Communication and Public Relations* 14.3 [2012]: 92, citing Viorela Dan and Øyvind Ihlen, “Towards the Empirical Assessment of Complex Frames: A Method for Combining Analysis of Verbal and Visual Elements,” [paper presented at the 61st Annual Conference of the International Communication Association, Boston, MA, 2011], 4; and quoting David A. Snow and Robert D. Benford, “Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization,” *International Social Movement Research* 1 [1988]: 197).

their “gut-feeling.”⁷⁷ Additionally, because of that predisposition to system 1 thinking, the patterns they choose to recognize and their gut-feelings usually remain unanalyzed.

WHAT THE METHODOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS POINT TO IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Analysis of the Gospel of John suggests that there is a “rhetorical situation” that occasions the gospel.⁷⁸ The exigence in John’s Gospel, namely, the situation that can only be addressed rhetorically, is the situation of a “world” that must be reconfigured from its present “form of life” to one in which the “world’s” inhabitants recognize (“believe in”) the one whose true home is localized at the Father’s breast (cf. 1:18), which is where true life is to be found for all (see John 17, *passim*).⁷⁹ The narrative drama found in the Gospel of John plays out within the context of this highly elaborate cognitive network. Furthermore, within this network the narrative character of the Johannine Jesus is squared off against his narrative antagonists—“his own”—in the context of what has become their home, the Jerusalem temple.⁸⁰ Other narrative characters (for example, the followers of Jesus, the Samaritan woman, Mary, Martha and Lazarus, and so on) flesh out the

77. Kurzweil, *How to Create a Mind*, 38.

78. The term *rhetorical situation* is taken from the seminal article by Lloyd F. Bitzer, “The Rhetorical Situation,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 1 (1968): 1–14. In that article, Bitzer indicates clearly that he wants to address “the context in which speakers or writers create rhetorical discourse.” The “rhetorical situation,” Bitzer notes, must have a rhetorical “exigence,” that is, a situation that can only be resolved rhetorically. In this essay, as in my commentary, I am dealing with the Gospel of John as a unity of chs. 1–20, with ch. 21 as an epilogue. I recognize that it is possible to identify strata and even separate “books” within John 1–20.

79. That this is the exigence of the Gospel of John understood as John 1–20 is clear from the last verses of the book, 20:30–31. The phrase “form of life” is associated with the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein. On the phrase, see L. Gregory Bloomquist, “The Possibility of Biblical Studies in a Post-Wittgensteinian World,” paper presented at the round-table discussion “Theology after Wittgenstein” in honor of Professor Fergus Kerr’s presence at Saint Paul University, 3 November 2005; as well as now Lynne Rudder Baker, “III. On the Very Idea of a Form of Life,” *Inquiry* 27 (2008): 277–89.

80. Of course, in John 2 it is clear that this home has been usurped, since it should be the Father’s home. It is not because it has been made a place of human commercial transaction.

meaning of what the members of the household of God—among whom we find the “offspring of God” (John 1:12–13)—look like: that is, how they are to be visualized.⁸¹

In this rhetorical situation, the temple is the visual image for the rhetorical exigence. It functions as the visual representation and antitype to the locus of the Father’s breast, whence traditionally both his heartbeat and his speech (located canonically in the temple in the holy of holies) but which has now been co-opted. Jesus’s words and actions consist in showing that the temple personnel and the temple’s adherents—“crowds,” “people,” “Jews,” theoretically all of Israel but potentially also the whole “world”—are actually in a framework of death rather than of life and that only by breaking free through Jesus will they find life, a new creation existence in the bosom of the Father. Textually, it is true that John begins with the Word, but rhetorically the audience is anchored in and to the temple, which provides the rhetorical frame within which the drama of the Word will be understood.⁸² Strikingly, the temple then is both *frame* as context for rhetorical meaning of the drama and *exigence* as that from which the audience must be set free rhetorically in order to be free.

As the visual representation of the Father’s “house” (2:16), the temple functions at the level of human-space through those who are most closely associated with it, specifically the priests and scribes. They should necessarily be those whose actions give shape and form to the household of the Father as the Father’s closest children; however, in the gospel they are viewed in ways that suggest something far less than “children” of the Father and actually are depicted in a more sinister way as “hired hands” (10:12) or worse as “thieves and brigands” (10:1, 8) who have invaded the house and now occupy it, a position not that different from the way that leaders of the Jewish community are viewed in some Synoptic passages (e.g., Matt 21:33–46 concerning the senior priests and the Pharisees).

81. A link between the new household and the old one imaged by the temple may be found in some of these other narrative characters. For example, the suggestion that the narrative character Lazarus was drawn from the historical personage Eleazar, one of the last Sadducean high priests before the Roman appointment of priests—a suggestion made in part in light of this priest’s having two sisters, one named Mary and one named Martha—may provide a link between the temple authorities and Jesus’s followers.

82. In light of Robbins’s notion of rhetorolects, see my suggestions for follow-up study in the conclusion to this essay.

The eponymous Judahite (Judas) enters their sphere, then their employ, and is himself branded a thief (12:4–6). Neutrally, they are best viewed as inquisitive, as for example, when they appeal to John the Witnesser concerning his mission (1:19–28) or to Jesus himself (3:1–2); this inquisition, however, which may appear neutral at the very start, quickly escalates in John to a formal trial and a defense by Jesus (John 5) and ultimately to an inquisition that leads to his death (John 18).⁸³ Those who are within the sway of the temple and its actors are depicted as those who walk in darkness, even in the fullness of festal light during the Feast of Tabernacles, *the* festival of light.

All of these actors—both personnel and adherents of the temple, witting or not, humans all and thus clearly born once—seem best understood in John as yet unborn, at best conceived or firstborn, but in need of a full birth or second birth in order to be fully born (3:3, 5). It is for this reason that they are in darkness (3:19–21), the darkness of a womb that confines them and within which they find themselves both alive in some form and for a time but also trapped (8:33), for after all, it is a womb! Only once they are born a second time (John 3) will they be free (8:32) and will they live as members of the family of God (3:3, 5) rather than as “his own” pseudo family, rejecting him and his Father.

Because of the topical fields at play in the gospel, we can propose this conceptual metaphor or, perhaps better, an elaborate network blend of awaiting birth within a womb in order to be born into a new family, as being a significant component of the elaborate integration network with which John works. The topical fields are evidenced through repetitively significant and prominent lexica having to do with “birth” (including the cultural context of “marriage” as the context for “birth,” which is the rationale behind the inclusion of the stories found in 2:1–12 and 4:1–42) and its cognate field “family” (especially “father” and “son” and the vital relations that are employed as lexical indications of how the two are united, but also “house” and a special kind of household, namely, “kingdom”), as well as keys to what we understand to be essentials of full human existence—namely, sense perception (especially “seeing,” “hearing,” “light,” and their absences “darkness,” “night,” etc.) and material sustenance (especially “water” and “bread”). The presence of these topical fields for human

83. Other temple personnel only ever go as far as to question the legal proceedings (7:50–51), never as far as belief.

procreation, generation, nurture, and growth, as well as the rhetographical and rhetological employment of the *topoi* themselves, often in ironic contexts—for example, birth but also other than human birth, food but also other than apparent food, father but also other than a human father, *et cetera*—suggest a “compression” being used to create a counterfactual human scale scenario for a complex cognitive metaphor of birth that will ultimately lead to a new kind of family life and to a new and more-true existence over against a merely human family, life, and existence.

Herein lies the counterfactual rhetorical strategy in the gospel. The topical fields are being integrated to present the world or *κόσμος*—or “a world”—as a place not so much of life but as a place of a kind of life awaiting true life, like a womb in which people are alive but not yet born, only waiting *to be born*. Yet, in our story, and given that these are not fetuses but full-grown humans, it seems that counterfactually what is being presented is some humans waiting to be born a second time (“again”), this time as an “offspring of God” (1:12–13). They seem to be told that once they are second-born (and this time, in a new way, namely, “from above”) they will find themselves in “the kingdom of God” (3:3, 5), a phrase in John’s Gospel that perhaps should best be translated as “the royal household or family of God.” Presently, in this womb, these humans can “see,” but they do so only in a very limited way, if at all; once second-born, they will be able to see (particularly, to see the “family” into which they have been born, 3:3). Likewise, presently they desire and feed on material realities such as bread and water (John 4, 6); however, once twice-born, they, like Jesus (4:32), will “feed” only on the Word that comes from the Father and will find that this will sustain them (the Word is the living bread that gives life, 6:63). They will come to this second-birth through faith (1:12), believing in the words that they have heard from one who has joined them in the “fleshly” womb (1:14) and with whom they now “abide” as they listen to him and learn from him. In the end, it is the death/birth of this one Jesus, evidenced as water and blood gush forth from him (19:34), that will mark the opening of the birth canal, through which those who believe him can follow the Word.⁸⁴

Strikingly, they believe by hearing, not by seeing. Seeing as the reception of visual stimuli from the surrounding world is cautioned against by Jesus, who tells them not to trust in appearances (7:24). Jesus does not

84. The process is alluded to in the explicit birth imagery found in 16:19–21.

appear to be saying that seeing is wrong in and of itself. In fact, it is through sensory perception that there are “witnesses” (so John 5) and “signs” as clues that will lead them to belief. Still, belief arises from that which cannot be seen with the human eye or heard with human ear. For this reason, even belief through “signs” is cautioned against (4:48): those who “see and believe” (2:22–25) are not commended in this gospel; those who remember, do truth, hear—and believe without seeing—are commended.

The reason for this caution against reliance on visual stimuli is that the gospel also insists on the invisibility, even inaccessibility of the truth. The gospel opens in a way that allows no real visual imagery of what it is talking about (1:1–4), nothing that the firstborn are capable of seeing with the eyes. Only the canonical Jewish Scriptures that are found in the cultural memory of the author and, one presumes, of his intended audience provide intelligibility in these opening verses, doing so in a way that both reveals and hides. These are the same Scriptures to which the Fourth Gospel will regularly return in identifying who the one is who has joined the firstborn in the womb and who bears witness to this realm. In fact, this significant but only allusive oral-scribal intertexture in the Fourth Gospel, together with the testimony of a man named John and the words of this firstborn-in-form Jesus, are the primary sources by which belief (faith) can be grounded (5:31–47). Everything else is to some extent suspect.

Even more bewildering, however, is the fact that the specialists in this canonical Jewish literature, those who have inquired directly of John and who regularly try Jesus, are the ones whom the gospel asserts are most blind. This leads us to the question: but, what is this womb—this half-world—in which they find themselves? The answer seems to be twofold: It is both a world in which visual appearances dominate the landscape and are more compelling to people than anything that they might know. *And* it is paradigmatically the temple—a place in which God uniquely might have been known, but because God can no longer be known there is now worse than the darkness of the world around it—because, deprived of the sole source of light (that is, the temple), the world itself has become darker. The temple was to be a place of divine illumination (John 7–8), a place in which the invisible God would be heard and known, and a reflection of his brilliance seen. But it has become darkened and has accordingly rendered the world completely dark. But, how has this darkening happened?

I believe that the author has anchored this drama socioculturally in the historical setting that would likely be known to his audience, namely, the occupation of the temple by the Roman governor of Syria’s appoint-

ment of Annas as high priest in 6 CE and whose family dynasty ruled the temple through most of the Roman period, including through the period during which his son-in-law Caiaphas was high priest (18–36 CE). While previous high priesthoods were controversial, that of Annas—whose dynasty was vituperated even by contemporaries as “whisperers” (i.e., those engaged in malicious and envious behavior)—effectively spelled the end of the postexilic hopes for the temple as the font of law and justice (covenant and order) of which the chief priest was to be guarantor (cf. Zech 3:7), the end of the purity of the high priest and the ability to remove all iniquity (cf. Zech 3:3), and the end of the prosperity and fecundity resulting from the deity’s presence in the temple (cf. especially Zech 2:8–9; 8:9–13; and Hag 2:10–19).

It is this counterfactual reality concerning the darkness that pervades the supposedly light-bearing temple and that now blinds its adherents through its profound darkness which leads the gospel to its most profound rhetorical irony. For while that rhetorical irony is employed throughout the gospel, it reaches its height (or its nadir?) in the final chapter. There, in a dramatic inversion of the visual imagery that temple personnel, including especially scribes, would have known as the visual imagery at the core of the temple in the holy of holies, the rhetorical reader sees through the eyes of a woman, Mary of Magdala, a slab of stone within the tomb. But, what makes that slab significant in a tomb is that it mirrors a similar stone that lies in the holy of holies. Through the eyes of this woman Mary, not through the eyes of a priest who is permitted to enter the holy of holies, the reader of John sees a slab guarded by two angelic figures, one at each end. These figures are, however, not carved cherubim standing watch over the now empty spot where the ark that was to hold the Torah given through Moses (cf. 1:17) once lay, a spot that marked the innermost part of the temple, the *debir* (דְּבִיר, 1 Kgs 8:1–12), where the invisible God was understood to take his seat and speak to Moses and his successors by his word.⁸⁵ No, these are now living, holy beings, who stand watch over another empty

85. God had commanded the making of an ark (Exod 25:8–16) that would hold the stone tablets of the law and would be placed in the innermost part of the tent, hidden by a veil. Only Aaron or his successor could enter the innermost part of the tent, and he was to do so daily to offer incense and once a year on the Day of Atonement with a blood offering (Exod 30:7–10). The Jewish canonical record suggests that, when the tabernacle was dedicated, God spoke to Moses from between the cherubim (Num 7:89).

spot, where the Word-become-flesh lay. Mary gives no hint of recognition of this sight, but the reader, the rhetorical audience of John, primed (or anchored) with the temple throughout the chapters of the narrative, *does* see: the slab on which the lifeless, spirit-less body of Jesus had lain is the most profound counterfactual echo imaginable of the holy of holies, the place where the Word of God was also once “at home.” Now, however, the reader knows that that former place is no longer the Word’s true home any more than this tomb is. And so, even as the ark had been taken from the holy of holies by gentiles, the body of Jesus, which had been handed over to gentiles by the high priests and whose life had been taken by them, is now found to have fulfilled his word that he was not taken by them nor has he been taken from the tomb but, rather, he has raised himself up (having been given authority to lay his body down in death and to take it back again in life [2:19]). The birthing out of the womb and thus the beginning of true, second-creation life has begun.

CONCLUSIONS

The above methodological discussion is a first step in attempting to ground and apply rhetoric to the study of the Gospel of John. I have sought to show how the creation and use of this rhetoric fits well within the broader conversations that are now taking place between neuroscience and cognitive psychology, conversations that have also begun to draw in the humanities.⁸⁶ While the discussion lags in the field of rhetoric, and even more so biblical studies, it is coming, even if slowly.⁸⁷ Hopefully, presentations such as this one may hasten these discussions along since, if I have been even partially successful, much now needs to be done.

First, I have said little about rhetoracts as a part of this discussion; however, I have begun to explore elsewhere the value of rhetoracts for

86. This discussion is already well under way in the arts. See among other recent entries into this field the work of Eric R. Kandel, *The Age of Insight: The Quest to Understand the Unconscious in Art, Mind, and Brain: From Vienna 1900 to the Present* (New York: Random House, 2012); Kandel, “What the Brain Can Tell Us”; G. Gabrielle Starr, *Feeling Beauty: The Neuroscience of Aesthetic Experience* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013).

87. Note, for example, the guild’s tepid reception to Robbins’s not-so-radical proposals regarding rhetoric as foundational to rhetorical discourse.

our understanding of the Gospel of John.⁸⁸ I have noted that the Gospel of John “gives extensive evidence of a reconfiguration of priestly discourse,”⁸⁹ but as I noted there and as I suggest here, this evidence is not easily discernible, precisely because it is part of the “anchoring” of the network of imagery in the gospel. True, it is part of the explicit lexica used, but the question is *how* those lexica and that imagery are used that matters for a rhetorical interpretation of John, at least insofar as a better understanding of rhetography is concerned.

Thus, not surprisingly, commentators from very early on in the Christian tradition found in John extensive depiction of the passion of Jesus as sacrifice and as priest throughout the gospel, not just at the end, as in the Synoptic traditions. This suggests a “profound reconfiguration” of a discourse form that we might call “priestly,” including both an implicit “true” priesthood and a “sinister and oppressive” explicit, and visualizable present priesthood.⁹⁰ While this might suggest a “priestly” reality that exists before time itself (a category that fits Robbins’s notion of *precreation discourse*) or even a kind of cosmic priesthood (a category that would fit within Robbins’s understanding of *apocalyptic discourse*), my analysis suggests that *priestly discourse* here coheres much more with the kind of *prophetic discourse* that would not be alien to the Synoptic tradition even though it would be presented very differently. For example, in John there is no need for the temple to be destroyed, something that seems likely in Synoptic accounts (cf. Mark 13 and parallels). Johannine rhetoric might imply that the temple still was standing when John wrote but that John’s rhetorical presentation shows how its significance for the children of God is actually of less significance than the empty tomb. Or it could mean that the temple had been destroyed, with John’s Gospel providing a tacit explanation for why it would have been destroyed and of how little importance its passing is. And there are other possibilities. Whatever the case, though, what we do find in John textually is a rhetorically constructed mental image of the temple’s emptiness, an emptiness that is eloquently and paradoxically displayed in the empty tomb: in both the temple and the tomb where the

88. L. Gregory Bloomquist, “Rhetorical Discourses in Gospel of John and Acts of John: A Response,” in *Jesus and Mary Reimagined in Early Christian Literature*, ed. Vernon K. Robbins and Jonathan M. Potter, WGRWSup 6 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 291–312.

89. *Ibid.*, 296.

90. *Ibid.*, 297.

Word had once found his abode. But now the Word has been freed from both and is to free those who still remain within the temple because he is free from the tomb, an image that is visualized in human scope thanks to cultural memory. The topical fields suggest a violent birthing from the temple, even as Jesus's death was violent, but not a destruction of the womb, only its being rendered used (in order to give full birth to those only firstborn) but now, in light of the womb/tomb's evident emptiness, no longer required. It would be hard to imagine a more different eschatological presentation and hope from that which we find in the Synoptics.

Second, I have not yet engaged *ideological texture* fully in this presentation. Have I found meaning in John, or have I used John to find meaning in my own theological, mental reflection? If, as I suspect, it is the former, it would be helpful to explore more fully to what extent there is something like a conceptual metaphor, or an elaborate network framing that picks up on some sort of anthropological reflection on those in the sway of the temple being like unborn children in a womb. Yes, there is some evidence that notions similar to this were already well grounded in antiquity.⁹¹ Yes, explorations of ancient medical understandings of the fetus might help to clarify how widespread such notions and reflection on them might be.⁹² True, there is a long discussion of the place of knowledge in the unborn child, arising in those intellectual spheres that were influenced by Platonism, Middle Platonism, and Neoplatonism, including the early church and its discussion of, among other things, the debate over creationism and traducianism.⁹³

But, it is also possible that my interpretation of John is my rendering of imagery in my brain regarding my own prenatal experiences. To what extent is my interpretation of John a reflection of my own cerebral memory processes finding meaning in this text? Or perhaps I have in fact discovered an elaborate integration network in John, *and* that network has already embedded itself deeply in my own Christian, theological mind

91. The question of the relationship between Plato's allegory of the cave in *Resp.* 7 and the womb has been noted by feminist scholar Luce Irigaray. See Alice Adams, "Out of the Womb: The Future of the Uterine Metaphor," *Feminist Studies* 19 (1993): 269–89.

92. Enzo Nardi, *Procurato aborto nel mondo greco romano* (Milan: Giuffrè, 1971).

93. On this debate, see Dennis J. Billy, "Traducianism as a Theological Model in the Problem of Ensoulment," *ITQ* 55 (1989): 18–38.

through the centuries-long reflection on the same texts by others, including Augustine.

These and many, many other questions are now, it seems to me, possible and even necessary. If one can find such fruits in this world of darkness-poised-for-light, how many more will we find in other texts where visual imagery abounds? On the other hand, perhaps the darkness-poised-for-light is indeed the best place to look for those mental configurations and networks in which the blind see best and the deaf hear the voice that Moses heard when God revealed to him God's very name and by means of God's very own voice and Word.

EYES WIDE OPEN, SEEING NOTHING:
THE CHALLENGE OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN'S
NONVISUALIZABLE TEXTURE FOR READINGS
USING VISUAL TEXTURE

L. Gregory Bloomquist

INTRODUCTION

I would like you to visualize God. If you are able to do so, your visualization of God is probably drawn from images that you have seen of God. These images themselves are drawn from various sources: stained glass windows, statuary, children's Bibles, shrines, stories that you have heard. You may imagine a patriarchal-style God with long beard, a multiarmed God fighting with a sword in each of many hands, a triangle with an eye, and so on. The task I assigned you is probably especially hard if you are Jewish or Muslim, but it is not impossible. You might envision a fire or an opening in the clouds. Or, you might be able to visualize the name of God written in calligraphic letters. But the aniconism of both religions probably leaves you unable to undertake the task.

But, how about this, a test not subject to the aniconism of any Abrahamic religion? I would like you to visualize life. Not a particular form of life, like a lily, or a monkey, or your friend sitting next to you. I want you to envision life itself. Can you do it? If you can, it is probably a rushed mixture of all sorts of specific and generic images all blended together.

Next, I would like you to visualize light. Again, not a particular form of light, like a light bulb, or the sun streaming through the window, nor even the source of light, like a campfire at night or the sun by day. I want you to envision light itself. Can you do it? If you can, it is perhaps a blind-

ing whiteness, which is what we see when “all the wavelengths of the visible light spectrum strike your eye at the same time.”¹

Finally, and most difficult of all, can you visualize reason? If so, what do you see? You might see a woman frowning, deep in thought. You might see in your mind what you imagine to be an fMRI scan, with the computerized depiction of increased oxygen flow in the prefrontal lobe. But these are all reflections in your mind of visualizations of humans engaged in a process that involves reason and much else. Can you visualize reason itself?

Or, if instead of trying to visualize reason, I asked you to visualize speech, what would you see? Not speaking. That would be relatively straightforward. You would picture a man’s or woman’s mouth in the process of uttering something, be it intelligible to you or not. Can you visualize speech itself? Unless you have the unusual ability that some people may have to see sound waves, my guess is that you would find this challenge as difficult as trying to visualize reason.

The point of these questions is that the opening verses of John’s Gospel—verses that many of us consider to be of such lofty poetic expression that they rank among the few passages in the New Testament that we consider worthy of being called great literature, verses that many Christians associate with the second greatest feast of the Christian year, Christmas, when these verses are read aloud around the world—set before listeners these very same tasks.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. (John 1:1–5)²

God, life, light, “Word” (which in Greek, means “reason” or “speech”). And note, one could have pushed this even further. Can you visualize “beginning,” that time before which something existed? How about “all things,” or “being,” or even “darkness”? Perhaps ironically, darkness is the one thing that you can visualize because when you close your eyes, you see nothing, not even light. It is the absence of everything that can be visualized, and,

1. “The Electromagnet and Visible Spectra,” The Physics Classroom, <http://tinyurl.com/p99hgcu>.

2. All biblical quotations are from the NRSV unless otherwise indicated.

strikingly, this we can visualize in some, paradoxical way. With this one exception, to which I will return, can anything of these opening few verses of John's Gospel be visualized?

What is the purpose of setting before you tasks that seem destined to fail? Surely, this is poor pedagogy. My reason is very simple. If Vernon K. Robbins is correct in his assertion that rhetorical address relies largely on the use of images that are set before hearers³ and that where one is "set up" for the scenario is at the beginning of a text, then the Gospel of John in its opening words presents its hearers with an impossible task and may be off to a failed start. An alternative is that Robbins's assertion is wrong. Another alternative is that something else is going on.

What makes these possibilities so awkward, as well, is that we are talking about a gospel in which "seeing" or "sight" is one of the main actions or themes of the entire document. There is in fact no other New Testament text in which the theme of "seeing" and "vision" are as central. No other gospel hinges on what the reader sees. As such, John's Gospel stands as an important test case for Robbins's assertion. It is a text that requires that we probe Robbins's assertion more fully, and it gives us an excellent, and in the end, a paradoxically satisfying opportunity to do so.

SOCIORHETORICAL INTERPRETATION AND RHETOGRAPHY

Sociorhetorical analysis or interpretation (SRI), as developed by Robbins, is itself a development of classical and modern rhetoric. Drawing on both, as well as the tools made available to us in social and cultural studies, SRI is a form of rhetorical analysis that seeks to understand the rhetorical discourse found in written texts as the by-product of the communication by actual people with bodies and minds living out their existence with others within their social, cultural, and ideological geography. This is why for years I have termed it, in contrast to several other forms of biblical exegesis, "full-bodied."⁴ According to Robbins, we get at this full-bodied

3. An assertion that is at odds with the claims of many specialists in textual materials, for whom arguments and concepts are what really sustain rhetorical address.

4. I used the expression in a presentation on SRI and Wittgenstein, a philosopher known for trying to get at the meaning of people's real speech. See L. Gregory Bloomquist, "The Possibility of Biblical Studies in a Post-Wittgensteinian World," presented at the round-table discussion "Theology after Wittgenstein" in honor of Professor Fergus Kerr's presence at Saint Paul University, 3 November 2005.

experience of human communication through an analysis of the varieties of strategies used in human communication. Such strategies include probes into three primary arenas of human communication.

First, there is the material that is internal to the speech or text and that can function perfectly well within the speech or text itself without drawing on any considerable understanding of the world around the text. For example, to understand and enjoy Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, one does not need a full course in Shakespeare, Shakespeare's England, or medieval Scottish history. To explore this arena that Robbins calls *inner texture*, there are several strategies that he has identified: analysis of *repetitive* and *progressive texture*, which reveals the ways in which words, phrases, and topics form patterns throughout a text; analysis of its *opening-middle-closing texture*, which provides the limits of a rhetorical unit, as well as the boundaries of the flow of that unit; analysis of the *narrational texture*, which deals with the patterns formed by the voices, actions, relationships, and so on of those in the text, for example, narrator and actors; analysis of the *sensory-aesthetic texture and pattern*, which presents the way that bodies, body zones, and motions—including both those external bodily actions (purposeful action) and the self-expressive and internal or emotion-fused actions of the mind, heart, bowels, and so forth—are presented in the text; and analysis of the *argumentative texture*, to which I will return.⁵

Nevertheless, and second, were one to have more than just the text of *Macbeth*—say, the background material regarding Shakespeare's world or the historical world of the characters and events in *Macbeth* itself—one could probably understand and enjoy other aspects of the text that would not otherwise yield themselves to a hearer or reader. This material, which is external to the text itself, is the second arena probed by SRI. Analysis of this material, for which I also use the term that Robbins uses, *intertexture* (though in a slightly different way), relies on analysis of the way in which elements outside the text intersect the text. For example, the social world of human phenomena and action are present in some measure in all texts. How? Possibly in the form of eating, or dwelling, or transportation, or

5. Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-rhetorical Interpretation* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 8–14, 19–21, 15–19, 29–36. Sensory-aesthetic texture is important, since attention to a character's action—purposeful, self-expressive, or emotion-fused—is to attend to the “stage directions,” witting or unwitting, that provide a reader or hearer with a guide to the positioning, direction, and look of the actors on the stage of the text.

governance, and so on. But, these actions are also couched in local form, in which one culture engages human action in ways that are similar to or different from another culture. In this category of local action, I include all the materials and interpretations of legends and texts found in one culture or another.

But, third and finally, with *Macbeth* as with all texts one eventually asks: So what? What makes *Macbeth* interesting, or work, or compelling? This “so what?” question clearly engages both the first and second arenas, but it also exists somewhat independently of both. After all, who has read or seen *Macbeth* and come away having enjoyed it but never having asked the question: “What was the point?” or has been unable to answer the question: “What is it really about?” Who has perhaps been pushed to read more about Shakespeare himself and/or his time but then is still unable to answer the question: “Why did Shakespeare write it?” The third arena SRI seeks to get at, if possible, is what Shakespeare intended but also and even more importantly the broader rhetorical question: What impact or force does this text have, whether aesthetically, socially, or otherwise, and why does it have this force whether Shakespeare intended it or not? This third arena, identified by Robbins as *ideological texture*, is manifest in the rhetorical goal that seeks to get an audience, real or fictive, to do or understand something.⁶ This is not “ideology” as found in “ideology critique,” in which someone or a class tries to get people to do things by reason of coercive power. Exploration of ideological texture, rather, seeks to probe the plausible ways in which a speech or a text seems to be attempting to move an audience, wittingly or unwittingly, in relation to plausible contexts in which it finds itself. This *rhetorical force* can often lead to an emergent discourse that creates a new, emergent cultural context for yet new discourse.

Woven throughout texts understood rhetorically is an aspect of *inner texture* that Robbins terms *argumentative texture*—that is, the way in which arguments are conveyed in the text. Following Aristotle, Robbins notes that argumentation usually occurs either in primarily deductive

6. Though I use the same phrase as Robbins, I use it differently. The reasons for my shift of language from Robbins's are, as I have suggested elsewhere, that *ideological texture* as found in Robbins's works is insufficiently rhetorical. See L. Gregory Bloomquist, “Paul's Inclusive Language: The Ideological Texture of Romans 1,” in *Fabrics of Discourse: Essays in Honor of Vernon K. Robbins*, ed. David B. Gowler, L. Gregory Bloomquist, and Duane F. Watson (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2003), 165–93.

(enthymematic) ways or in inductive (paradigmatic) ways through elaborations (e.g., elaborations that are thematic, narrative, etc.).⁷ Robbins has within the last ten years started to speak of these two forms of argumentation as *rhetology* and *rhetography*, respectively.⁸

There is, on the one hand, rhetology, which is the reasoning that a logical argument presents. Rhetology is essentially thinking that is based on the notion of the rhetorical enthymeme. While a complex and debated notion since the time of Aristotle, the enthymeme is actually a common feature of regular human communication. As Steven Pinker notes, languages are “designed for vocal communication between impatient, intelligent social beings. They achieve brevity by leaving out any information that the listener can mentally fill in from the context ... the statements in a knowledge system are not sentences in English but rather inscriptions in a richer language of thought, ‘mentalese.’”⁹ What Pinker calls “mentalese” is in fact normal human communication that is enthymematic in form.¹⁰

However, even more basic than mentalese is the underlying content of that mentalese, namely, the images about which and with which humans communicate in their fragmentary logic. Rhetography, according to Robbins, “refers to the features of a spoken or written communication that evoke a picture (graphic image) in the mind of a hearer or reader,” or as he later wrote, it refers to “the progressive, sensory-aesthetic, and/or argumentative texture of a text ... that invites a hearer/reader to create a

7. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 21–29.

8. While they derive from Aristotle’s original insights as the twofold nature of argumentation, rhetology and rhetography cannot simply be reduced to neologisms for Aristotle’s original categories: Vernon K. Robbins, “Rhetography: A New Way of Seeing the Familiar Text,” in *Words Well Spoken: George Kennedy’s Rhetoric of the New Testament*, ed. C. Clifton Black and Duane F. Watson (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008), 81–106.

9. Steven Pinker, *How the Mind Works* (New York: Norton, 1997), 70.

10. For example, the simple statement “Sure looks like rain” necessitates that *the explicit, stated rhetorical conclusion* “It’s going to rain” be supported by a *partially stated observation* (the equivalent of the minor premise in a logical syllogism), “It looks like it’s going to rain,” and also a *wholly tacit but crucial rule or major premise*, something like, “When there are clouds of the kind that there are right now in the position that they are in in the sky, rain generally follows.” Such statements, Pinker rightly notes, are the primary phrases used in normal discourse outside of sophisticated philosophical and scientific papers. For a discussion of this point, see the fuller presentation in the methodology presentation that accompanies this essay.

graphic image or picture in the mind that implies a certain kind of truth and/or reality.”¹¹

As we shall see below, SRI's interest in rhetography has arisen in no small part due to understanding how our minds work and how those same minds, as embodied, communicate to others, primarily through pictures. However, my use of the word *rhetography* will, as Robbins does in his glossary of SRI terms, stress the rhetorical use of these pictures.¹² Rhetography has to do with the employment of visual texture to create images in audience members' minds for plausible, particular ends. Consistent with Robbins's use, I will be looking at rhetography as the argumentative use of visual texture or the pictures that arguments use and “the picture an argument evokes.”¹³ As such, I will use rhetography primarily to discuss plausible attempts to get others' minds to see something in particular ways and thus to configure or reconfigure pictures in an audience members' mind. For rhetography depends on visual texture and images that are culturally plausible. These pictures “emerge ... in embodied cognition through interaction with specifically located contexts that provide picturing based on seeing places and spaces through social and cultural experiences.”¹⁴ Thus, “a speaker or writer composes, intentionally or unintentionally, a context of communication through statements or signs that conjure visual images in the mind which, in turn, evoke ‘familiar’ contexts that provide meaning for a hearer or reader.” Furthermore, visual texture and images are most often (though not always) further contextualized in “pictorial narration,” that is, in “story-lines containing a sequence of pictures”¹⁵—for example, a gospel, or in this case, specifically the Gospel according to John.

11. Robbins, “Rhetography”; Vernon K. Robbins, *The Invention of Christian Discourse: Volume 1*, RRA 1 (Dorset, UK: Deo, 2009), xxvii.

12. See the glossary in *ibid.*, xxi–xxx.

13. *Ibid.*, 17. In the case of our weather statement, the rich imagery and texture of two farmers, sitting on a Midwestern street bench, looking up at a blue but clouding sky, with the wind picking up just enough to cause them to stay in place and not run for shelter ... is the stuff of rhetography, though it is not itself rhetography at the point of mere description of the scene, *pace* some interpretations of rhetography.

14. Vernon K. Robbins, “Conceptual Blending and Early Christian Imagination,” in *Explaining Christian Origins and Early Judaism: Contributions from Cognitive and Social Science*, ed. Petri Luomanen, Ilkka Pyysiäinen, and Risto Uro, *BibInt* 89 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 162.

15. *Ibid.*

GROUNDING RHETOGRAPHY

Before approaching the Gospel of John, however, I believe we must provide some justification rather than just asserting the significance of rhetography, given the sea-change in textual studies that Robbins's assertion concerning the centrality of rhetography portends. After all, most recent biblical study, including rhetorical study of Scripture, has tended to focus on what Robbins is calling *rhetology*, not what he is calling *rhetography*. I address the methodological foundations for rhetography in a separate essay contained in this volume; accordingly, here I will limit myself to a summary of the major outlines of those foundations.¹⁶

The Physiological Process of Visualization

Let us start by asking a very simple question: Whence do we have images in the mind? The obvious first answer is from visual perception. In fact, "vision is the main way we collect information from the world."¹⁷ Visual perception gives us some raw data that is ultimately configured by the brain for our use. However, these raw data are quite minimal in terms of mental processes. Our brain does the work, a maximal amount of work on minimal data given to it. Some years ago, Benjamin Whorf had already noted that "the world is presented in a kaleidoscope flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds."¹⁸ Recently, Ray Kurzweil restated this assertion in his own winsome way: "We ... essentially hallucinate the world from cortical memories that interpret a series of movies with very low data rates that arrive in [approximately ten to twelve] parallel channels."¹⁹ In

16. I have also applied these same methodological principles, based on the same primary sources, recently in a more condensed form in L. Gregory Bloomquist, "Visualizing Philippians: Ancient Rhetorical Practice Meets Cognitive Science through Sociorhetorical Interpretation," in *Paul and Ancient Rhetoric: Theory and Practice in the Hellenistic Context*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Bryan R. Dyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 265–84.

17. Benjamin K. Bergen, *Louder Than Words: The New Science of How the Mind Makes Meaning* (New York: Basic Books, 2012), 49.

18. Benjamin Lee Whorf, *Language, Thought, and Reality*, ed. John B. Carroll, foreword by Stuart Chase (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1973). Whorf's (original, 1956) work is cited by Bergen, *Louder Than Words*, 188.

19. Ray Kurzweil, *How to Create a Mind: The Secret of Human Thought Revealed* (New York: Viking, 2012), 94. Quoting from the work of Botond Roska and Frank

other words, yes, our visual perceptions provide us with fundamental but minimal data; however, it is our mind that constructs what we see.²⁰

Images and Memory

Furthermore, not all images in the mind come from direct or immediate visual stimuli. For example, some images are already there, stored in the memory early. This seems obvious since brain activity does not simply cease with the absence of an external stimulus.²¹ To configure a picture, then, we do not need constant visual inputs, but we do need memory recall, or as Pinker asserts, picturing necessarily draws on memory recall, because, as Pinker notes, “people cannot reconstruct an image of an entire visual scene” but “only the surfaces visible from one vantage point, distorted by perspective.”²² For this reason, he concludes that “visual thinking is often driven more strongly by the conceptual knowledge we use to organize our images than by the contents of the images themselves,” or put simply, images are “slaves to the organization of memory.”²³ Again, this seems obvious since, “without the binding force of memory, experience would be splintered into as many fragments as there are moments in life.”²⁴ But the importance of this assertion for us is that it also means that it is memory that will be largely responsible for enabling the construc-

Werblin, Kurzweil goes on to note: “Even though we think we see the world so fully, what we are receiving is really just hints, edges in space and time.... These 12 pictures of the world constitute all the information we will ever have about what’s out there, and from these 12 pictures, which are so sparse, we reconstruct the richness of the visual world” (Kurzweil, *How to Create a Mind*, 95, citing Botond Roska and Frank Werblin, “Vertical Interactions across Ten Parallel, Stacked Representations in the Mammalian Retina,” *Nature* 410 [2001]: 583–87).

20. Evidence of the mind constructing what we see comes from the fact that even if we do not see something, our mind may be able to construct it for purposes of cognition. I do not, for example, need to see a man to visualize a man in my mind; hearing the word suffices. Thus, to finish the quotation from Whorf cited above: “The world is presented in a kaleidoscope flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds—and this means largely by the linguistic system of our minds.”

21. Bergen, *Louder Than Words*, 35.

22. Pinker, *How the Mind Works*, 294–95, though see the entire chapter, “The Mind’s Eye” (211–95).

23. *Ibid.*, 295.

24. Eric R. Kandel, *In Search of Memory: The Emergence of a New Science of Mind* (New York: Norton, 2006), 10.

tion of continuous and consistent narratives that can be communicated, a construction that draws on both individual memory *and* a collective cultural memory.²⁵

How the Mind Works with Visual Imagery

But, how are these images from visual stimuli and from stored memory actually converted by the mind to make meaning? The literature on how the mind constructs meaning from the limited visual stimuli we receive and personal and corporate memory is as abundant as the hypotheses on the constructions. For the purposes of rhetography, however, a useful starting point for understanding how the mind does so with a view to communication can be found in the work of Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner.²⁶ According to Fauconnier and Turner, the mind works essentially with “input spaces” or “mental spaces”: “small conceptual packets constructed as we think and talk, for purposes of local understanding and action ... structured by frames and cognitive models.”²⁷

For example, we might speak of a male child as a “son.” That conceptual packet, “son,” occupies a mental space that is “framed” by “elements and relations [that] are organized as a package.”²⁸ Within that frame or package, we might find elements such as “human” (since we do not talk of animals as “sons”), “male” (since we do not talk of girls as “sons”), and so on. All of these elements are easily pictured.²⁹ The frame provides an opportunity for construction of meaning, since, for example, to talk about a “son,” people will almost inevitably bring that particular input space into relation with other spaces (e.g., mother, father, daughter, prodigal, etc.), which can also be easily pictured in light of the framing. Fauconnier and Turner identify these framing “links” that allow input spaces to be connected as “vital relations” since they are vital to thought

25. The power of construction via memory of this continuous, narrative flow almost certainly begins in the womb during the prenatal period (David B. Chamberlain, “The Fetal Senses: A Classical View,” <http://tinyurl.com/SBL4819n>).

26. For Fauconnier’s and Turner’s publications, see my “Methodology Underlying the Presentation of Visual Texture in the Gospel of John” in this volume.

27. Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind’s Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), 102.

28. Ibid.

29. As we shall see, “son” is already a blend. It is hard to imagine any unblended conceptual packets.

and communication.³⁰ They include “change” (a “son” may grow up), “identity” (though a “son” grows up, he may remain the same person), “time” (a “son” may grow or simply do things differently from one day to the next), “space” (a “son” may live in a house, or a cave, or a boat), and so forth. While the links themselves are not easily pictured, the result of a link in bringing two or more conceptual packets together can be via a “blend” of framed input spaces. It is this process of linking input spaces with one another by means of these vital relations and producing pictures in the mind that Fauconnier and Turner call “conceptual blending.” Such blending may become visualizable when it is brought to “human scale,” a process they call “compression,” though it could also become less visualizable, but not less coherent, when it becomes more abstract (e.g., imagine “justice”)—a process they call “decompression.”³¹ Compression and decompression are the means whereby elaborate blends are created and unpacked “over elaborate integration networks,” the stuff of complex human cognition.³²

Fauconnier and Turner’s work is valuable for SRI, a “full-bodied” rhetorical analysis, because they see that humans “live in the blend.”³³ Accordingly, they see conceptual blending to be a helpful way of getting at what daily cognition and communication are. Why this should be, they explain, is because of the need for daily living that is attuned to our environment, rather than daily living that is checked and measured at every step of the way. They suggest that “evolution has restricted consciousness to live in the blend for activities that are crucial to the species—perception, sensation, arousal, immediate reaction to basic environmental threats. In these cases, global and immediate insight is the

30. Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 92.

31. Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, “Compression and Global Insight,” *Cognitive Linguistics* 11 (2000): 291.

32. Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, “Rethinking Metaphor,” in *Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*, ed. Raymond W. Gibbs Jr. (New York: Cambridge University, 2008), 53–66, <http://tinyurl.com/SBL4819d>.

33. Fauconnier and Turner, “Compression and Global Insight,” 294. In the field of human thought and communication, conceptual blending promises to move our understanding forward and beyond where conceptual metaphor thinking had left us—namely, understanding “metaphorical thinking as an inherent component of human cognition.” See Pilar Alonso, “The Conceptual Integration Network Model as a Paradigm for Analysis of Complex Narrative Discourse,” *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature* 37 (2004): 161–82, <http://tinyurl.com/SBL4819a>.

priority, and there is little evolutionary incentive to check step-by-step how that global insight is achieved.”³⁴ As we shall see, this notion of the immediacy of conceptual blending is confirmed by the recent work of Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman and has been recently published by Kahneman as an exploration of what he calls system 1 thinking and system 2 thinking.³⁵

But, Fauconnier and Turner’s work does not simply describe regular day-to-day communication. It is important not to render this process simplistic in a reductionistic way. Conceptual blends are almost never the result of simple connections of single, discrete items for a single, immediate purpose. Nearly all conceptual blends *and* conceptual packets contain many spaces and many mappings. These spaces and mappings provide rich treasures for expanded human discourse. Not surprisingly, when these are combined as they are in human discourse in the form of “elaborate integration networks constructed by means of overarching general principles,” the complexity is extraordinary.³⁶

Think, for example, of the commonly cited Christian notion of “Son of God,” a phrase that has special significance in John’s Gospel. The conceptual packet “son,” though already a blend, is relatively easily visualizable and represents a fairly low-order conceptual packet.³⁷ But, when we bring it together with the conceptual packet that we think of when we think of “God,” a highly complex and already highly blended notion, it is probably obvious even to someone who knows nothing of conceptual blending that the notion “Son of God” is extraordinarily complex, in our case, an example of a complex blend of mappings. Yet we also know, given its relatively late appearance in the history of religions and its rapid rise to prominence, that once it had appeared—the blend “Son of God,” transcending as it does both the notion of “God” and of a “son”—it had significant potential to create a new, emergent structure with significant impact. If one begins to think of the further blending of the notion that “Jesus is the Son of God” with its elaborate defenses, rebuttals, and rhetology (e.g., “Jesus as the Son of God has power to ... because he is able to ...”), one can begin to see just

34. Fauconnier and Turner, “Compression and Global Insight,” 294.

35. Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011).

36. Fauconnier and Turner, “Rethinking Metaphor,” 53.

37. Though it is, as I noted, still probably a blended notion.

how complex such mappings become and how potentially useful it can be to trace them in rhetorical address.

The Power of the Image

Using elaborate integration networks, the brain composes and reconfigures images into memorable narratives that gain power through regular and consistent use in local contexts, or in some cases much broader, trans-cultural contexts. With regular use these networks of meaning further conjure up in the minds of hearers and readers other networks that have some relationship to them. This process of relating is a key associative element in neural networks, a necessary element for all communication to happen easily without having to rewrite scripts all the time.³⁸ But rewriting and reconfiguring happen all the time. The point of any human communication generally and of rhetorical address specifically is to propose new narratives within which some old and some new images are foregrounded and manipulated to communicate new meaning. According to Robbins, rhetorical address achieves this reconfiguration of narrative in large part due to the power of imagery.

We now know both that pictures overwhelm and the reasons that they do so in ways of which we are aware and in ways of which we are not.³⁹ In the aforementioned, recent work by Kahneman, in which he published the results of the study of cognition and decision-making that he and his colleague Tversky carried out, Kahneman notes the way in which humans default in their thinking to a form of picture-based cognition that he calls variously “intuition,” “intuitive heuristics,” “fast thinking,” and “system 1” thinking.⁴⁰ By these different names, he is referring to a kind of thinking that includes the ability of an expert to make “judgements and decisions ... guided directly by feelings of liking and

38. Pinker, *How the Mind Works*, 104–9. In SRI the exploration of these narratives or “storylines” that emerge and establish the rhetorical force of the text help us understand how Christian, cultural memory is reconfigured over time.

39. In discussion, Robbins has often noted that one of the reasons for the prominence of visual texture in rhetorical discourse has to do with the ability of pictures to overwhelm. What Robbins means is quite simple: images are powerful and can actually dominate a narrative in a way that logic alone cannot, and thus they contribute fundamentally to the rewriting of narratives.

40. Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*.

disliking, with little deliberation or reasoning,” as well as the ability of common people to come to immediate and, often, right decisions in matters as banal as avoiding something while driving.⁴¹ In contrast, “system 2” thinking, also called “logic” and “slow thinking,” happens when “neither an expert solution nor a heuristic answer comes to mind,” and we are forced to switch “to a slower, more deliberate and effortful form of thinking.”⁴² Though system 1 thinking provides the “stuff” for system 2 to think through,⁴³ “system 2 takes over when things get difficult, and it normally has the last word.”⁴⁴ The bulk of Kahneman’s book illustrates that, while system 1 is normally adequate, there are situations in which system 1 will mislead us unless system 2 “kicks in” and analyzes the situation more carefully.

As may be clear, Kahneman’s system 1 form of thinking is a form of cognition that would respond well to rhetography—that is, to argumentation based on compelling images. The display of imagery in compelling fashion requires little logical calculation but only until it becomes problematic. At that point, system 2 thinking kicks in to provide some logical, even basic enthymematic argumentation. That argumentation falls into the category of rhetology: rhetorical argumentation that is used to bring someone in step-by-step fashion to the conclusion desired by the rhetor but only until such logical steps became “ego-depleting”—that is, simply too laborious to continue.⁴⁵

Kahneman also adds to our understanding an important element for analysis of rhetorical presentations, specifically, where visual texture is present but not explicitly so. According to Kahneman—who here

41. *Ibid.*, 10–13.

42. *Ibid.*, 13.

43. *Ibid.*, 21: “the main sources of the explicit beliefs and deliberate choices.”

44. *Ibid.*, 25.

45. *Ibid.*, 41. Logical analysis is so time- and energy-consuming, that the human body gets tired and “is less willing or less able to exert self-control when the next challenge comes.” A good example of how and why a rhetor would employ rhetology can be found in Paul’s Letter to the Romans. Paul introduces a picture (Rom 1:7–8) but quickly, because of the challenge of what he wants to communicate to his audience and the way it undermines their own assumptions, he shifts to enthymematic presentation (note the use of “for” throughout the subsequent verses of the chapter). Then, when the audience might have tired of “too much logic,” he shifts back to rhetographical display to make his point. See my essay “Paul’s Inclusive Language.”

follows the work of Herbert Simon⁴⁶—humans are influenced in their beliefs and their attention by “anchors,” mechanisms that are sometimes arbitrary, sometimes intentional, that unwittingly influence people’s estimate of a situation. These anchors may be present through visual (or other sensory) stimulus, or they may be present in the individual or corporate memory. But, however they are there, their impact is unwittingly powerful, as powerful as an explicit image would be. When such anchors are enhanced by confirmation biases (which again may be arbitrary or intentional) that may be tacit or explicit, they become almost too powerful for an individual or a group to work against. For example, an anchor might be a prior experience or observation that unwittingly sways what I presume to be my unbiased consideration of a subsequent subject matter (e.g., a bad morning experience might influence the important business decision I must make in the afternoon; a fellow scientist’s unwelcome stare might lead me to want to find an apparent chink in the armor of his conclusive evidence in a scientific experiment in which he is the lead researcher). In other words, an anchor leads one to draw a conclusion or to assess a situation based, not on the data or evidence of an argument but, rather, on apparently extraneous though compelling forces.⁴⁷ Kahneman has shown how powerful an anchor can be even—or especially—when it has no direct bearing on the subject that it eventually anchors.⁴⁸

The notion of anchors and consequent “confirming biases” are important elements that can be helpfully incorporated into rhetorical analysis and, specifically, into SRI analyses of texts. Analysis of anchors can help to illuminate tacit clues that would otherwise be overlooked but that, once revealed, help us to see the rhetorical “frame” within which a rhetorical address operates. Analysis of the impact of an anchor can even help to reveal imagery that would otherwise not be noted, imagery that has helped shape a compelling framework that a reader or hearer must intuitively assent to in discourse.⁴⁹ Analysis can then also reveal

46. Herbert A. Simon, *Models of Man, Social and Rational: Mathematical Essays on Rational Human Behavior in a Social Setting*, Continuity in Administrative Science (New York: Wiley, 1957).

47. Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, 127.

48. *Ibid.*, 119–28.

49. The notion of *intuition* as the system 1 thinking that first leads us to conclusions is crucial for Kahneman’s argument.

the way in which “confirming hypotheses” throughout the text provide ongoing incentives for the reader to stay on the “right” path by continuing to enable the stated or unstated anchors to shape the reader’s or hearer’s thinking. In SRI, we can supplement what we know about the powerfully intuitive, initial impact of *explicit* rhetography, supported by a rhetor’s use of rhetology, with the notion of *tacit* rhetographical anchors and subsequent confirmation biases. As we shall see, in fact, such an analysis becomes crucial when we turn to the Gospel of John.

RHETOGRAPHICAL HIGHLIGHTS OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

In my sociorhetorical commentary on the Gospel of John, each chapter begins with a rhetographical overview of the material in that section. Here, I limit myself to some rhetographical highlights from the commentary. I have divided those highlights into three headings and then summarized the content of these headings in tentative conclusions at the end of this section.

The Visible and the Invisible

As I hinted in the introduction to this essay, the Gospel of John begins in a way that appears to spell immediate difficulty for a rhetographical approach to the same gospel. After all, the major features of the opening verses are essentially not able to be visualized. This is a striking situation, at odds with nearly every other gospel, both of the New Testament and (perhaps even especially) of the apocryphal materials that were not included in the canon of Christian Scripture. Think for example of the opening of the Gospel of Luke, where the scene with the putative father of John the Baptist is depicted in considerable detail on the occasion of offering incense in the Jerusalem temple; or the Gospel of Mark, in which John the Baptist is depicted in the Judean wilderness, clothed in particular garments and eating a particular kind of food; or even the Gospel of Matthew, in which a series of named Israelite progenitors are listed as the forebears of Jesus. In contrast, John begins his gospel in a patently unvisualizable way. Furthermore, as noted, the rest of the gospel presents material that emphasizes like no other gospel the reality of seeing.

Scholars and astute readers of the gospel, however, know that what we actually find in this gospel is a tension between the invisible and the visible. There are scenes that hearers or readers can easily visualize, such

as the so-called cleansing of the temple (John 2:12–22). The gospel is also peppered with abundant lexica having to do with “sight” and “vision,” as well as warnings against relying on sight. Perhaps the most striking and explicit warning comes in one of Jesus’s appearances in the temple, when he rebukes the unbelieving Jews: *μὴ κρίνετε κατ’ ὄψιν, ἀλλὰ τὴν δικαίαν κρίσιν κρίνετε* (John 7:24).⁵⁰ The implicit rebuke of that which enters the eyes and becomes the subject of cognition is striking but consistent with the rhetorical un-seeing at the beginning of the gospel (see also John 14:8–9).

In fact, as John’s Gospel develops, it becomes clear what the *ideological* point of un-seeing might be—namely, that those who *should* be fully able to see and who assert that they can are actually those most *unable* to see when it truly matters! This is the case especially of the leaders of the Jews, often represented by the Pharisees, and their adherents among the people. Thus, note “some Pharisees” around Jesus on the occasion of the giving of sight to a man born blind, as Jesus comments: *ἤκουσαν ἐκ τῶν Φαρισαίων ταῦτα οἱ μετ’ αὐτοῦ ὄντες καὶ εἶπον αὐτῷ· μὴ καὶ ἡμεῖς τυφλοὶ ἐσμεν* (John 9:40).⁵¹ In contrast, there are those who are not expected to see but who do truly see what really matters. This is clearly the case of the man born without physical sight (John 9), who goes from not seeing at all, to seeing physically but not necessarily fully, to defending Jesus’s actions even though he hasn’t seen Jesus, to being expelled (possibly) from the synagogue, to seeing but not recognizing Jesus, to heeding the voice of Jesus and worshiping Jesus. Thus, in heeding Jesus, the man has truly seen who Jesus is through the eyes of the gospel. Another example is the case again of progressive “seeing,” namely, that of the Samaritan woman (John 4:5–29); she moves from physically seeing and identifying Jesus as a Jewish man, to understanding him to be a “prophet,” to seeing in him—possibly—the Christ, though again only because of his words. These two characters appear to see or, in the latter case, at least to be poised to see truly. The contrast between the Pharisees who seem unwilling to see and people like the last two mentioned seems to give the gospel sharply contrasting narrative characterizations.⁵²

50. “Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment” (John 7:24, RSV).

51. “Some of the Pharisees near him heard this, and they said to him, ‘Are we also blind?’” (John 9:40, RSV).

52. On characterization in Greek literature, see the work of C. B. R. Pelling, ed., *Characterization and Individuality in Greek Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990); and

This seeing in part or potential for full seeing is reminiscent of a human reality that is alluded to through the topos of birth, a topos with significant *repetition* in the gospel in contrast to the other canonical gospels, and one that can be found highlighted *repetitively* either lexically (e.g., 1:12–13; 16:21) or topically throughout the rest of the gospel.⁵³ For example, the topos of birth is primary from the unvisualizable opening verses of the gospel:

οἱ δὲ ἔλαβον αὐτόν, ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ἐξουσίαν τέκνα θεοῦ γενέσθαι, τοῖς πιστεύουσιν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ, οἳ οὐκ ἐξ αἱμάτων οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος σαρκὸς οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος ἀνδρὸς ἀλλ' ἐκ θεοῦ ἐγεννήθησαν. (John 1:12–13)⁵⁴

Some years ago, in fact, Alan Culpepper argued that these verses were actually the “pivot” of the introduction to John’s Gospel (1:1–18).⁵⁵

I suggest, however, that the topos is also highlighted here rhetorically in a way that Culpepper has not shown. For example, in these opening verses we find humans identified in a way that is consistent with the anthropology of the first century, in which a female provides “blood,” a male provides the male’s “will,” and the union of the two is expressed as “the will of the flesh.” God’s offspring, on the other hand, are described

for the subject in the gospels, see both the work of David Rhoads, “Narrative Criticism: Practices and Prospects,” in *Characterization in the Gospel: Reconceiving Narrative Criticism*, ed. David Rhoads and Kari Syreeni, JSNTSup 184 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 264–85, and now the work of my colleague Christian Dionne, *L’Évangile aux Juifs et aux Païens: Le Premier voyage missionnaire de Paul (Actes 13–14)*, Lectio Divina (Paris: Cerf, 2011). There are, of course, complicated characters like Nicodemus who appear somewhere in the middle and whose trajectory points toward belief and worship, as is the case with the man born blind.

53. Building on the Aristotelian notion that a topos is a landmark on the mental geography of thought—something that evokes a constellation of networks of meanings as a result of social, cultural, or ideological use—I have concluded that a topos is very much like what Carolyn Miller describes as a “place to which an arguer (or problem solver or thinker) may mentally go to find arguments” (Carolyn R. Miller, “The Aristotelian *Topos*: Hunting for Novelty,” in *Rereading Aristotle’s Rhetoric*, ed. Alan G. Gross and Arthur E. Walzer [Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000], 130–46).

54. “But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.”

55. R. Alan Culpepper, “The Pivot of John’s Prologue,” *NTS* 27 (1980): 1–31.

as being generated differently, and an essential part of that difference is that their production is not depicted in a way that can be visualized in the same way that human production can. In the language of conceptual blending, the vital relation that allows us to know who they are is that they have become “offspring of God” through the action of their receiving the one that the gospel calls “Word” *and* through the “empowerment” by God consequent upon that reception. This explanation leaves the process of their generation invisible, the role played by their genitor God ambiguous: the offspring are either begotten by God in a way that is analogous to a male’s action or conceived from God in a way that is analogous to a female’s action. But, what does it say about the “look” of God’s offspring?

If our text is couched *intertextually* in the cultural memory of Judaism, where God always remains unseen and only God’s voice can be heard, then we have a clue about the look, or lack thereof, of the offspring.⁵⁶ In the cultural memory of Judaism, God’s voice may be heard in mystical night visions (see the garden of Gen 3 or later in Gen 12:1 and 15:1) or in daylight mystical encounters, as in the seminal text in which Moses hears God’s voice from the burning bush but sees nothing other than the bush in flames yet not consumed (Exod 3:14–15); however, whether by day or by night, God is not seen, only heard. Thus, when God speaks to Moses in secret from deep within the tabernacle that God has told Moses to build (Num 7:89), God remains invisible but fully audible. In fact, the same opening verses of John’s Gospel that give such prominence to the birth topos conclude with an echo of the very assertion made by God to Moses in Exod 33:20: Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε (John 1:18).⁵⁷

This leads us to an important element of this book’s conception, not only of God, which is common with cultural Judaism, but also of “God’s offspring,” which in contrast appears to be at odds with Judaism’s notion of the eminent and publicly visible nature of God’s offspring (cf. 10:34–35). For John the prominent complex blend that is “offspring” entails at least the vital relation of “identity,” which means that the offspring has some resemblance to the parent, understood as feminine or masculine

56. The occasional reference to catching a glimpse of God (e.g., Exod 33:20–23) needs to be interpreted, for in these passages, it is only once the divine has passed by that the seer is allowed a vision of something, the wake as it were, once the boat has already passed.

57. “No one has ever seen God.”

or somehow both. Human offspring resemble their parents; so in all likelihood God's offspring must resemble God in some way. This suggests, though it is never set forth explicitly, that the offspring of God, like God in the cultural form of Judaism in which this text arises, are likely invisible but audible, even as God is. Some evidence for this can be found in Jesus's statement to Nicodemus, in a discourse in which Jesus immediately introduces the notion of childbirth: it is no easier to visualize the invisible wind than to visualize those who are "born of the spirit."⁵⁸ One may see the effect of the wind but not the wind itself. God's offspring, like God, are in fact only visible in some vestigial fleshly form, even as God's Word in the person of Jesus is visible but confusingly so in flesh. God's offspring, like God and like God's word, are really as invisible as the Word is—paradoxically veiled from sight *by* that very same flesh that he inhabits—and only heard as Word both in flesh and before having "become flesh."

A further complication of the identity of the offspring of God, though, is the fact that throughout the gospel, the offspring of God are not yet fully born, only poised to come to birth. They have not *yet* come to birth and are not fully born. This observation is pertinent because in John it appears that, though people have eyes, they cannot really see, even those who are closest to true sight. All move about but with limited understanding and a limited scope of their movements, certainly very much unlike the wind. They appear free but they are not. They have eyes but cannot see, since they are in the dark. Their movements appear to them free, but they are significantly restricted.

This conceptual metaphor is not just wishful contemporary interpretation. As we have learned, fetuses were known in ancient medicine to have eyes but were understood to be unable to see anything while in the womb.⁵⁹ Strikingly, modern medicine has confirmed that they do have vision, but that it is also dramatically limited vision:

58. τὸ πνεῦμα ὅπου θέλει πνεῖ καὶ τὴν φωνὴν αὐτοῦ ἀκούεις, ἀλλ' οὐκ οἶδας πόθεν ἔρχεται καὶ ποῦ ὑπάγει· οὕτως ἐστὶν πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος (John 3:8). "The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

59. Ancient medical texts confirm that fetuses that were aborted either intentionally or through miscarriage had eyes. For the literature on abortion in the Greco-Roman world, see Enzo Nardi, *Procurato aborto nel mondo greco romano* (Milan: Giuffrè, 1971).

In utero, eyelids remain closed until about the 26th week. However, the fetus is sensitive to light, responding to light with heart rate accelerations to projections of light on the abdomen.... Although it cannot be explained easily, prenatates with their eyelids still fused seem to be using some aspect of “vision” to detect the location of needles entering the womb, either shrinking away from them or turning to attack the needle barrel with a fist.... Similarly, at 20 weeks g.a., twins in utero have no trouble locating each other and touching faces or holding hands!⁶⁰

In other words, we now know that the ancient world, like our modern world, understood that fetuses see in a glass very darkly indeed: they “see” in some fashion the things that their limited existence enables them to see, including what their sense of touch leads them to “know” of others sharing their womb space. However, what is absolutely clear is that they cannot see outside the womb. They cannot see, in other words, the world that those who have “really” been born know to be real.

By the end, the elaborate integration network that has been woven suggests that, unless these poised-to-be-offspring are born and “see the light,” they will remain in the darkness of the womb that they inhabit and, like those fetuses who do the same, they will die there. Enwombed, they will there become entombed. Because in its depiction of men and women walking in the darkness of night even during the day and loving that darkness (cf. 3:19, 20), the darkness is not absence of daylight (cf. 9:4) but, rather, the darkness of judgment and death (cf. 3:19–20), though again a judgment that is only real if their world remains shrouded in darkness (cf. John 5). They are dead but only if they remain where they are, judged and poised for judgment. Both they and those are who closest to fullness of life are in fact alive, but in contrast to them, God’s offspring are closer to being alive because they are poised ever so close to true life.

The best evidence for this metaphorical understanding comes from Jesus’s dialogue with Nicodemus (John 3). This dialogue happens at night and may be intended in terms of *sensory-aesthetic texture* to reflect the absence of the sun at night; however, the dialogue quickly moves the reader in the direction of understanding darkness as the experience of those who

60. All of the quotations on in-utero sense perception are drawn from David B. Chamberlain, “The Fetal Senses: A Classical View,” *Birthpsychology.com*, <http://tinyurl.com/SBL4819n>; citing J. C. Birnholz, J. C. Stephens, and M. Faria, “Fetal Movement Patterns: A Possible Means of Defining Neurologic Developmental Milestones in Utero,” *Am J Roentgenol* 130 (1978): 537–40.

have not yet been really born—that is, have not been second-born from present life-leading-to-death to a true life, a god-like life that fully sees and has no limitations or ending. This dialogue, blended as it is with the aforementioned, pervasive topos of childbirth, clearly presents a conceptual metaphor of humans—or, as we shall see, the humans with whom Jesus is concerned—living in a kind of enwombed existence: they have eyes, but they cannot see. Some of them, however, are poised to see when or if they are born. In other words, they are ready for birth, ready to become God’s offspring. However, at this point they are only once-born in their first creation world described in its creational state by Genesis, a womb that Jesus and the gospel call the “world” or *κόσμος*. They have not yet entered the new creation, new Genesis world, through being born twice (of “water and spirit,” “again,” or “from above”). In other words, the second-born are born *from* that womb in which they presently find themselves *into* a new creation order. When they are, they will truly be the “offspring of God” that John 1:12–13 contrasts with those who are only human as the Gospel understands them.

That new creation order in which the second-born will find themselves once truly born is called in John 3 “the kingdom of God,” a phrase that is in fact quite rare in John’s Gospel. In contrast to the Synoptics, where the phrase is widely used and even appears to conjure up the image of a potential earthly reign by God or God’s messiah, here in John the phrase is used strategically as a synonym for “the royal household or family of God.” The only-once-born members of the Genesis creation order are not members of the royal family; the twice-born or second-born offspring of God are. For John, only those who are twice-born—again, from above, by water and the spirit—into a womb-less existence are born as children into God’s royal family, having, like Jesus himself, God as their father. In contrast, those who are not twice-born but remain stillborn, dying by not being made fully alive, have no claim to divine blood.⁶¹

61. ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν οὐ κρίνεται· ὁ δὲ μὴ πιστεύων ἤδη κέκριται, ὅτι μὴ πεπίστευκεν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ μονογενοῦς υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ (John 3:18): “Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God.” Given this narrative, it comes as no surprise *not* to find in John’s Gospel anything that resembles the other New Testament understandings of “heaven” or “hell.” There is presence with the Father, which the Word has, who is always—even in the flesh—“in the bosom of the Father” (John 1:18), and which apparently all the “offspring of God” will have after

This framework for visualizing the situation of the narrative characters in John—or better said, a framework in which the implied audience might be able to imagine the situation of the narrative characters in John—is crucial for our understanding of visualization in John. In fact, as we have done so, it is likely that the imagery of Plato's allegory in *Resp.* 7 has come to mind. Plato depicted the state of the world in terms of slaves chained in a cave, regarding only shadows cast upon the wall of the cave during the whole of their lifetime: there they would remain unless, freed, they might see the light of day. It is true that the Gospel of John depicts a similar state, including, as we shall see, the shadows on the wall; however, it is also true that the gospel identifies this cave not as the world *per se* but as a particular world, a particular womb waiting to give birth.⁶²

Clues to the Invisible

Though John's opening verses present us with an unvisualizable scenario, a scenario that is confirmed throughout the gospel, the opening verses also present some clues for feeling our way in an endarkened world. These clues guide readers by presenting cultural memories drawn from a repository of texts believed to provide guidance for knowing about the world as

their "second birth"; and there is condemnation (John 3:18), which entails *not* being born again, that is, being released from this womb-like existence.

62. As we will see, that "world" is likely the present condition of Israel under its present temple personnel and extending as far as the concentric circles of holiness radiating out from the temple pervade reality. Such a picture appears to be an excellent example of expanded conceptual blending, which might be known as "conceptual metaphor," in which "cognitive mapping" occurs "between two different domains" and out of which "linguistic metaphor" is born. However, given the dominance of the conceptual blend and the dominance of conceptual subuses of the metaphor with repetitive but not dominant lexica, we should probably think of the imagery that I am describing here in ways that do not limit it to conceptual metaphor. See Lawrence Zbikowski, "Metaphor and Music Theory: Reflections from Cognitive Science," *Music Theory Online* 4 (1998): 3.3, <http://tinyurl.com/SBL4819m>. For cross-domain mapping, see George Lakoff and Mark Turner, *More than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); George Lakoff, "The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor," in *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. Andrew Ortony, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 202–51; Raymond W. Gibbs Jr., *The Poetics of Mind: Figurative Thought, Language, and Understanding* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Gilles Fauconnier, *Mappings in Thought and Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

it is and before it was—namely, the canonical Jewish Scriptures. Thus, the Gospel of John actually begins with words that recite in Greek the opening words of the very first book of the Jewish canon of Scripture and that make it synonymous in title with the Greek version of that first book: *Ἐν ἀρχῇ* or Genesis. This *recontextualization* of the opening words of Genesis by the opening words here gives a rhetorical force to the notion that John's Gospel may have to do with a creation, as it turns out, a *new* creation, the creation of a new race not of humans as in the first creation but of God's offspring in a second creation.

Such a *recontextualization* is, however, rare in John's Gospel, as is the even more rare *recitation* of Jewish Scripture. Unlike the Gospel of Matthew with its familiar "fulfillment citations" in *recitation* form, or even unlike the Gospels of Mark or Luke, the Gospel of John mainly weaves *echoes* of the Jewish Scripture's canonical imagery into its narratives. It does so by drawing on scriptural titles ("lamb of God," "Son of God," "king of Israel," etc.), persons ("Elijah," "the one who is to come," "Jacob," "Moses," etc.), places, feasts, and so on. The goal appears to be not so much to quote the text or even to illustrate the narratives visually but to provide some coordinates from cultural memory both for finding one's place in the world of the first-creation and for contemplating new possibilities for one's place in a second, new-creation order.⁶³ These clues, drawn from cultural memory, thus provide coordinates and begin to create the outlines of reality in order to give the reader a true understanding of the visually compelling world in which the reader lives and at the same time to prepare the reader to understand and truly see a new and more fully alive world. In other words, what is important about these clues from the Jewish Scriptures is that they provide guidance for how to interpret what is seen and guidance to begin to imagine what cannot be seen.

This means that these clues provide guidance for the human characters in the story not only to speak about other humans and human-scale matters from cultural memory but also to speak about matters that are not able to be visualized at human scale and yet to do so at some human-scale level.⁶⁴

63. This can happen on the part of the narrator or on the part of one of the characters. For example, the narrator introduces Moses in the initial eighteen verses, while the Samaritan woman introduces eponymous Israel in the person of the patriarch Jacob into the narrative, and Jesus invokes the figures of Moses and Abraham and their respective biblical contexts.

64. The construction of human-scale imagery is what allows us as humans to

This is true of complex conceptual packets like clear cultural artifacts (e.g., a common ancestor “Jacob” in John 4) but more so of that to which the cultural memory points (e.g., “life” and “light” in John 1). Of course, this is not a new approach to the Jewish Scriptures. In providing these clues, the Gospel of John appears to take its lead from existing uses of these same Scriptures, whether they be in the Pseudepigrapha, in the various translations or paraphrases of the Jewish Scriptures into Greek (e.g., the LXX) or Aramaic (e.g., the targumin), or in the work of postbiblical commentators such as the Qumran writers, Philo, or the rabbis.⁶⁵ It is possible that John’s Gospel engages with this postbiblical interpretation in a way that seeks both to affirm a significant ideological trajectory within it and also to show that this trajectory does not proceed far enough, and that more is necessary to picture what is true. In other words, while other writings also sought to give clues to what was read in the Jewish Scriptures, John’s Gospel may engage with some of these writings by saying implicitly that they have not done or gone far enough.

For example, the narrative of Jesus multiplying bread and fish in the Galilean wilderness (cf. John 6) seems clearly to build on the clues provided in narratives in which God provides manna for the people of Israel through Moses (e.g., Exod 16). This is generally understood to be the reason why the people cry out for Jesus to become their new leader (literally, their king), following the example of Moses, who provided the people with food and became their king. In the Johannine narrative, however, and unlike Moses, Jesus goes on to talk about himself as the food that truly satisfies. In fact, as is clear in John 6:30–31, there is a basic progression in the narrative that suggests that much more is at play than just the use of Exod 16 and Jesus’s own self-interpretation of that passage. The progression that we find there moves the reader from an event involving literal, visible (and edible) bread to the link to the manna given by Moses (Exod 16), to that

grasp complex and abstract notions. The notion helpfully moves conceptual blending beyond the limited range in the discussion of conceptual metaphors. On “human-scale constructions,” see Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 376–80.

65. I have not yet had the opportunity to consult a book that may provide considerable opportunity for us to explore cultural memory and how it is employed in Judaism and Christianity in just these ways: Diana V. Edelman and Ehud Ben Zvi, eds., *Remembering Biblical Figures in the Late Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods: Social Memory and Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

manna (linked now to this bread) understood itself as something more than visual and edible, as something divine.

What is important here is that this progression itself is not new. We find in some rabbinic materials the same kind of progression where, as in the case of the manna of Exod 16, this narrative contains coded signs as visualizable realities that stand in for something that is not visualizable. In other words, there, too, we find human-scale realities for something beyond normal human understanding. Specifically, in some rabbinic materials we find the manna of Exod 16 standing in for Torah. What we find the Gospel of John doing in John 6 is something very similar to what the rabbis have done, but in this case the bread that Jesus has provided will not stand in for Torah as in the rabbinic texts but, rather, for the Word.⁶⁶ In sum, the Gospel of John shows Jesus moving his rhetorical audience as the rabbis themselves had done: from basic visual features (e.g., bread), through a conceptually more complex and less visual understanding, to the truth, whether it be Torah or the Word. Through such progressions, the gospel shows Jesus regularly seeking to move his audiences from the most basic literal and visual level of things to the most spiritual and invisible level, a truly divine level for Jewish aniconism, and doing so by his word.⁶⁷

However, the Gospel of John goes still further. John's Gospel presents Jesus as an intelligible voice (i.e., a truly human-scale code) for the unseeable Word of God who once spoke the Torah to Moses and now speaks directly to the Israelites in the wilderness through the person of Jesus in vocal stimuli.⁶⁸ This word, which gives "birth" when it is believed, is not

66. On this issue, see Peder Borgen, *Bread from Heaven: An Exegetical Study of the Concept of Manna in the Gospel of John and the Writings of Philo*, NovTSup 10 (Leiden: Brill, 1965).

67. For the full progression and the way that progression was discerned in early Christian commentary, see now the work of my PhD student François Beyrouti, "Discerning a 'Rhetorics of Catechesis' in Origen of Alexandria's Commentary on the Gospel of John: A Sociorhetorical Analysis of Book XIII: 3–42" (PhD diss., Saint Paul University, 2013).

68. If the Gospel of John engages in polemic with the rabbis and/or their predecessors, then the progression evident in John may in fact be an explicit polemical continuation that seeks to supersede the rabbinic progression that terminates with Torah. After all, in John's Gospel, it is the scholars of the Law, primarily the Pharisees, who, though they have the Torah to draw on, fail to understand and accept (i.e., "believe") Jesus.

received by all.⁶⁹ In fact, where it is *least* received is precisely by those Scripture scholars and probable predecessors to the rabbis who provided the similar, code-based interpretation of Jewish Scripture to which I have just alluded. We see this set forth most clearly in John 5, the chapter where it becomes clearest that the scholarly scrutiny that had begun with the appearance of John the Baptist (1:19–28) and had continued with Nicodemus's interrogation of Jesus (3:1–10) has now turned into a full trial of Jesus.⁷⁰

John 5 is structured as a clearly forensic narrative, focusing primarily on Jesus's rhetorical address as he defends himself against the charge brought against him (i.e., the instructions to the paralytic following his healing on the Sabbath to take up his mat and walk). Jesus defends himself by calling to the witness stand four sets of witnesses: (1) John the Baptist's witness; (2) the miracles or signs of Jesus; (3) the Father; and (4) the Jewish Scriptures.⁷¹ Without going into detail concerning the meaning of each of these, I will only say that these are intended to be "witnesses" or "signs," visible or audible "pointers" to who Jesus is. In and of themselves, the Fourth Gospel narratives suggest that these signs should point the way to the truth, which according to the Fourth Gospel is found in Jesus. They constitute a way to belief: if followed, they will lead to Jesus; however, they do not *necessarily* lead to Jesus, for clearly there are those who have heard or seen at least three of the four signs and who have not believed in Jesus. Even the visible and audible Jesus himself, the Word that has become flesh, is not able to compel true vision, since there are many who see and hear

69. That even in John 6 it is clear that it is the Word that needs to be received, of which the "flesh" of Jesus is only a "code" for the Word, can be found when Jesus notes τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν τὸ ζωοποιῶν, ἡ σὰρξ οὐκ ὠφελεῖ οὐδέν· τὰ ῥήματα ἃ ἐγὼ λελάληκα ὑμῖν πνεῦμά ἐστιν καὶ ζωὴ ἐστιν (John 6:63): "It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life" (RSV).

70. As is well known, the "trial of Jesus," which is limited to the final chapters of the Synoptic Gospels, occurs throughout the Gospel of John. See particularly Andrew T. Lincoln, *Truth on Trial: The Lawsuit Motif in the Fourth Gospel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000). See also F. F. Bruce, "The Trial of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel," in *Gospel Perspectives*, ed. R. T. France and David Wenham (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1980), 1:7–20; and Josep Oriol Tuñí, "Pasión y muerte de Jesús en el cuarto evangelio: Papel y significación," *Revista Catalana de Teologia* 1 (1976): 393–419.

71. How the "Father" is understood to be a witness is unclear, unless it be in the form of the "voice from heaven" found, for example, at the baptism of Jesus and at the transfiguration in the Synoptic Gospels.

him but do not believe. He is, after all, still shrouded in the confusing flesh that both reveals and masks.

Why this is so is because the Word-become-flesh, though light, has entered the world of flesh and thus of unborn darkness. In this world he is rightly viewed as an intruder whose origin is unknown (cf. 7:41). Not surprisingly, this intrusion of the Word into the unborn flesh of the womb is expressed in an extraordinary conceptual blend that gives rise eventually to the standard phrase "Son of God." The grounds for this blend can be found in the gospel's initial verses and fleshed out in form throughout the remainder of the gospel: the Word entered the realm of "flesh" (by which the author means the limited, womb-like existence in which at least those humans exist that the text is interested in), and this Word is the same one who is known as the "only begotten" (John 1:18), referred to throughout the rest of the gospel as "son of the father" or the one who exclusively makes regular reference to his father. The "compression" that is required to blend "son" and "God" as well as "Word" to human scale, is extraordinary.

Yet the comparison is not to what we might see as a fully human figure. This intrusive character is primarily seen in the gospel as one who speaks, even voluminously (cf. 21:25), while doing very little in the way of *purposeful* or *emotion-fused* action.⁷² As such, the intrusion is not just an action or momentary occurrence but a rhetor speaking and revealing to hearers the limited existence in which they find themselves and an invitation to be birthed out of it. Not surprisingly, it is a task destined to fail. For how can a fetus make any sense of what cannot even be imagined, that is, a world outside of the womb? As we see from the extended tabernacles narrative (John 7–10), the longest narrative of the gospel, the primary ones who are unable to see are those who are associated with the temple: the religious personnel of the temple and those who adhere to their teachings.⁷³ The only one who does believe during that time is one who is most

72. Jeff Staley has identified clearly the limited range of *sensory-aesthetic* action (though Staley does not use that phrase) in Jesus's character (Jeff Staley, "The Structure of John's Prologue: Its Implications for the Gospel's Narrative Structure," *CBQ* 48 [1986]: 241–64). In fact, Jesus is never depicted in John as entering any physical context. The Word is only, and ever, *in* the bosom of the Father (1:18). It is from there that the Fourth Gospel depicts Jesus constantly speaking, as befits the "Word" of the Father.

73. The narrative that begins in 7:1 shows no change of scene until near the end of ch. 10; however, the change there is only temporal, from the Feast of Tabernacles to the Feast of Hanukkah. The latter, however, is known in Second Temple Judaism as

clearly unable to see physically until given sight by Jesus, but even then the sight that he is initially given is not where the narrative ends (as often happens in the Synoptic Gospels) but when he worships Jesus (9:37).

Only a few others are also depicted as seeing. One is the enigmatic Beloved Disciple, who sees and bears faithful witness to the Word made flesh (cf. 13:23; 19:26). The other is Mary Magdalene at the tomb of Jesus (John 20), a scene that, as we shall see in the next subsection is actually linked to the depiction of events in the temple, including those found in John 7–10. In striking contrast to the Gospel of Luke, where it was John the Baptist who leapt in the womb of his mother, Elizabeth, at the voice of Mary as the mother of Jesus (unnamed in John's Gospel), in John's Gospel we will see this named, other Mary leap in what we now know is the womb of "this world" (the Johannine *κόσμος*) at the sound of the voice of the risen Jesus himself as she recognizes him by his word, not by physical sight (20:16). The beloved disciple and Mary are both poised as close as you can get in this world to full birth, the second-birth. They join the unlikely also-poised-for-second-birth in the form of the man born blind, as well as those among the Samaritans who are poised to be born from the word that the promiscuous or at least passed-around Samaritan woman has borne to them, hot off the lips of Jesus, who has engaged her at the well.⁷⁴

Veiling the Truth

But to return to our question: What is this Johannine "world" of which Jesus speaks? Or to put it in the language that conceptual blending has allowed us to use: What is this womb that dominates the narrative scene of the gospel, a womb in which, finally, this other Mary leaps? In this final section, I want to zero in on a potential answer to this question.

I want to start by asking the question that John's Gospel early on suggests, a profound and disturbing question: If "his own" did not recognize and receive him (John 1:11), why did they not? Who are these who are called "his own" who do not recognize him? Why did others that we have just seen recognize him? Were they not "his own"? While it has seemed to

the "lesser" Feast of Tabernacles. Thus, while the modern calendar has changed, the setting and the religious conceptual frame have not.

74. The John 4 well scene almost assuredly plays on the patriarchal betrothal scenes concerning Isaac and Jacob. See Janeth Norfleete Day, *The Woman at the Well: Interpretation of John 4:1–42 in Retrospect and Prospect*, BibInt 61 (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

many that “his own” refers either to his immediate clan or his larger clan that is the people of Israel, I seek to show in my commentary that “his own” are those associated with “my Father’s house” (John 2:16)—that is, the temple personnel and the adherents to the practices and teachings of the temple in the *συναγωγή* or “congregation” of Israel. This would of course include not only the priests and their staff but also the Pharisees who are consistently depicted in John as personnel connected to the temple (cf. 1:24; 3:1; 7–9 passim; 11:46, 47, 57; 12:19, 42; 18:3).⁷⁵

The Johannine answer as to why “his own” did not believe him can be found in a sociorhetorical analysis of the gospel. Strikingly, it has to do with the temple itself. John’s Gospel gives Jerusalem and specifically the temple a more prominent role in the life of Jesus than do any of the other gospels, including Luke, which opens in the temple and concludes there. Yet it is not so much the regular presence of the temple in John that surprises us but, rather, its primary absence in the Synoptic Gospels. The temple is after all the “continuum from heaven to earth ... [bearing] meaning that transcended its material reality.”⁷⁶ While I will not here go into any detail about the absence of the temple in the Synoptics, I do want to highlight the way in which the temple is central in John.

In John’s Gospel as in Luke, the narrative also begins with the temple but very differently. It does so through the temple personnel who send and are sent to inquire of John (1:19–28). The Gospel of John, again like Luke, also closes with the temple, or at least in its shadow (John 18–20), but also again unlike Luke, it last appears veiled in a way that is itself unseen. But, unlike Luke, the temple is not just as an *inclusio*; rather, the temple in John is interwoven throughout the gospel and provides the rhetorical anchor that gives meaning to the reading of the entire gospel.⁷⁷ We thus see it

75. This depiction stands in contrast to that of the Synoptics but is not, for that reason, necessarily unhistorical, as has sometimes been argued. On this point, see the important article by Judith Lieu, “Temple and Synagogue in John,” *NTS* 45 (1999): 51–69. Further evidence of the extent of temple affiliation within the synagogue networks is found in the recent archaeological discovery of temple-related artifacts and motifs in synagogal contexts. See Isabel Kershner, “A Carved Stone Block Upends Assumptions about Ancient Judaism,” *New York Times*, 8 December 2015, <http://tinyurl.com/SBL48190>. According to the author, the find “is upending some long-held scholarly assumptions about ancient synagogues and their relationship with the Temple.”

76. Carol Meyers, “Temple, Jerusalem,” *ABD* 6:367.

77. As we know from studies of cultural anthropology of the period of the New

from the outset (when John is approached by inquisitors from the Jerusalem temple), and then through the final half of chapter 2 and most of chapter 3 (dominated by the events of Jesus's so-called cleansing of the temple and an inquisition by a Pharisee from Jerusalem named Nicodemus), and including chapters 5, 7–10, and 12–20, all of which take place with the temple as the conceptual framework within which the drama unfolds. In fact, even those sections that do not take place with the temple visible do actually engage the temple in some form: in Jesus's dialogue with the Samaritan woman in John 4, the Jerusalem temple is invoked as an alternative to the Samaritan temple; the miracles of chapter 6, though located in Galilee, take place at Passover, which is the context for Jesus's "signs" in chapter 2 and the final events of chapters 12–20; the raising of Lazarus in chapter 11 concludes with the debate among the temple personnel led by the high priest Caiaphas concerning how to proceed against Jesus and Lazarus. In sum, the temple is the one constant narrative backdrop and overarching spatial element of the conceptual frame for the drama of John's Gospel.

As such it is the main topos that anchors the antagonism to Jesus. True, it is understood by Jesus as "my Father's house," but counterintuitively it is the very place that we find the narrative characters (the temple personnel and their adherents) who are the primary opponents of Jesus. I say "counterintuitively" because in the depiction of the Fourth Gospel what we *should* find there are the truly alive, those who are free of the limited womb-like existence that we have seen above that would be characteristic of Plato's world, those who receive the Word. That the temple Jews believe that this *is* the case can be seen when they cry out: "We are free. We are not slaves" (see John 8:33). Yet, the gospel suggests that the temple is the very place where what we *do* find are the still-(un)born (the gospel's "first-born"), still in the womb, like Nicodemus still unable to see that they have not yet been born, and still needing to be born to be able to see, because all that they can presently see is what the womb allows them to see.

One is led to ask how this can be. Did not the postexilic prophetic expectation indicate clearly how the temple was to be the context for this

Testament, what gave Jerusalem prominence in first-century Jewish understandings was not that it was an *urbs*, nor that it was a center of governance, which in fact it was not, but rather as the place of the temple. See on this the work of Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, 3rd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), esp. 161–97.

very kind of genesis of pure, holy children, with the temple personnel not just as the fully alive but as the living midwives of process? According to Carol Meyers:

The association of the Temple with law and justice (covenant and order) is present in the charge to the chief priestly official (Zech 3:7) who will have access to heavenly justice at the Temple as sacred intersection of earth and heaven. The necessary purity of the high priest involves cleanliness and also the removal of all iniquity (Zech 3:3).... The notion of prosperity and fecundity that result from the construction of a divinely ordained and approved temple, in which the deity's presence is thus secured, is an integral part of the message of both Zechariah and Haggai. Haggai contrasts the relative impoverishment of the inhabitants of Yehud (Hag 1:6, 10–11) with the bounty that will obtain once the temple project is underway (Hag 2:10–19). Zechariah, too, equates anticipated prosperity (as in Zech 2:8–9 and especially 8:9–13) with the restored divine presence in the Temple (and thus throughout the land) and the attendant blessings.⁷⁸

What has happened that has enabled the author of the gospel to cast the Second Temple in this clearly antagonistic role in the Fourth Gospel? Whether John's Gospel be understood to be an eyewitness narrative of the events of Jesus's life or a subsequent reflection on them from either an early postresurrection date or a significantly later postresurrection date, it is clear from the narrative that it is the postexilic Second Temple that is in view. However, we can say more. Both the narrative and the possible historical context of the events suggests that this is not just any postexilic generation that is in view but, rather, the temple in the period understood in its post-6 CE form of life—that is, the temple both in its greatly expanded Herodian form and staffed by temple personnel appointed by Roman governors. This means that whether John's vision is an anachronistic and romanticized reflection of a temple that once existed between 6 and 70 CE or whether it is an eyewitness account of the temple during that same period, what is in view is the visually splendid, Roman-inspired, Herodian Temple run by Roman-appointed personnel.

In terms of visual texture, this Herodian Temple was indeed a magnificent building that would presently have visually dominated the Jerusalem landscape and drawn the eye. The area of the extensive platform

78. Meyers, *ABD* 6:363.

on which the entire temple complex sat was more than 140,000 square meters, “making it the largest site of its kind in the ancient world.”⁷⁹ The size and uncovered nature of most of the temple is important, since most of activity of the temple, including the sacrifices, would have occurred in the various courtyards that surrounded the actual holy of holies in the temple itself. The light alone from the torches in the temple courtyard on the Feast of Tabernacles (the context for some of the events of John 7–10, including Jesus’s statement that “I am the light of the world” [8:12]) was said to illuminate the whole city of Jerusalem, which would otherwise have been shrouded in the darkness of night. The importance of this visually imposing, impressive, illuminating, and life-giving temple is itself significant for any understanding of the visual texture that would have anchored a reading of John’s Gospel for a first-century audience.

This Second Temple as a building stood in stark, visual contrast to the First Temple. Solomon’s original temple was designed with a focus that was not on the imposing, public, and externally impressive visual nature of the temple but on adorning what lay within, mostly out of view except to the priestly cadre; for the First Temple continued the focus on the worship of God in the unimposing structure that was the tabernacle—that is, a focus on God’s indwelling. In other words, the focus was not on the temple as visually splendid but on that which the temple contained within or at least which the temple provided a venue for, namely, God’s word. In the case of the tabernacle, the scriptural record indicates that God had commanded the making of an ark (Exod 25:8–16) that would hold the stone tablets of the law and would be placed in the innermost part of the tent hidden by a veil. Only Aaron or his successor could enter the innermost part of the tent, and he was to do so daily to offer incense and once a year on the Day of Atonement with a blood offering (Exod 30:7–10). The Jewish canonical record suggests that when the tabernacle was dedicated, God spoke to Moses from between the cherubim (Num 7:89). To mirror this structure, the First Temple held the ark in the temple’s innermost part. The transition from tabernacle to temple took place on the occasion of the Feast of Sukkoth (Tabernacles: 1 Kgs 8:2, 65), when the ark was placed under the outspread wings of the cherubim (1 Kgs 8:6–7), which were ten cubits tall and with a wingspan of ten cubits (i.e., 4.5 × 4.5 meters; cf. 1 Kgs 6:23–28). The idea was that, as in the tabernacle, so

79. Ibid., 365.

now in the temple, the cherubim would constitute the sacred attendants and a canopy for the throne of the unseen God, who would thus be over the *kiper* and the ark. Here, as Meyers suggests, is the real reason for the temple's holiness:

The closer one gets to the inner sanctum, the nearer one is to the perfection of the divine presence. Even if an ordinary individual can never approach the holiest place, the existence of the concentric circles, as it were, of increasing holiness signified that the Holiest One of all could be found at the sacred center.⁸⁰

This God, who had always been unseen, would remain unseen but would make his presence known through speaking. He would speak in that innermost part of the temple to the high priest, following the example of Moses. It was for this reason that, in all likelihood, this innermost part of the tabernacle and the temple were called the *debir* דְּבִיר (1 Kgs 8:1–12), a word that would suggest God's "speaking" or simply God's "word."

Following the Babylonian destruction of that temple, and the capture and disappearance of the ark, the temple had been rebuilt in the postexilic (Persian) period in a way that sought to mirror the look of the First Temple on the outside, though now minus a crucial element on the inside, namely, the ark as the place of Torah and, more importantly, as the seat of the invisible yet speaking God. Perhaps as a result of this significant missing element, the focus of the temple gradually but decisively shifted outward, from a focus on the inner, invisible but audible presence of God to the outward, public and very visual display of the building itself. In fact, in the absence of the ark, the rebuilt Second Temple may have appeared to some to have at its core a real absence, for in the place where the ark had been, the Second Temple now had a "stone of foundation," a slab of stone about three fingers high (cf. m. Yoma 5:2), over which nothing was to be placed.

Nevertheless, the people believed that this temple would still yield its fecund fruit. So whether they went up to the temple for rites of purification or simply believed that a supernatural, cleansing power radiated out from the temple in concentric circles and somehow purified them, the temple would still produce children of Israel who were cleansed, new, reborn, and free, as they themselves insist, in disputing with Jesus in the temple (cf.

80. Ibid., 360.

8:33).⁸¹ True, there were times when the tabernacle or temple had become polluted, as had happened when the ark had fallen into gentile hands or when a heinous gentile ruler like Antiochus IV Epiphanes had entered the temple, something that might easily have happened once again with Caligula's edict and statue.⁸² In fact, celebrations of purification from past defilements were commemorated in Jesus's day at Tabernacles and Hanukkah (the "little Tabernacles"), events that provide the narrative context for John 7–10.⁸³ Rabbinic literature preserves a record of elements of the celebration of Tabernacles at the Second Temple. At one point during the Second Temple Tabernacles celebration, the temple worshipers identified themselves explicitly as a fully seeing people associated with a purified temple. The text notes that,

At cockcrow on each of the seven days the priests proceeded to the east gate of the Temple area and gazed away from the Temple toward the east. At the moment of sunrise they turned their backs on the sun and faced the sanctuary of the Temple, reciting: "Our fathers when they were in this place turned with their backs toward the Temple of the Lord and their faces toward the east, and they worshiped the sun toward the east [see Ezek 8:16]; but as for us, our eyes are turned toward the Lord" (*m. Sukk.* 5:4).⁸⁴

Though we do not know for sure that this was a historical context in Jesus's own day for the celebration of Tabernacles, it does represent a remarkable counterpart and question raised by the Fourth Gospel in the very context of Jesus's appearance at the temple at Tabernacles, namely: "Do you see? Are your eyes truly turned to the Lord? Do you in fact see anything at all?" For this temple toward which "our eyes are turned," toward which the

81. Though Jesus and the temple worshipers in John 8 are at this point debating the role of Abraham, it is important to note intertextually that Abraham is not depicted in John as he is in Paul as "father of faith" but as the one who, in the sacrifice of Isaac, made of the mount on which the temple was eventually built the place on which God spoke to him and ensured that Isaac would indeed be the one in whom the promise would be assured. On the role of the binding (*akedah*) of Isaac, Abraham, and the Temple Mount, see Jo Milgrom, *The Binding of Isaac: The Akedah, a Primary Symbol in Jewish Thought and Art* (Berkeley, CA: Bibal, 1988).

82. For Antiochus IV, see Dan 11:36–37; for Caligula, see Josephus, *Ant.* 18.8.

83. Mention is also made of the "feast of fire" (2 Macc 1:18).

84. Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, Sacra Pagina 4 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), 235–36.

people looked and confessed that their eyes were wide open, is actually more accurately depicted in the Fourth Gospel more along the lines of the walls of Plato's cave, upon which not light but the shadows of the processing priests are cast by the bright but despised fire; or in the case of the temple, the sun that is in fact behind the chained slaves on the one hand and the processing pilgrims on the other.

But, why might the Fourth Gospel present this visually splendid and even luminescent temple as a place of darkness, of mere shadows cast upon the wall? That this is the case in the Fourth Gospel seems clear. Historically, there is indeed evidence for such a rhetorical depiction. For while the temple was indeed magnificent visually, it was anything but pure, and it was certainly no longer the place of truth according to the Fourth Gospel. This was not because of a direct defilement by incursion of gentiles but, rather, because of the impure Roman-appointed Jewish priesthood.⁸⁵ The impurity either began or reached its culmination with Annas's appointment by the Roman governor of Syria Quirinius in 6 CE. Though Annas was removed in 15 CE by Valerius Gratus, Annas appears to have remained very much involved, not least through the high priesthoods of five sons (Eleazar 16–17 CE, Jonathan 36–37 CE and 44, Theophilus 37–41 CE, Matthias 43 CE, Annas b. Annas 63 CE) and the extensive high priesthood of his son-in-law Caiaphas (18–36 CE), who was high priest during the period of all the events narrated in the Gospel of John. But it is not just the Gospel of John that depicts them this way. The family of Annas is repudiated even in the rabbinic materials as a family of "whisperers," that is, as a family characterized by the evil of "envy."⁸⁶ It is not surprising that one could easily see in them men who introduced pollution into the very "bosom of the Father," the temple's holy of holies.

I believe, therefore, that the story told in John's Gospel is framed intertexturally and anchored cognitively not only by the visible Hero-

85. The Roman-appointed priesthood replaced the Sadducean priesthood that had been in place during the last years of Herod and throughout his son Archelaus's brief but chaotic reign. One of the first acts of Herod's son, Archelaus, who became king of Judea after his father's death, was the slaughter of three thousand Jews in the temple precinct during Passover in 4 BCE.

86. The record of the house of Annas as being "whisperers," those who were captive to envy and used slander to advance their purposes is found in b. Pesah. 57a and in Josephus, *Ant.* 20.199; 13.294 (LCL). For "envy," see Malina, *New Testament World*, 108–33.

dian structure of the Second Temple (something to which the Synoptic Gospels explicitly call attention; cf. Mark 13:1 and parallels) but more importantly by the conceptual framework of an unbelieving temple personnel who were appointed and supervised by Rome, men who have full access to and who can thus pollute the very core of purity itself. It is this conceptual frame and this rhetorical anchoring, together with the regular occurrences of confirming biases in the form of temple opposition to Jesus understood as the Word of God made flesh, that thus shapes the antagonistic rhetography of John. That frame begins narratively with the image of the temple as the locus from which the Pharisee and priest interrogators are sent to question John the witnesser (1:19–28)⁸⁷ and which during a first Passover becomes explicitly named in John 2:14–3:21 as a place in need of cleansing. It then becomes the background for yet another interrogation—this time of Jesus—by another Pharisee, Nicodemus. Following the Samaritan and Galilean interlude of John 4, the temple provides the context for the first explicit trial of Jesus (John 5), a harbinger of another trial that would also take place in the temple context (John 18). Following the Galilean wilderness interlude, the temple again becomes the context for the lengthy narrative of John 7–10 during the Feasts of Tabernacles and Hanukkah, yet another occasion for the rejection of the Father’s real Word. Finally, the temple looms ominously over the betrayal and death of the Word made flesh in John 11–19, and as well in a mysterious way in John 20, where it appears to have no place.⁸⁸ John’s readers were presented rhetorically at every turn with the gospel’s antagonistic vision of the temple, a space that should be staffed by “his own”—since the temple is supposed to be “his Father’s house”—but that is instead a place associated with unbelief and blindness.⁸⁹

87. The temple is actually present proleptically in the initial mentions of John as witnesser in 1:6–8 and 15, when read in light of the only narrative regarding John in ch. 1.

88. This leaves a relatively modest amount of material that does not make the temple an explicit point or context. This material includes the incidents in or relating to three *non*-Jerusalem sites: Galilee (the calling of disciples from Galilee, the wedding at Cana, the healing at Cana, and the material in John 6), Bethany (the raising of Lazarus and the supper in John 12), and the garden tomb (the resurrection of Jesus in John 20). But, as we have seen in relation to John 6, there are reasons for suggesting that this material is in fact linked to the temple. Analysis of John 12 plus the analysis of John 20 that I propose below suggest a clear link with the temple anchor.

89. The temple may even be presented in this same way from the opening moment

Accordingly, I would suggest that the enwombed existence of once-born humans as presented in the Fourth Gospel is in fact a depiction of those who exist in the shadow of the temple, which is their “world.” Such an understanding helps to clarify the tacit *visual texture* of the temple, which is physically centered on the real absence of the ark and thus of the God who from “the beginning” has only been known by his word: this potentially, marvelously fertile and fecund womb that can and should produce children to populate the earth is ritually busy with the affairs of religion and state but is in reality a hollow—though filled with apparent life!—tomb. That this is so has less to do with the temple as building in John’s Gospel and more to do with the fact that it is in the power of men who—though they pretend to holiness and purity—have been appointed by impure gentiles and are using the temple for the purpose of their own gain. Rather than purifying the issue of children from the temple, including bringing the gentiles to worship the true God, they are using a present gentile hegemony and preventing children from being born to life. The Johannine Jesus identifies their actions as of no more value than the anointing of dead bodies. Eyes, like those of the temple Jews at the Feast of Tabernacles—eyes that purport to be wide open, turned to God, seeing more than other human eyes see because they are directed toward the temple—are actually eyes that see nothing more than the inner lining of a womb, which, unless they are born from it, are the eyes of those who will die there. They are certainly not the eyes of children truly born into the royal household and family of God, becoming like God in that birth.

What the Jesus of the Fourth Gospel purports to provide to these people is exactly what is needed for them to be born, a different kind of purification from the one that they have known. It is a purification that comes from the words that the Word-made-flesh speaks. The Fourth Gospel makes this connection explicit as Jesus talks to his immediate followers in the shadow of the temple during his longest speech (John 13–17).

of the gospel. Thus, a further exploration of the temple mythology of Second Temple Judaism would exegete the many connections between the temple as sacred structure and the creation as depicted in Genesis. See, for example, Gary Anderson, “Inauguration at the Tabernacle Service at Sinai,” in *The Temple of Jerusalem: From Moses to the Messiah; In Honor of Professor Louis H. Feldman*, ed. Steven Fine, BRLJ 29 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 1–2. For Christian reflection of these connections, see Margaret Barker, *The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple in Jerusalem* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2008).

Here Jesus explicitly indicates how and why he has power to purify truly: while many Jews are coming to the temple to “purify” themselves (11:55) for Passover, and after the temple agent Judas has left the pre-Passover supper to betray Jesus, Jesus says to his closest followers: ἤδη ὑμεῖς καθαροί ἐστε διὰ τὸν λόγον ὃν λελάληκα ὑμῖν (John 15:3).⁹⁰ In other words, the Word-made-flesh can truly cleanse because he and not the empty holy of holies is the actual space for hearing the Word of God. Building on the notion that the tabernacle’s and the temple’s original ability (i.e., authority) to cleanse came not because of sacrifices but because of the presence of the speaking Word of God, the Word-made-flesh, Jesus, again draws attention spatially to the Father’s bosom, which is where the Word always is to be found. In fact, the eyes of temple worshipers and personnel are even more blind than the eyes of the man born blind, who, though he was blind, had begun to see truly—not just visually, but what only true eyes can see through the spoken word—namely, the voice of the invisible God that sat invisibly over the ark and spoke to the people. The man born blind can see truly not because he can see physically but because he has heard and believed the Word. He has been purified from the “world’s sin,” which is blindness to the Word.

Ultimately, and consistent with the other canonical gospels, one knows that the true cleansing will not occur through the ongoing presence of the Word-made-flesh within this world, that is, within the sphere of the temple. Like a human birth in which the fetus experiences a kind of death when it is expelled from the womb into the world as we know it, so too there will be a death, a violent expulsion from the world as we know it into another world. So in this gospel the goal of those who are first-born within their world must die, even as Jesus must and does. When he does, the Fourth Gospel rhetorically depicts blood and water issuing forth from Jesus’s side, an element of visual texture that did not escape the reflection of early church fathers, who saw it as a visual imagery of the birthing of the children of God.⁹¹

When he does die, faithful, temple-oriented Jews Joseph and Nicodemus go so far as to take his dead body and place it in a tomb. It is an account that is not at odds with the other gospel accounts; however, the way that the tomb is presented in John includes a final, visual confirma-

90. “You are already made clean by the word which I have spoken to you” (John 15:3, RSV).

91. See, for example, Augustine, *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 120.2.

tion of the bias that is rhetorically presented throughout John in John's depiction of the temple. There are only two tombs that are mentioned in John: that of Lazarus, to which Jesus is led by Mary and Martha (of Bethany),⁹² and that of Jesus, to which Jesus's body is brought and which another Mary (of Magdala) finds empty. Obviously in the cases of both the tomb of Lazarus and that of Jesus, the tomb is a sterile place of death, not of life. But in John, birth places are also in the end empty because of the exit into life of the being who once occupied them. So, too, with a tomb that is empty because the one dead is no longer there.

So, both the tomb of John 11 and that of John 20 are eventually empty, even as the temple is described rhetorically throughout the gospel; however, in contrast to John 11 and to any of the Synoptic empty tomb accounts, John 20 depicts Mary of Magdala as seeing something within that tomb, something that is unique and still in the empty tomb: two angels, one sitting where Jesus's head had been and one sitting where his feet had been at each end of a stone slab. Given the framing, anchoring, and confirming bias that we have noted throughout the gospel and that points clearly to the temple, the *visual imagery* here is strongly reminiscent of another spatial location that—though no Israelites would have seen it, much less a woman like Mary—it would indeed have been known by the temple personnel, especially those most closely associated with the “real absence” of the holy of holies. That place is of course the stone slab that lies at the heart of the holy of holies, guarded by both a cherubic headpiece and a footpiece marking the place where God once spoke to the people by His word. The slab where the Word's body once lay, like the slab that marks the absence of the ark, are both visually compelling signs of an invisible absence, but only the slab where the Word's body once lay can actually point beyond itself to the true Word that still speaks.⁹³ Can we conclude that among the reader-

92. There is some speculation that Lazarus and his two sisters, Mary and Martha, may be the narrative characterization of the historical figure of the high priest Eleazar/Lazarus b. Boethus, the last Sadducean high priest before the Roman-appointed priests. He was high priest at the end of the life of Herod the Great and at the start of the career of Archelaus. He is also reported to have had two sisters named Mary and Martha. The Sadducean/Boethan family of high priests was reportedly despised by the Pharisees (see b. Pesah. 57a).

93. In passing Brown mentions the possibility of this interpretation in one line (Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John* [13–21], AB 29A [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970], 989). He adds that the scene in the apocryphal Gospel of Peter is in marked contrast to the scene here, for even though there are two angels, their appear-

ship of John's Gospel there would have been some who understood and "saw" the conceptual significance of this vision that the narrative character Mary received as a visual stimulus with her own eyes? She is no priest of the first-creation order, but she is indeed functioning like the priesthood in the tabernacle and First Temple, as recipient of the Word. She is in fact depicted not dissimilarly from the Samaritan woman, who in the Fourth Gospel is the first person to receive Jesus's self-identification as I AM, even as Moses, Aaron's brother, had. How different is this new, second-creation birthing, not of human children but of children of God, going to look?

TENTATIVE CONCLUSIONS

John's Gospel portrays those who have faith as those who are ready to be born but are not yet fully alive in a way that they can remain alive. These are those who are poised to come alive, that is, to be born anew. They are those who, like the Samaritans, the man born blind, Mary of Magdala, or the Beloved Disciple, have mysteriously tasted a future moment of birth.⁹⁴ They are like all their coreligionaries in that they are children in a womb, children yet to be born, who cannot really see, even as children in a womb cannot see what is happening outside, in the "real" world. They are, however, poised to be born because of their belief, which is thus less seeing-as-getting-it and more being-poised-to-life. Eventually, if they do leave the womb and are born as God's offspring into that "real" world, they will see; if not, then they, like all others who have not believed, will remain in the womb as mere humans and die there.

In what does their belief consist? It consists in following the verbal (in the case of the gospel itself, written) clues to what the clues (signs) sug-

ance suggests a more apocalyptic, even mythic, portrayal. The imagery has been suggested as a foil to the imagery of the two thieves who hung on crosses on either side of Jesus. In contrast, the depiction of the empty tomb in John 20 as a scene that echoes the holy of holies in the temple was crucial for Saint Germanus's eighth-century understanding of the scene in John 20 and for his interpretation of the Christian altar in terms of the tomb *and* the holy of holies. See Saint Germanus of Constantinople, *On the Divine Liturgy: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary*, ed. and trans. Paul Meyendorff (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), 87.

94. The case of the man born blind is the best example of the latter. In the narrative, it is clear that he has been expelled from the "congregation" of Israel—not just the Pharisaic synagogue—and may be depicted as someone who has suffered a death leading to life, that is, second-birth.

gest. These signs, which are listed in the pivotal trial scene of John 5 as forensic witnesses, do not of themselves enable true sight. True sight comes only eventually, when one is born into that new world. The truth, therefore, remains still hidden to the first-born in this enwombed, temple-centered world. For it is not human existence per se that is the context for the Fourth Gospel's depiction of waiting-for-birth and birth-from; rather, the world (*κόσμος*) that the Word enters as "flesh" is the world of the temple, an entrapped existence, hallucinated by those who find themselves in it as a most beautiful world. These hallucinations mask the fact that this world actually has a death-hold on its "children," for if the first-born stay in this world, the result will be still-born decay. This "world" that the Word enters is "his own" world, a world that should ideally recognize and receive the Word into the holiest of places, where he in fact belongs, a place that physically symbolizes the "bosom of the Father," the place where the Father's heartbeat can be heard, and which the Word always inhabits, even during the earthly manifestation of his speech. But, no: this "world" has now become a place of death and will lead even the Word-made-flesh to his necessary death. Why? Because those who are in charge of it, who have the care of the sheepfold, have done so for gain (John 10) and have thus introduced every form of impurity into the very source of purification. If the means of purification has itself become impure, what hope is there for purification? Purification can only come through death and the pouring forth of blood that will lead the enwombed into a new, true, second-creation world.

Until that happens even Jesus, the Word that has become flesh, will remain only a clue, a "sign," to true sight. True, he will be a different clue from the others mentioned in John 5, since the words that he speaks as Word are themselves true. As such they should be intelligible as truth to those who hear them and enable their sight. But in fact they are heard only by some who might best be viewed as imperfect children of this world in the eyes of the temple and its personnel, hardly "his own," who are closest to the visual place of God's speaking at the core of the temple. But though not "his own," these are the ones who are best poised for the new life when it comes, leaving the temple behind in ruins and its personnel to wither like the grass of the field.

Their judgment has already come upon them, but the narrative explicitly depicts them acting impurely in consort with the impure Romans,⁹⁵

95. The pronoun *αὐτοῖς* of 19:16 can only refer to the *ἀρχιερεῖς* of 19:15.

entombing the Word-made-flesh in a place that the gospel describes using a depiction of the true emptiness found in the holy of holies in the temple. Eventually, the tomb of Jesus will be visually empty, as really empty (both visually and truly) as the holy of holies; however, the one who has been birthed out of this temple, depicted symbolically as his tomb, is now more fully alive than ever, and the rhetographical imagery seen within his empty space points to that. He will henceforth always and only be known in his rightful place in the “bosom of the Father,” whither he is ascending (cf. 20:17) and whither he will gather the other “offspring of God.” John’s narrative suggests to the reader: “Forget the empty womb that was the temple and its core, the holy of holies, and do not look back to the empty tomb but worship now in a new temple, where the Father’s heartbeat and the Father’s words alone are heard and give true life.”

SOME POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS FOR VISUAL DEPICTION AND
EXEGESIS IN LIGHT OF VIEWING THE TEXT OF THE
GOSPEL OF JOHN RHETOGRAPHICALLY

The great challenge presented by the Gospel of John is how to depict visually that which is “full of truth and full of grace,” when visualizing this truthfully cannot be done in the realm of human flesh. I hope to have shown that there is indeed rich imagery in John’s Gospel, though it is not depicted through visual texture as in, say, rhetorical *ekphrasis*. Rather, the imagery arises in the mind of the reader through complex conceptual blending. I have suggested that in John the rhetorical challenge to the reader is to see truly, which means specifically *not* to see with the eyes that are able to see visual sights but are easily blinded by visual, earthly hallucinations. In the gospel’s understanding, these visualizable sights are more often than not appearances that lead to the blindness of false conclusions. A “true” reality is a reality that transcends what is normally visible and dispels appearances.

Accordingly, it seems to me that there are likely four approaches that one could adopt for a visual representation of John’s Gospel understood from a rhetographic perspective. It seems necessary to highlight these, especially given the context of this essay within the Sawyer Seminar series.

The first possibility is the most obvious. It is to depict what the *visual texture* of John allows a reader to depict visually, namely, those scenes from the Gospel of John that are presented with explicit visual texture. A few stories would allow for such depiction, including the wedding at Cana,

the cleansing of the physical temple, the raising of Lazarus, the death of Jesus on the cross. But, would these depictions really get at the *rhetography* of the Gospel of John? In fact, limiting depiction of the Fourth Gospel to these scenes would only get at the rhetography of the Gospel of John if they were done with an ability to point to absence. Thus, the best candidate here might be not the empty tomb but the Fourth Gospel's visual depiction of what Mary saw in the empty tomb.

The second approach can be found in pre-Constantinian art, as we find it, for example, in the catacombs. Scenes here depict John's conceptual imagery that can be visualized in some way, either borrowed directly from conceptual metaphors in the gospel (e.g., Jesus as the Good Shepherd) or based on material from the cultural memory on which the Gospel of John draws, namely, the canonical Jewish Scriptures (e.g., Moses and the burning bush, Jacob's well, etc.). Such depictions can be helpful if they get at the *ideological* texture of John's Gospel, which is the purpose of the rhetography that is used in John. Could one, for example, think of depicting a shepherd carrying a slain sheep, with his same face, and both fully alive?

The third approach can be found in post-Constantinian art, which begins to depict not only the visualizable scenes found in texts like the Gospel of John and scenes from the canonical Jewish Scriptures but also now earthly realities of the children of God as heavenly. For example, the depictions in several Ravenna mosaics are splendid, indeed glorious, because they purport to be depictions of what is true. The procession figures in Saint Apollinare Nuovo have divine features because they, like the presumed viewer, are in process of divinization (*theiosis*). They show the figures to be different from this-worldly figures, unlike what could only be imagined "within the womb." In fact, both Ravenna baptisteries, in their womb-like and tomb-like form, may in fact be making the point architecturally and iconographically: the baptistery *is* the place of second-birth whence the child comes forth starting to see truly.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, this is a dangerous move, since, as we know, it led to the Constantinian "Christendom" that all too quickly authorized what human eyes could see as necessarily divine. Eventually, Christendom began to embody the very kind

96. In both Ravenna baptisteries, the waters of baptism may be viewed as the waters of the womb whence the second-born child arises truly purified and truly able to see. On the Ravenna mosaics, see Carl Otto Nordström, *Ravennastudien: Ideengeschichtliche und ikonographische Untersuchungen über die Mosaiken von Ravenna*, Figura 4 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1953).

of thing that the Fourth Gospel seems to target—namely, visible religious structures and impure religious clergy as a hollow shell, a womb with a death-hold on its children, providing tantalizing but untrue, hallucinatory impressions. The Renaissance, the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and Romanticism were all, in their own ways, responses to this evolution. Perhaps most eloquently, Friedrich Nietzsche denounced the Protestant churches of his day as “tombs and monuments of God,” holiest of holy places, where the Word of God had once spoken but no longer.⁹⁷ The

97. “Have you ever heard of the madman who on a bright morning lighted a lantern and ran to the market-place calling out unceasingly: ‘I seek God! I seek God!’ As there were many people standing about who did not believe in God, he caused a great deal of amusement. Why! Is he lost? said one. Has he strayed away like a child? said another. Or does he keep himself hidden? Is he afraid of us? Has he taken a sea-voyage? Has he emigrated? the people cried out laughingly, all in a hubbub. The insane man jumped into their midst and transfixed them with his glances. ‘Where is God gone?’ he called out. ‘I mean to tell you! We have killed him, you and I! We are all his murderers! But how have we done it? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the whole horizon? What did we do when we loosened this earth from its sun? Whither does it now move? Whither do we move? Away from all suns? Do we not dash on unceasingly? Backwards, sideways, forwards, in all directions? Is there still an above and below? Do we not stray, as through infinite nothingness? Does not empty space breathe upon us? Has it not become colder? Does not night come on continually, darker and darker? Shall we not have to light lanterns in the morning? Do we not hear the noise of the grave-diggers who are burying God? Do we not smell the divine putrefaction? for even Gods putrefy! God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him! How shall we console ourselves, the most murderous of all murderers? The holiest and the mightiest the world has hitherto possessed, has bled to death under our knife,—who will wipe the blood from us? With what water could we cleanse ourselves? What lustrums, what sacred games shall we have to devise? Is not the magnitude of this deed too great for us? Shall we not ourselves have to become Gods, merely to seem worthy of it? There never was a greater event,—and on account of it, all who are born after us belong to a higher history than any history hitherto!’ Here the madman was silent and looked again at his hearers; they also were silent and looked at him in surprise. At last he threw his lantern on the ground, so that it broke in pieces and was extinguished. ‘I come too early,’ he then said, ‘I am not yet at the right time. This prodigious event is still on its way, and is traveling, it has not yet reached men’s ears. Lightning and thunder need time, the light of the stars needs time, deeds need time, even after they are done, to be seen and heard. This deed is as yet further from them than the furthest star—and yet they have done it!’ It is further stated that the madman made his way into different churches on the same day, and there intoned his *Requiem aeternam deo*. When led out and called to account, he always gave the reply: ‘What are these churches now, if they are not the tombs and monuments of

reader of John sees in his words a bitter, ironic reflection of the very thing that the gospel itself presents rhetographically.

The fourth approach is in fact the most consistent but because of John's *rhetography* also the most elusive. It is also the most truly "mad" in Nietzsche's sense. It is to show the way in which some visually compelling, religious appearances, especially those that appear to offer a means to life, actually lead to death, and the way in which what is true ultimately eludes human vision. If one realizes that the people of Israel were encouraged to seek health and wholeness through a temple—and its personnel—that could only offer decay and death masked as life, one would see what the fetus in the womb could see and be aware of and thus want to flee. Imagine a fetus becoming conscious of his or her state, a world of darkness, broken only by dim shades of color and light, similar to the impaired vision of a blind person, with muffled and sometimes deafening sounds, fearsome but signifying nothing. Restricted and unable to flee this world, the fetus would surely cry out in panic. If realizing that he or she could not flee and the best that could be expected was to make do, the fetus might begin to hallucinate a world that would be the creation of fertile minds, but not itself fertile because not fully alive. On what imaginations would these hallucinations be based, what experiences? They would certainly not be based on what truly is in the sense of what can most fully become. What would this world look like? Perhaps the closest we might come is the mad hallucinatory spectacle of any number of Hieronymus Bosch works or of an Edvard Munch's *Scream* or of an Alban Berg's *Lulu*.

But such a depiction would still not grasp the rhetorical force of John's Gospel, that to which this awareness of limitation is meant to point. No, such a depiction might in fact pick up the elements of the gnostic world as found in gnostic texts that may have utilized John's Gospel or material related to it. For a truly Johannine depiction, however, one would also need to be able to show delight in the invisible beauty of the realm of truth and grace, of which the Word-made-flesh was full to overflowing (1:14–16). If the challenge is to depict the rhetography of the "world" that Jesus describes as in darkness, how much more challenging it is to depict the invisible, true world! It is possible to depict the Jerusalem temple in all of its false glory or of the purification rites as rites that defile and mask

God?" (Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Joyful Wisdom*, trans. Thomas Common [New York: Ungar, 1960] 3.125 [orig., 1882], 167–69).

death, to cause them to be scented as perfume that only masks the smell of bad odor but does not eliminate it and to paint the horrors of those who realize only too late that they are caught. But, to depict the new temple as the book of Revelation does is simply to pile cultural clue upon clue in the hope of creating enough outlines to get an idea of what this invisible world is truly like.

Yes, this fourth approach is the best one, but it is a formidable challenge to depict what is true but cannot be seen: the Word, God, light, and life. Examples of such a depiction may exist; I do not know. But, I do believe that for John, only faith can really paint that tableau, a faith that comes not from seeing the Word, which is impossible, nor even from seeing the Word that has become flesh, which many saw and did not believe, but only from hearing the Word and believing the Word, which is to be poised to be second-born.⁹⁸ Only the attentive faithful, especially the blind to this world, can achieve this tableau.

98. The Roman Missal includes as a prayer of thanksgiving the hymn *Adoro te* after the Mass. The words of this hymn, written by Thomas Aquinas on the occasion of the establishment of the Feast of Corpus Christi (1264), resonate strongly with the Fourth Gospel's emphasis on hiddenness, unseeing, and revelation only by word. Speaking of the eucharistic mystery of bread and wine, Thomas wrote: "Devoutly I adore thee, hidden Godhead, who truly stayest hidden under these forms: to thee doth my whole heart subject itself, because, in contemplating thee, everything [else] is found lacking. Sight, touch, taste fail with regard to thee, but only by hearing does one believe surely; I believe whatever God's Son said: nothing is truer than the word of Truth. (*Adoro te devote, latens Deitas, quae sub his figuris vere latitas: tibi se cor meum totum subiicit, quia te contemplan totum deficit. Visus, tactus, gustus in te fallitur, sed auditu solo tuto creditur; credo quidquid dixit Dei Filius: nil hoc verbo Veritatis verius*). There are many translations, but the one included here can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/SBL4819c1>.

PART 2
VISUAL EXEGESIS USING ROMAN
VISUAL MATERIAL CULTURE

PAUL, IMPERIAL SITUATION, AND VISUALIZATION IN THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

Harry O. Maier

PAUL AND EMPIRE

Throughout the past decade, scholars of Christian origins have turned their attention increasingly to the relationship of emergent Christianity to the Roman Empire.¹ The themes taken up in fact echo ideas presented by New Testament exegetes over a hundred years ago, when German archaeologists made new discoveries about the imperial cult in Asia Minor. Adolf Deissmann, Adolf von Harnack, Ernst Lohmeyer, Paul Wendland, and Karl Bornhäuser, for example, recognizing New Testament echoes of imperial language, argued that biblical authors used political terms and images drawn from the imperial cult to oppose persecuting emperors and a hostile empire.² Contemporary exegetes largely echo these assertions. One popular formulation, for example, describes Paul opposing Rome's empire reign with God's kingdom.³ Central in this understanding is the

1. John Dart, "Up against Caesar," *SBL Forum* 3.4 (2005), <http://tinyurl.com/SBL4819c>; David J. Lull furnishes a review ("Paul and Empire," *RelSRev* 36 [2010]: 253–55).

2. Gustav Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World*, trans. Lionel R. M. Strachan, 4th ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995); Adolf von Harnack, "Als die Zeit erfüllet war," in *Reden und Aufsätze*, ed. Adolf von Harnack, 2nd ed. (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1906), 301–6; Paul Wendland, "σωτήρ," *ZNW* 5 (1904): 335–53; Ernst Lohmeyer, *Christuskult und Kaiserkult* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1919); Karl Bornhäuser, *Jesus imperator mundi* (*Phil.* 3,17–21, und 2,5–12): *Vortrag vor den theologischen Fachschaften von Groningen, Kempen, Amsterdam, Utrecht und Leiden* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1938).

3. John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan L. Reed, *In Search of Paul: How Jesus's*

role of the imperial cult in forming popular expectations and dedication to Roman rule, orchestrated either from above by the emperor or from below by local aristocratic elites. Karl Galinsky has described the discovery of the imperial cult by New Testament scholars as a Columbus-like discovery of the new world.⁴ New Testament scholars have found evidence of Paul's alleged opposition to the imperial cult in virtually every line of his letters, in every metaphor used to champion dedication to Christ's rule and his achievements, and in every polemical situation he addressed. N. T. Wright's treatment of Paul is typical. He argues that the imperial cult was the glue that held the empire together and that, as a consequence, it would have been impossible for Paul to have written his letters without opposing emperor worship.⁵ This he argues despite the fact that the imperial cult was spread unevenly and with differing motivations in the period under consideration.⁶

Whatever their accuracy, claims to Paul's political attitudes and motivations are often accompanied with images drawn from the Roman Empire. Yet a chief challenge to the uses of visual data in the interpretation of Paul has been the lack of theorization about how to interpret texts with the help of imagery or any discussion of visual culture more generally and the function of iconography in the Roman Empire more specifically. The typical juxtaposition of texts and images that one finds, for example, in New Testament introductory textbooks often serves little more than to offer an interesting accompaniment to otherwise strictly text-based introductions to the tools of biblical exegesis. It is critical, however, in drawing links between the visual world of the Roman Empire and its influences on Paul's theology to take account of the cultures of vision of the Roman Empire, among both its elites and its everyday viewers. Further, it is important to remember that the interpretation of what is seen is often

Apostle Opposed Rome's Empire with God's Kingdom; A New Vision of Paul's Words and World (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2004).

4. Karl Galinsky, "The Cult of the Roman Emperor: Uniter or Divider?," in *Rome and Religion: A Cross Disciplinary Dialogue on the Imperial Cult*, ed. Jeffrey Brodd and Jonathan L. Reed, WGRWSup 5 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 1.

5. N. T. Wright, "Paul's Gospel and Caesar's Empire," in *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation; Essays in Honour of Krister Stendahl*, ed. Richard A. Horsley (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 2000), 161. See also his more recent account in *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 2 vols. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 1271–1319.

6. Collin Miller, "The Imperial Cult in the Pauline Cities of Asia Minor and Greece," *CBQ* 72 (2010): 324–32.

an unconscious cultural act, and while demonstrably laden with political meanings obvious from a later vantage point, may not have been so visible to audiences inhabiting the social worlds in which interpretation was formed. Without such theorization and cultural analysis, it is easy to come to inaccurate conclusions about the relation of text to image in ancient writings. This is true in Pauline scholarship, where it is too often assumed rather than demonstrated that the apostle's use of political language and imagery signaled a confrontation with imperial realities.

This paper is not a polemic but seeks an alternative, more nuanced account of "Paul and Empire" through analysis of the uses of imperial imagery in Pauline persuasion and a discussion of Roman imperial visual cultures. The following discussion outlines a model for using ancient visual culture in the interpretation of Paul's letters. I hope to show that Paul represents a complex negotiation of power by way of appropriation of the empire's political imagery and metaphors. Inflecting slightly Lloyd Bitzer's concept of "rhetorical situation," I will describe Paul's uses of imperial imagery and vocabulary as the creation of an "imperial situation" as a means of promoting a universal message. I will then turn to the importance of visualization in the task of rhetorical performance and Paul's appropriation of visual imperial and local civic honorific culture to create in his listeners' minds striking images of ideas to persuade audiences of his teachings. I will conclude with an application of the theory to the Letter to the Colossians (which I treat as pseudonymous, although authorship questions will not affect the outcome of the specific case argued here). Finally, I will return to the question of Paul and empire at the conclusion and make a case for the interpretation of Paul's relationship to the Roman Empire as manifesting cultural hybridity rather than a simple capitulation or resistance to Caesar's reign.

IMPERIAL SITUATION

Bitzer coined the phrase "rhetorical situation" in a 1968 essay to describe "a complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence which can be completely or partially removed if discourse, introduced into the situation, can so constrain human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence."⁷

7. L. Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 1 (1968): 3.

Central to Bitzer's concept is exigence—that is, rhetoric responds to a real or potential challenge to which it addresses itself. Rhetorical situation describes a real setting that requires address: "What is a rhetorical situation? I want to know the nature of those contexts in which speakers or writers create rhetorical discourse: How should they be described? What are their characteristics? Why and how do they result in the creation of rhetoric?"⁸ A rhetorical situation mirrors an empirical reality that merits a response: "The presence of rhetorical discourse obviously indicates the presence of a rhetorical situation."⁹ Among other examples of rhetorical situation, he cites the occasion of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address and observes that "each is a clear instance of rhetoric and each indicates the presence of a situation."¹⁰

Bitzer's theory has been criticized because of a positivistic orientation of rhetoric to "real" situations. Reader-response theory, poststructuralist criticism, as well as attention to the discursive creation of history require a cross-examination of Bitzer's empiricist orientation of rhetorical situation—a cross-examination that, were I to undertake it, would take us too far afield from the present task. Two observations are germane to the discussion here. First, the value of rhetorical situation is that it describes well the discursive component of persuasion and the fact that persuasion *reflects* a given situation construed historically in the broadest form, however we may understand it outside of strictly rhetorical interests. Second, building on the first, persuasion *creates* a situation; that is, it places its topic, its audience, its narrator, its exigence, and its successful outcomes in a culturally specific and constructed narrative world and argument. Today, when scholars write of rhetorical situation, a host of literary and ideological tools come into play: the question of implied author and audience; issues of power and politics in the interpretation and creation of situations to which a piece of persuasion addresses itself; the creation of and promotion of gender codes; the history of reception both before and subsequent to the appearance of a persuasive piece as hermeneutical horizon of meaning; and so on.¹¹

8. Ibid., 1.

9. Ibid., 2.

10. Ibid.

11. For an overview with discussion of chief theorists, objections, and bibliography, see David E. Aune, "Rhetorical Situation," in *The Westminster Dictionary of New*

A reconfigured model of rhetorical situation, disciplined by the methodological insights and tools just listed offers a useful means to assess the role of empire in Paul's writings. With a view to the frequent instances in the Pauline corpus of terminology at home in both Paul's larger imperial context and the specific civic contexts in which he lived, I use the phrase "imperial situation" to describe the ways in which Paul uses political language, metaphor, and narratives and ideals in his tactics of persuasion. *Situation* here refers both to the recurring *Sitz im Leben* of Paul's audiences as imperial city dwellers and to the way he situates them with the uses of political language and images in civic contexts. The uses of political language such as savior (σωτήρ), salvation (σωτηρία), gospel (εὐαγγέλιον), peace (εἰρήνη), Son of God (υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ), Lord (κύριος), parousia (παρουσία), reconciliation and cognates (καταλλαγή), ambassador (πρεσβεία) and cognates, as well as church (ἐκκλησία), body (of Christ) (σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ), and citizenship (πολίτευμα) are but a few instances that reflect borrowing and application to his proclamation, instruction, and exhortation. Metaphors such as slave of Christ (δοῦλος τοῦ Χριστοῦ), going out to meet the Lord (ἀπάντησιν τοῦ κυρίου), citizenship in heaven (τὸ πόλιτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς), and lead in triumph (θριαμβεύειν) reflect Paul's urban and Roman political context and are but a few of the instances of political images and vocabulary that pepper Paul's letters. In using such language and metaphor, Paul of course reflected his social and cultural context. However, when he applied such terms, often at home in chancery vocabulary, he also created his audiences and cast them as players in overarching political narratives. The brilliance of Paul in this regard is that he confers language reserved often for elites, military, and imperial achievements by generals and emperors, and political actions such as visitations and decrees onto the crucified and raised Jesus and onto fledgling communities that are worshiping most usually in artisans' shops or in the second-floor living quarters of tabernae and popinae owners.¹²

The power of civic language was that it represented a transcultural and global repertoire of terms and concepts to communicate communal ideals. Paul could assume knowledge of these terms and their place in larger idealized narratives of harmony, peace, and power amongst his listeners. They

Testament and Early Christian Literature and Rhetoric, ed. David E. Aune (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 423–25.

12. David Horrell, "Domestic Space and Christian Meetings at Corinth: Imagining New Contexts and the Buildings East of the Theatre," *NTS* 50 (2004): 349–69.

furnished for speaker/writer and audience a shared set of values conducive to the goals of good society and ethical living. Paul turned to political language and imagery because it was there that he could find a universal language to make persuasive the dramatic claims of his gospel. His audiences had been well primed by his formulations through their experiences first of Hellenistic and then Roman rule, each of which publicized universal claims in a variety of media extending from still-surviving forms such as coinage, monuments, and inscriptions through to those that no longer survive, such as games, processions, placards, spectacles in the arena, and so on. The Roman cities where Pauline formulations of the Christ cult emerged were literally stuffed with political imagery that was, like advertising, ubiquitous, inescapable and subliminally absorbed.¹³

ΕΚΦΡΑΣΙΣ AND ΕΝΑΡΓΕΙΑ

Until recently, scholars have not noticed the importance of graphic or vivid speech (*ekphrasis*) in New Testament and early Christian literature. The work of Vernon K. Robbins, L. Gregory Bloomquist, and Roy R. Jeal as well as colleagues studying the role of visualization and imagination in ancient Christian writings have shown the importance of vivid speech in New Testament literature.¹⁴ *Ekphrasis* was central in Paul's configuring of his audiences in an imperial situation. The apostle deployed vivid language drawn from the imperial world around him to create pictures of the benefits of Christ's reign and the obligations of Christ-followers to honor their Lord by placing their trust in him and honoring God through him. As

13. C. R. Whittaker, "Imperialism and Culture: The Roman Initiative," in *Dialogues in Roman Imperialism: Power, Discourse and Discrepant Experience in the Roman Empire*, ed. D. J. Mattingly, JRSup 23 (Portsmouth, RI: Cushing-Malloy, 1997), 145.

14. L. Gregory Bloomquist, "The Pesky Threads of Robbins's Rhetorical Tapestry: Vernon K. Robbins's Genealogy of Rhetorical Criticism," in *Genealogies of Rhetorical Criticism*, ed. Troy W. Martin (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 201–23; Vernon K. Robbins, "Response to L. Gregory Bloomquist: From the Social Sciences to Rhetography," in Martin *Genealogies of Rhetorical Criticism*, 225–44; Vernon K. Robbins, "Rhetography: A New Way of Seeing the Familiar Text," in *Words Well Spoken: George Kennedy's Rhetoric of the New Testament*, ed. C. Clifton Black and Duane F. Watson (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008), 81–106; Roy R. Jeal, "Melody, Imagery, and Memory in the Moral Persuasion of Paul," in *Rhetoric, Ethic, and Moral Persuasion in Biblical Discourse: Essays from the 2002 Heidelberg Conference*, ed. Thomas H. Olbricht and Anders Eriksson (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 160–78.

he was communicating with audiences constituted by members whose literacy was relatively limited, Paul's letters were crafted in a way that assured immediate recognition of their claims and teachings.

Ekphrasis describes the use of vivid speech in persuasion. Ancient rhetorical manuals, the Progymnasmata, furnish discussions of graphic language.¹⁵ Their value is not only in their definition but that they are also elementary: that is, they represent a level of rhetorical training more or less consistent with what we find in most of the New Testament (save the Letter to the Hebrews), a low-grade, entry-level kind of ability. Each of the composers of these handbooks—Aelius Theon, Hermogenes, Aphthonius, Nicolaus, and John of Sardis—dedicates a portion of his handbook to the topic of *ekphrasis*, the use of vivid description as hortatory strategy.¹⁶ Thus Theon, for example, defines *ekphrasis* as “descriptive language, bringing what is portrayed vividly [*enargōn*] before the sight.” *Ekphrasis* is *vivid* language.

Enargeia and cognates are the terms that dominate not only the definitions in the Progymnasmata but also in the instructions of Quintilian (late first century CE) concerning rhetoric.¹⁷ He cites the word *enargeia* in Greek in his discussion of the uses of images in declamation and then comments, “It is a great virtue to express our subject clearly [*clare*] and in such a way that it seems to be actually seen.” Later, he makes “vividness [*inlustris explanatio*]” the critical feature: persuasion entails “setting forth our facts in such a striking manner that they seem to be placed before our eyes as vividly [*gerantur sub aspectum paene subiecto*] as though they were taking place in our actual presence” (*Inst.* 8.3.62 [Butler LCL]; see also 9.1.27). Hearing is not enough; one must also see: “A speech does not adequately fulfill its purpose or attain the total domination it should have it if goes no further than the ears” (*Inst.* 8.3.62).

Enargeia invites listeners to fill in details prompted by vivid description. Through it, “[a listener] even imagines for oneself some of those

15. For texts, their dating, and their function in elementary training, see Ruth Webb, “The Progymnasmata as Practice,” in *Education in Greek and Roman Antiquity*, ed. Yun Lee Too (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 289–316.

16. See the following pages in George A. Kennedy, ed. *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric*, WGRW 10 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003): Theon, 45–47; Pseudo-Hermogenes, 86; Aphthonius, 117–20; Nicolaus the Sophist, 166–68; and John of Sardis, 218–21.

17. Quintilian, *Inst.* 4.2.63–65; 6.2.29–36; 8.3.62–72; 9.1.27; 9.2.40.

things which are not even mentioned" (*Inst.* 8.3.65). The rhetor can rely upon the people in the audience to furnish details not described, to fill in the gaps, to make the topic declaimed upon vivid in their own idiosyncratic ways. He stresses the importance of directing imagination carefully to assure that listeners see what the speaker wishes them to see, and he emphasizes that speakers should not depart too widely from commonplace associations and predictable outcomes. "The mind finds it easiest to accept what it can recognize" (*Inst.* 8.3.71). "We shall succeed in making the facts evident, if they are plausible; it will even be legitimate to invent things of the kind that usually occur" (*Inst.* 8.3.71).

Behind Quintilian's account of the vivid or lucid speech lies an understanding of cognition that is in many ways foreign to our own, though recent research on the role of cognitive blending in communication and understanding has shown that image and visualization are central to thought and communication.¹⁸ Ancient accounts of cognition link understanding and memory to *phantasiai*, or images, believed to be inscribed by experience on the soul or in analogous ways.¹⁹ Ruth Webb has shown its connection with Aristotelian and Middle Platonic and with Stoic epistemology. In the case of Aristotelian and Platonic theory, memory is understood as created by sense perception that leaves its imprint or enduring image on the soul. Central to persuasion is the drawing forth from the rhetor's imagination internal images or *phantasiai* and through vivid language to impress upon his listeners shared mental images and the emotions associated with them. "What lies behind vivid speech is the gallery of mental images impressed by sensation in the speaker's mind. The souls of both speaker and listener are stocked with internal images of absent things, and these provide the raw material with which each party can 'paint' the images the *ekphrasis* puts into words."²⁰ In Stoic theory, *phantasiai* are not so closely linked to what is perceptible but include more-abstract phenomena. They can be mental images derived from a real object, from reasoning (*katalēptikai*), or from figments of imagination (*phantasmata*) that are obstacles to a true perception of the world. In

18. For the theorization of cognition, Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).

19. For what follows, Ruth Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination, and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), 107–30.

20. *Ibid.*, 113.

the Stoic theorization of vivid speech, rhetoric serves true knowledge by removing from reasoning any impediment that would detract from true knowledge.²¹ In both Aristotelian-Platonic and Stoic theorization, vivid speech, through the evocation of an image, awakens the sense perception associated with the imprinted image. With these images comes a host of emotions.²² Thus Longinus can stress the role of emotion in awakening imagination: *phantasia* or visualization occurs “when under the effect of inspiration and passion, you seem to see what you are speaking about and bring it before the eyes of your listeners” (*Subl.* 15.1 [Roberts]). Once thus awakened the imagination takes over and starts to fill in details not represented by the speaker.

INTERIOR AND EXTERNAL NARRATIVE

A theoretician useful for the anthropological study of visual culture is Marcus Banks.²³ Banks is important because he has studied the role of artifacts in the construction of visual culture and the social creation of seeing. He distinguishes between external and internal narratives in visual culture. External narrative denotes the larger organization of visual reality shared by communities of viewers: the things they see when they look at an object like a religious object, an item of daily use, a monument, or a picture. This forms the larger cultural template that passes by usually unnoticed and which regular usage inscribes, in addition to those that tradition, cultural elites, politicians, and artists reinforce. The ages of Augustus, the Julio-Claudians, as well as of the Flavians, Trajan, Hadrian, and the Antonines are periods when enormous attention was given to the construction of a standardized external narrative of the sort Banks describes. This external narrative was imported to far-flung cities of the empire through coinage, placards, games, processions, statues, reliefs, and so on and filled cities with the same motifs and iconographical forms.

Banks's understanding of the interior narrative of visual culture is the local instantiation of the external narrative in a concrete form. The visual tokens of everyday life here take on their meaning by reference to the larger external narratives. For example, a photograph of a birthday party only has meaning once it is related to larger customs and then

21. *Ibid.*, 115–19.

22. *Ibid.*, 113.

23. Marcus Banks, *Visual Methods in Social Research* (London: Sage, 2001).

takes on particular meanings once one considers the particular composition of the birthday in question. This understanding of interior narrative is especially useful in the interpretation of vivid speech in Paul's letters and the visualization it engendered, because it offers a finer instrument for interpreting political language in the apostle's writings as simply for or against the Roman Empire, or as oppositional to ideological distortions of empire. Rather, one looks closely at the precise narrative (re)configurations of visual culture and then notes the ways in which Paul's graphic representations at once echo but also displace larger visual meanings. While elites like the emperor and local aristocrats produced external narratives for official purposes, nonelite viewers like Paul could use them to develop their own internal narratives. They could draw on the imagery and redeploy it for new purposes and understandings never intended by those who produced it.

COLOSSIANS AND THE USES OF IMPERIAL IMAGERY

The pseudonymous Letter to the Colossians furnishes an excellent way to show how *ekphrasis*, inner, and outer cultural narrative and politics work together to cast listeners into an imperial situation and to imagine the benefits of the Christ cult. It offers a test case for recognizing the uses of imperial military ideology and its reconfiguration for specific nonimperial religious ends. Further, it invites observations concerning how best to assess the political location of Colossians, a document of the Roman Empire. I am assuming in what follows that one of Paul's disciples wrote Colossians, perhaps when the apostle was still alive, in the early 60s, to churches in the Lycus Valley (near modern Denizli, Turkey), at Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis. Colossians is polemical. It presents a description of communities of Christ-followers who have either replaced or supplemented devotion to Christ with forms of rituals, prayers, and ascetical practices to what the writer names as "elemental powers."²⁴

The author deploys imperial narratives of subjugation, defeat, victory, and triumph as polemical strategy to describe the letter's audience as beneficiaries of Christ's rule. S/he describes listeners as ideally

24. It falls outside the limits of this discussion to identify the precise nature of the opponents. Clinton E. Arnold furnishes a survey of proposals: *The Colossian Syncretism: The Interface between Christianity and Folk Belief at Colossae*, WUNT 2/77 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996).

entrusting themselves to the universal geopolitical claims of the gospel (Col. 1:5–6), that through the death and resurrection of Christ the hostile forces that had kept humankind in bondage have been vanquished and in their place has come a message of reconciliation to all (Col 1:15–20; 2:15). Now not only is there no longer Jew or Greek, there are no longer barbarians or Scythians (Col 3:11), the latter being a vivid term that connoted in the Greek imagination a wild and exotic world of transgression and lack of civilization.²⁵ Christ's rule extends over both the cosmos and the globe. "Paul" casts his/her audience in an imperial situation of triumph and victory.

SEEING A VICTORY

Colossians 2:8–13 describes a series of beliefs and practices that might tempt Christ-followers to submit by way of ritual and ascetical practices to what the author describes as cosmic "principalities and powers" (v. 15). Colossians' general strategy is to remind its audience that the principalities and powers were created through and for the preincarnate Son (2:16) and then to invite them to imagine, spatially, a "vertical" cosmic order in which the raised and enthroned Jesus reigns above all creation. The letter represents Jesus's death as a victory over these same principalities and powers (2:15). Resonant with the uncontested Paul's understanding of baptism, Colossians presents baptism as a ritual of transfer out of the kingdom of the principalities and powers—the "dominion of darkness"—to that of God's "beloved Son" (Col 2:13).

The present tense dominates Colossians. In the uncontested corpus, resurrection is oriented to the future, but in Colossians the emphasis is on an action already complete.²⁶ "Since then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of

25. For a full discussion of Col 3:11 with reference to imperial imagery, see Harry O. Maier, "Barbarians, Scythians and Imperial Iconography in the Epistle to the Colossians," in *Picturing the New Testament: Studies in Ancient Visual Images*, ed. Annette Weissenrieder, Friederike Wendt, and Petra von Gemünden, WUNT 2/193 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 385–406.

26. Colossians does, of course, still retain a futurist eschatology inherited from the uncontested Paul—thus, Col 3:3. But whereas for the earlier literature future expectation orients belief and practice in the present, in Colossians it has all but lost its function in positioning Christ-followers in anticipation of an order about to break in.

God” (3:1). The shift in emphasis is to convince hearers that, because in baptism they have already been raised with Christ, it is inappropriate to serve those principalities and powers he vanquished on the cross.

As well as the present tense, Colossians is occupied with a vertical set of spatial relationships. As beneficiaries of Christ’s resurrection, listeners are not below the principalities and powers but reign with Christ as coregents above them. Christ is the head of the resurrected body, which is the body of Christ, the church (1:18, 24). As he is “the head of all rule and authority” (2:10), his body, the church, reigns alongside him. To put on the body of Christ indicates a ritualistic ascent in resurrection and the embrace of a new set of relationships steeped in a new ethos of love (3:12–17), and to put off the old self means to leave behind a life of the lower regions (2:20–22; 3:9–10). The audience is to set its mind on things above (3:2); the elemental spirits of the universe and their associated vices belong to what is below and left behind. The Household Code (3:18–4:1) establishes, as the organizing principle of this new life of corulership with the raised Christ, the right performance of duties arranged vertically: husbands, wives, children, slaves, masters.

The linchpin of the author’s argument is the victory that Christ brings his followers and the set of social relations and ethics that go along with it. At the heart of this letter is a theology that makes the death of Jesus a military victory over cosmic powers, through which they have been pacified and reconciled. Colossians represents the death of Christ as a triumph in Col 2:15, a text we will take up at the end of the discussion. It is sufficient here to say that triumph is the major key in which Paul composes his letter, and the benefits of Christ’s triumphal rule are the spoils the apostle promises his/her audience. Scholars have of course noticed that this is an imperial metaphor.²⁷ Few, however, have observed the ways in which such a highly charged image of Roman rule belongs with the other imperial vocabulary and imagery of the letter as a whole, and especially how this language evokes a whole series of visual associations.²⁸

27. Preeminently Wesley Carr, *Angels and Principalities: The Background, Meaning, and Development of the Pauline Phrase *hai archai kai hai exousiai**, SNTSMS 42 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 49–52, 58–66; and Roy Yates, “Colossians 2:15: Christ Triumphant,” *NTS* 37 (1991): 573–91.

28. For notable exceptions, Rosemary Canavan, *Clothing the Body of Christ at Colossae*, WUNT 2/334 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012); Brian J. Walsh and Sylvia C.

The image of triumph in Col 2:15 develops the political language introduced earlier in the letter, in the so-called Christ Hymn of Col 1:15–20. Here again the political language has been largely passed over in traditional exegetical treatments of the passage.²⁹ After describing creation of the thrones, lords, principalities, and authorities by Christ (1:16), the hymn states that he has “reconciled” (ἀποκαταλλάξαι) all things (1:20, 22) and “made peace” (εἰρηνοποιήσας, 1:20) by his crucifixion. The verb ἀποκαταλλάσσειν (“to reconcile”) and its cognates have a strong imperial political valence to represent the diplomatic process of reconciliation to bring an end to hostilities.³⁰

The second term, εἰρηνοποιήσας, is more directly associated with military victory. It appears in 1:20 to describe the means of reconciliation. The Roman theology of imperial victory was one of the pacification (or threat of it) of enemies and conquered peoples.³¹ Εἰρηνοποιεῖν (“to make peace”) expresses this notion of imperial pacification, both on a civic level and, more importantly with reference to Colossians, on a cosmic level as well. The Julio-Claudians imagined the peace Rome (*pax Romana*) brings as mirroring the peace of the gods (*pax deum*).³² Colossians deploys it to

Keesmaat, *Colossians Remixed: Subverting the Empire* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 49–64.

29. Overviews of the literature show no treatment of this aspect; see, for example, Larry R. Helyer, “Recent Research on Col. 1:15–20 (1980–1990),” *GTJ* 12 (1992): 51–67; Pierre Benoit, “L’hymne christologique de Col 1, 15–20: Jugement critique sur l’état des recherches,” in *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults*, ed. Jacob Neusner, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 226–63; Fred O. Francis and Wayne A. Meeks, eds., *Conflict at Colossae: A Problem in the Interpretation of Early Christianity Illustrated by Select Modern Studies* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979). This is not to deny other similarities with other literature as well, specifically Jewish texts, for which, see Arnold, *Syncretism*, 158–94; James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 92–93. My intent is to draw attention to the imperial aspects of the language and imagery.

30. Cilliers Breytenbach, *Versöhnung: Eine Studie zur paulinischen Soteriologie* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1989), 73, 79, 191–220.

31. Hans Windisch, “Friedensbringer—Gottessöhne: Eine religionsgeschichtliche Interpretation der 7. Seligpreisung,” *ZNW* 24 (1925): 240–60.

32. For their relationship in imperial ideology, see Paul Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, trans. Alan Shapiro, Jerome Lecture 16 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988), 101–35; Karl Galinsky, *Augustan Culture: An Interpretive Introduction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 288–312; Harald Fuchs, *Augustin und der antike Friededgedanke: Untersuchungen zum neun-*

show how the pacification of principalities and powers by the incarnate Son, Jesus, has brought about a whole new order of peace and concord in his body, the church. The difference between Roman pacification and the one envisioned by Col 1:20 is that, in the latter instance, peace comes about through the death of Jesus, not the slaying of enemies.

“Paul’s” vivid representation of pacification and reconciliation through subjugation would have prompted mental images of imperial victory formed from daily visual experiences of the listeners’ urban world. Following the visual anthropological methods of Banks, we can see how the inner narrative of Colossian’s vivid imagery echoes larger sociocultural visual narratives. Exegetical treatments of Colossians pass over the imperial and cosmic aspects of imperial rule, but once seen, they cast into relief a host of other imperial echoes and associations.

COSMIC PACIFICATION

A common theme in Greco-Roman literature roughly contemporary with Colossians is that the emperor’s rule mirrors a concord of diverse, sometimes opposing, elemental forces. Philo, Plutarch, Seneca, the author of Pseudo-Aristotle’s *De mundo*, Dio of Prusa, and Aelius Aristides describe the rule of Rome over competing nations as a mirror of the gods’, especially Jupiter’s, bringing order to chaotic elements and cosmic powers.³³

zehnten Buch der Civitas Dei, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1965), 186–204; Stefan Weinstock, “Pax and the ‘Ara Pacis,’” *JRS* 50 (1960): 44–58; more recently, Jörg Rüpke (*The Religion of the Romans*, trans. and ed. Richard Gordon [Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007], 65–85) and Clifford Ando (*The Matter of the Gods, The Transformation of the Classical Heritage* 44 [Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008], 120–48) outline the more general religious outlook and its working assumption, the latter with direct comparison to the cult of Israel.

33. For example, Philo reflects his imperial backdrop in his depictions of civil order mirroring cosmic concord (*Decal.* 178; *Spec.* 2.188–192; *Fug.* 10)—here the Augustan order is transparent in celebrating God as “the giver of peace [εἰρηνοπός], who has abolished all seditions in cities, and in all parts of the universe, and has produced plenty and prosperity” (*Spec.* 2.192; cf. *Legat.* 8; 15–19, where the imperial application of cosmic harmony is explicit); for the imperial associations, see Erik Peterson, *Der Monotheismus als politisches Problem: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der politischen Theologie im Imperium Romanum* (Leipzig: Hegner, 1935), 121–31. Plutarch (*Fort. rom.* 2.316e–317c) likens Roman imperial pacification of contending powers to a cosmic ordering of opposing natural elements; *Princ. iner.* 5.781f–782a likens the ruler governed by divine reason to the sun, the image of god, regulating

In the period of Augustus, the imagery of Jupiter (thunderbolt, spear, eagle) and its associations with Olympian victory was adopted in imperial iconography.

In addition to depicting Jupiter as vice-regent of Zeus/Jupiter, the *pax Romana* was likened to the cosmic peace of the heavens. Both of these themes can be seen on the Gemma Augustea (ca. 10 CE; see fig. 1). In the upper register, on the right, Augustus is seated as Jupiter Capitolinus. Roma is to his right, and behind him are Neptune, Tellus with cornucopia, and Italia who crowns him. Tiberius steps off his chariot accompanied by Victory behind him, having pacified Rome's enemies. The lower register depicts conquest by showing legionaries erecting a *tropaeum* and subjugating barbarians to bring about divinely ordained Roman rule and peace. Imperial cult inscriptions similarly liken the emperor to Jupiter/Zeus. The gemma is a rare and elite object that very few would have seen, but it is illustrative of political affirmations of Roman rule spread across the empire. A decree from Halicarnassus, published immediately after Augustus's death, for example, establishes a cult to the divine emperor and identifies Augustus as Zeus Patroos.³⁴ An earlier (9 BCE) inscription from Priene uses Jovian imagery to celebrate Divine Providence for granting a "Savior [Augustus] who has made war to cease and who shall put every-

the cosmos, free from chance and change. Seneca (*Clem.* 1.1.2; 1.3.3–4) conceives the empire as a unity of diverse forces that would descend into chaos were it not for the emperor, the vicar of the gods, as its head, governed by divine reason and regulating the body of his Empire. Pseudo-Aristotle (*Mund.* 396a32–401a11) betrays the imprint of its author's first-century imperial culture in its representation of the absolute ruler as bringing about civic harmony mirroring the divine governance of conflicting natural and cosmic forces. Dio of Prusa (*Or.* 40.35) urges his fellow citizens of Prusa to seek concord with the Apameans by asking them to consider the harmony of the heavens and the orderly relation of the elements (air, earth, water, and fire) as the model after which to govern their mutual well-being. Aelius Aristides (*Or.* 23.76–78) likens the harmony of emperors with cosmic concord. For the eclectic philosophical backdrop to these ideas, see Glenn F. Chesnut, "The Ruler and the Logos in Neopythagorean, Middle Platonic, and Late Stoic Political Philosophy," *ANRW* 16.2:1310–32, and E. R. Goodenough, *The Political Philosophy of Hellenistic Kingship*, YCS 1 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1928), 55–102. For the image of the emperor as Jupiter's viceroy ordering the political realm after the Jovian example of heavenly rule, J. Rufus Fears, *Princeps a diis electus: The Divine Election of the Emperor as a Political Concept at Rome* (Rome: American Academy in Rome, 1977), 189–251.

34. V. Ehrenberg and A. H. M. Jones, *Documents Illustrating the Reigns of Augustus and Tiberius*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), 83–84, no. 98a, ll. 6–7.



Figure 1. Gemma Augustea, Courtesy of the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria

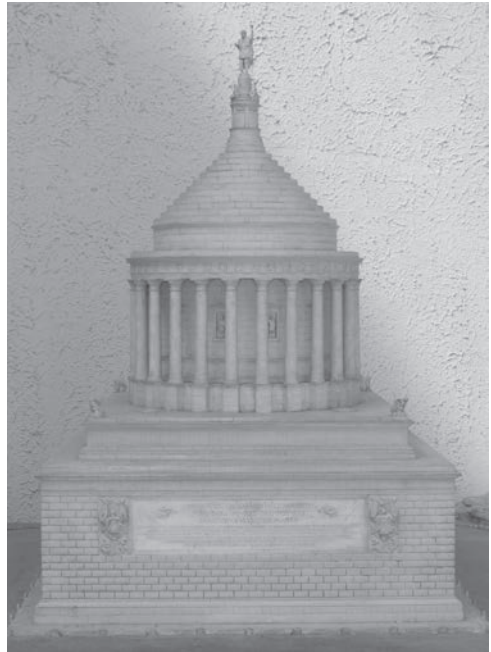


Figure 2. Model of the Tro-paeum Alpium, Courtesy of the Museo della Civiltà Romana, Rome, Italy

thing [in peaceful] order.”³⁵ The gemma puts in pictures what such inscriptions state in words. Imperial monuments were a means of advertising these claims to a broad public. They represented the cosmic dimensions of the Roman theology of military victory found in the Gemma and represented in inscriptions. For example, at Turbie, near Monaco, in 6 BCE, the Roman senate inaugurated a monument to honor Augustus’s subjugation of forty-six tribes in the Alps. The so-called *tropaeum Alpium*, the “Victory of the Alps,” was built as a rotunda divided by twenty-four columns on its upper level (fig. 2). According to medieval and sixteenth-century descriptions, a statue of Augustus, no longer extant, possibly represented as Jupiter, with bound figures at his feet, surmounted the rotunda.³⁶ The form of the monument in the round as well as the twelve bound figures placed around its circumference are suggestive of the celestial sphere and the zodiac. Augustus surmounted on the top likens Augustus’s reign on earth to Jupiter’s rule of the cosmos. Later, Nero likened his rule to the cosmic governance of both Jupiter and Helios.³⁷ The emperor’s self-stylized cosmic associations with Helios were reflected in a wide iconographic repertoire, including, perhaps, numismatic images of him with a radiate crown (an image usually reserved for emperors posthumously deified).³⁸

UPSIDE DOWN VICTORY

It was through such imagery that viewers were to be persuaded that they were living as the beneficiaries of a concordat between the gods and their earthly vicar. It communicated to diverse peoples that they belonged to a greater, transethnic, global order and that this order was established thanks to a divinely elected nation and its emperor, Jupiter’s vice-regent, or in some cases embodiment, to meld otherwise competing nations into a harmonious order.³⁹ Upon an emperor’s accession, one of his first acts was

35. Ibid., 82, no. 98, ll. 37–38.

36. Jules Formigé, *Le trophée des Alpes (La Turbie)*, Fouilles et monuments archéologiques en France métropolitaine, Supplément à Gallia 2 (Paris: Centre national de la Recherche Scientifique, 1949), 74–75, with sources.

37. For a renaissance in Jovian imagery under Nero, see J. Rufus Fears, “Nero as Viceregent of the Gods in Seneca’s *De Clementia*,” *Hermes* 103 (1975): 486–96; Fears, “The Cult of Jupiter and Roman Imperial Ideology,” *ANRW* 17.1:69–74.

38. Fears, *Princeps*, 235–37.

39. Ando (*Matter of the Gods*, 206–73) offers an excellent account of emperors’

to disseminate his images across the empire. Among these were images of his military victories and, specifically, victory in the company of the gods, the erection of monuments, and the display of military standards, trophies, and panels depicting decisive victories.⁴⁰

There are no surviving examples of the type just listed from the cities of Hierapolis or Laodicea, which Colossians names. Nevertheless, less than 100 kilometers away from Colossae, at Aphrodisias, at the imperial temple dedicated to the Julio-Claudian emperors and their families, the statues and reliefs of the Sebasteion or imperial temple translated into stone the cosmic rule of the emperors and its benefits for the world's inhabitants.⁴¹ As such, it is especially instructive for helping to capture the kind of imperial imagination Colossians triggered in its audience when it celebrated the triumph of Christ over the principalities and powers and his heavenly reconciliation of them, and for helping to recognize the visual aspects of the imperial metaphor the letter adopts and adapts to persuade Christ-followers to accept its teachings.

The temple of three tiers (ca. 12 meters high) was built on an east-west axis and organized around a rectangular paved temenos or courtyard (approximately fourteen by ninety meters). Sculptural reliefs comprised the second and third stories of both the north and south side. At its eastern end was a temple (no longer surviving) built on top of a flight of stairs. The first impression one gains when beholding the site is its vertical program. The three stories draw the eye upward even as the long and narrow temenos draws it eastward, where prayers and sacrifices were made to the emperor and his family. Thus the vertical and the horizontal merge; the architecture brings ritual and the gods together, with their focal point set on the celebration of Julio-Claudian rule. As a whole, architects and artists designed the Sebasteion's iconographical program to demonstrate that the inhabitants of the Roman Empire owed whatever benefits of peace and prosperity they enjoyed to the Julio-Claudian dynasty, which the gods had appointed to pacify the nations and bring order to the world (fig. 3).

uses of iconography as a means of persuasion, as well as the various urban locations where images of the emperor and his achievements were displayed.

40. Gilbert Charles Picard, *Les trophées romains: Contribution à l'histoire de la religion et de l'art triomphal de Rome*, Bibliothèque des Écoles Françaises d'Athènes et de Rome 187 (Paris: Boccard, 1957), 285–342.

41. See R. R. R. Smith, "The Imperial Reliefs from the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias," *JRS* 77 (1987): 88–138 for reproductions and discussion.

The north and south side of the courtyard on the third and second tiers comprised a sculptural program that included representations of emperors and their family members depicted as Olympian deities associated with reliefs of personified nature and cosmic powers, female representations of conquered nations, and sculptural

reliefs dedicated to scenes from Greek mythology and the story of Aeneas. These were conspicuously placed on the north side of the portico; they thereby expressed the global reach and cosmic dimensions of Julio-Claudian rule—over earth and sea, from rising to setting sun.⁴² The second northern tier of the Sebasteion displayed fifty female statues, each representing a different nation or people conquered by Augustus and added to the empire.⁴³

On the southern side of the courtyard, the second tier portrayed episodes from Greek myths. The third tier reliefs depicted Roman emperors and their victories. Interspersed among them were panels given over to Olympian gods represented as individual figures. Surviving reliefs depict the emperors in the company of the gods, with divine qualities, or in association with Greco-Roman myths. One depicts Augustus with a Victory, a bound captive, and a *tropaeum*. To his right, symbolizing Jovian power, is a large eagle; the scepter Augustus holds similarly evokes themes associated with Jupiter/J Zeus. The *tropaeum* to Augustus's immediate left and the image of the bound captive below reinforce this message. Beside the

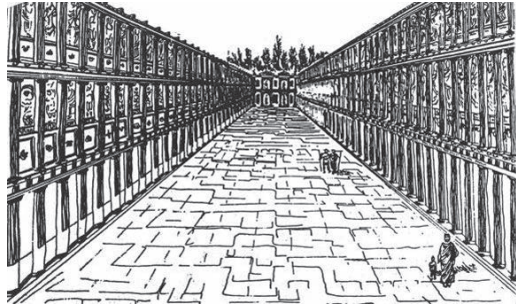


Figure 3. Artist's Rendition of Aphrodisias Sebasteion

42. For discussion of the cosmological affirmations of this portraiture, see Charles Brian Rose, *Dynastic Commemoration and Imperial Portraiture in the Julio-Claudian Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 168.

43. Thus J. Reynolds, "New Evidence for the Imperial Cult in Julio-Claudian Aphrodisias," *ZPE* 43 (1981): 317–27; R. R. R. Smith notices that the nations personified represent those conquered by, added to, or reconquered by Augustus ("Simulacra Gentium: The *ethne* from the Sebasteion of Aphrodisias," *JRS* 78 [1988]: 58–59).

tropaeum stands a Victory. As the relief invokes military victory on earth, it recalls mythology associated with heavenly rule (fig. 4).



Figure 4. Augustus with Nike and Trophy, Courtesy of the Aphrodisias Museum, Aphrodisias, Turkey



Figure 5. Augustus by Land and Sea, Courtesy of the Aphrodisias Museum, Aphrodisias, Turkey

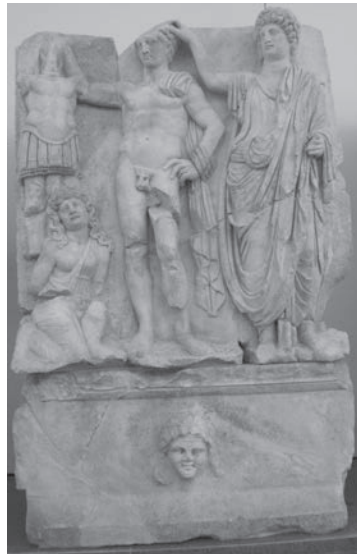
Another relief invokes both mythic and cosmic elements together. Here a nude Augustus in forward stride is flanked by personifications of earth and sea. A cornucopia at his right symbolizes the abundance of harvest. A prow in his left hand designates his power over the sea. Here Augustus is a divine figure who has his place alongside the gods who govern the cosmos, to rule land and sea, as well as to usher forth their abundance (fig. 5).

Other reliefs signify association with divinity in more subtle but equally instructive ways. They represent the emperors in heroic nudity in order to assimilate them to heroes, as in the case of Germanicus, who stands in a classical pose beside the *trophaeum* and bound barbarian child at his right (fig. 6).



Figure 6. Naked Germanicus with Bound Captive and Trophy, Courtesy of the Aphrodisias Museum, Aphrodisias, Turkey

Figure 7. Claudius Crowned by Roma, Courtesy of the Aphrodisias Museum, Aphrodisias, Turkey



Or they represent their achievements as the deeds of heroes, such as in the case of Claudius, again a classical nude, crowned by a personified Senate or Roman people to his left, and a bound female captive below a trophy to his right (fig. 7).

The Sebasteion is a monument and as such is a special case of imperial iconography. It is impossible to know, of course, whether the author of Colossians ever saw the Sebasteion or whether it directly influenced him/her. The argument here, however, does not require personal knowledge of the temple. I instead cite these visual data to argue that the monument is illustrative of the nonmonumental iconography that helped to shape the imaginations of the kind of first-century listeners addressed by Colossians. This iconography took the form of coins, inscriptions, statues, and reliefs that were widely dispersed in the Lycus Valley, where listeners to Colossians lived.⁴⁴ The monument offers a dramatic and extended visual program of what other more quotidian iconography depicted.

Colossians represents the crucifixion as a pacification of hostile cosmic powers and prompts its listeners to imagine the outcome of their subjugation celebrated in a victory procession (Col 2:15). “Having been stripped [ἀπεκδυσάμενος], he boldly exposed [ἐδειγμάτισεν ἐν παρρησία] the principalities and powers, triumphing [θρειαμβεύσας] over them by means of it [the cross; ἐν αὐτῷ].”⁴⁵ Here the crucifixion is at once a revelation of the violence of the imperial order that is hostage to hostile cosmic powers and the place of a triumph over them. We can safely suppose that the letter’s listeners had never seen a Roman triumph, but they were well prepared to imagine the kind of subjugation verse 15 graphically depicts through representation of the conquered on coins and other media such as placards, games, and processions. The victory here presented is upside down, since it is through being the victim rather than the wielder of Roman torture and death that such a triumph comes. Roman subjugation exposes itself for the order of violence and evil it is, while the death of Christ represents an alternative vision even as it invokes the language of victory to persuade listeners. The result is paradoxical.

44. See Harry O. Maier, *Picturing Paul in Empire: Imperial Image, Text and Persuasion in Colossians, Ephesians and the Pastoral Epistles* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 80–82.

45. Here, following Yates (“Colossians,” 573–91), I interpret ἀπεκδυσάμενος as a middle-passive reflexive verb and the “principalities and powers” as the object of “exposed boldly” rather than “stripped.”

VISION AND PARADOX

The foregoing problematizes the relationship of Paul and empire. What we discover in the appropriation of vivid imagery from the register of iconography celebrating the benefits of and achievements of imperial rule is a complex negotiation of political commonplaces. At one level it is hardly surprising that a first-century Christ-follower should have appropriated a ubiquitous picture language to make universal claims for an eschatologically oriented religious movement. Indeed, prophetic and apocalyptic writers of the Hebrew Bible did the same when they drew upon ancient Near Eastern motifs and images to represent Israel's/Judah's national hopes and beliefs about its ultimate destiny.⁴⁶ What is more surprising is the way the author ascribes the imperial motifs of victory to crucifixion, and how s/he pictures the triumph over enemies, the parade of the triumphator, as coming about through a tragic death God has used to create a new order.

Postcolonial study offers some insights for the interpretation of emergent cultural and religious identity in a new movement that was expanding through the Roman Empire. It is especially useful in the study of Colossians because it offers a means for investigating the complex relations that result when colonized cultures appropriate the ideologies of the colonizer as a means of self-definition. Hybridity describes a colonial productive liminal space, in which the colonized are not quite the colonizer and not quite the fully subjugated, but both together, in the formulation of identity, practices, and ideals.⁴⁷ According to Homi Bhabha, central to hybridity is the notion of mimicry, the imitation of a dominant cultural script so as to make it one's own, but in a highly inflected manner. Hybridity, he argues, describes a process of self-identification whereby "'denied' knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority—its rule of recognition."⁴⁸ "In mimicry, the representation of identity and meaning is rearticulated along the axis of metonymy," writes Bhabha.⁴⁹ The "denied knowledge" that the crucified reconciles, pacifies,

46. A much-studied phenomenon; for literature and discussion, John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 2nd ed., Biblical Resources Series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 17–33.

47. See especially Homi Bhabha's notion of colonial mimicry in *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 121–31.

48. *Ibid.*, 162.

49. *Ibid.*, 90.

and triumphs is suggestive of a metonymous mimicry that enters upon a dominant discourse and estranges the very foundation of its authority. For here, the way of crucifixion, of love for others, disrupts even as it borrows from a dominant discourse.

We cannot and should not argue that the political situation of the Lycus Valley under Roman rule was one akin to the colonization of modern imperial powers. Nevertheless, hybridity offers a heuristic tool for the analysis of an emergent Christian religious identity in the urban contexts of the Roman Empire. Critical here is the tension of not quite one thing or the other. To resolve this liminal identity to either one thing (opposition) or the other (accommodation) is to misrepresent the dynamic social reality of Paulinism as represented both in the earlier and the later New Testament letters. The outcome of deploying vivid language drawn from a larger external narrative of the Roman Empire for the purposes of an internal narrative of religious polemic is that imperial discourse is legitimated even as it is dismantled. One realizes the full force of this paradox when one reads Colossians as a vivid text that places its listeners in an imperial situation and sees it as creating an internal narrative with the daily images from the external imperial narratives of a shared visual culture.

THE GALATIAN SUICIDE AND THE TRANSBINARY
SEMIOTICS OF *CHRIST CRUCIFIED* (GALATIANS 3:1):
EXERCISES IN VISUAL EXEGESIS AND
CRITICAL REIMAGINATION

Brigitte Kahl

1. PREVIEW

1.1. Pergamon Museum Berlin

The room was dimly lit and evoked a sanctuary-like feeling. Artifacts of the Pergamene kings and their deities in dignified poses stood watching from the side wings behind pillars draped in crimson. On a long table running down the central aisle, four human bodies were on display, the whiteness of their marble flesh in stark contrast to the bright red of the countertop that carried their collapsed shapes as if they were floating on a stream of blood. Bleeding they were, profusely, in petrified gushes from gaping wounds in their chests, bellies, backs—a *Dead Giant*, a *Dying Gaul*, a *Dying Persian*, a *Dead Amazon* (see fig. 1). Farther down loomed another seated but sunken figure somewhat similar to the first dying Gaul, though much bigger and on a separate pedestal. He could barely keep himself upright. Blood was running in rivulets down from a diagonal cut on his right side underneath the chest, vaguely reminiscent of the spot where painters later located the “side-wound” of Christ.

Like a straight arrow, the whole presentation was running down the hall and pointing to its centerpiece at the front, where a second “large” Gaul stood tall and upright, high above the others on an elevated pedestal, the only one of the six standing and facing the audience. A nude male figure full of wild motion, he was plunging a sword into his chest, while holding up a slumped female with his other hand. The white plaster



Figure 1. Exhibition hall at the Pergamon Museum in Berlin, 2011–2012, with a display of the four “small barbarians” from Naples/Italy—a *Dead Giant*, a *Dying Galatian*, a *Dying Persian*, and a *Dead Amazon*—together with plaster casts of the two “big” (or Ludovisi) Galatians/Gauls—*The Dying Galatian* (or *Trumpeter*) and *The Galatian Suicide* at the front and center. All sculptures are Roman copies of Pergamene originals dating to the third/second century BCE.

cast of this suicidal Gaul stood out dramatically against the gilded mosaic background, and the spotlight surrounded him like a golden halo. Even without some vaguely cruciform allusions in the overall composition of the sculpture, one could not have missed the impression that it occupied the altar-like space where Christian visual habituation would anticipate an image of the crucified Christ.¹

The Galatian Suicide and *Christ Crucified*: The thread connecting the two images may be less arbitrary than it seems at first and is worth following for a bit. When the Pergamon Museum in Berlin opened its doors for Yadegar Asisi’s spectacular Pergamon Panorama in 2011–2012, it also hosted in a special exhibition four of the famous “small barbarians” from Naples, Italy, and put them on display together with plaster casts of their

1. A strong vertical axis in his posture, even more visible in fig. 2, is emphasized through the sword striking in a straight line from above. This dynamic is “crossed” by a horizontal motion in the outstretched woman’s left arm; see below, n. 66.

two “large” siblings, the Ludovisi Gauls/Galatians.² The dramatic arrangement was intended.³ Even the church-like aura began to make sense at a closer look. Featuring some of the most precious and priced pieces of Greco-Roman art that survived into the twenty-first century, all six sculptures represent a fairly coherent visual and conceptual program that indeed transposes the spectator into a space one might call the innermost sanctuary of Western civilization—a sacrificial site where blood is collectively consumed, if only symbolically and visually: the blood of the conquered “barbarian” other.

With its origins reaching beyond Pergamon far back into the mythological imaginary of our civilization, this archetypal religion of war-making and death was already firmly in place two millennia ago when Paul wrote his signature letter “to the assemblies [ἐκκλησίαι] of Galatia” (Gal 1:2). Its eye-catching rituals were performed on the battlefield, in the arena, and through triumphal processions or public crucifixions, and its faith-constructs were universally proclaimed by imperial religion and powerful images in every corner of the Roman Empire. Regarding the first-century CE Galatians in Asia Minor—they happened to be the direct descendants of the bodies on display at the “red table.” This is the most immediate contextual link between the sculptures and the letter. Yet it is not the long line of their dying and dead ancestors sculpted in marble or cast in bronze with which Paul confronts the Galatians but a different image evoked by his words: the image of *Christ as crucified* (Gal 3:1).

1.2. New Testament Studies Turning “Visual”

Claiming that Paul’s word image of *Christ Crucified* in Gal 3:1 is different from the visual imagery of the *Dying Galatian/The Galatian Suicide* or that it is related at all is a bold statement. Traditionally, this connection has not been made. Prompted by his extensive and erudite work with domestic art in Pompeii, David Balch was the first to point out that the topic of tragic voluntary death in the first century CE had a significant visual presence in wealthy Roman and Greek houses where Paul’s communities gathered.

2. For an overall introduction to the exhibition featuring Asisi’s panorama and other Pergamene artifacts, see *Pergamon* (30.9.2011–30.9.2012). Yadegar Asisi, Volker Kästner, and Stephan Oettermann, *Yadegar Asisis Panorama der Antiken Metropole* (Berlin: Asisi, 2011).

3. *Ibid.*, 141.

Frescoes showing Iphigenia's self-sacrifice to appease Artemis, for example, or sculptures like *The Galatian Suicide* would be an essential part of the visual context that influenced how Paul's ἐκκλησίαι tried to make sense of Christ's dying on a cross.⁴

Meanwhile, the visual turn in New Testament studies has started to transform our approach to "reading" and "seeing" in fundamental ways.⁵ Vibrant lines of scholarship from various venues within the field and across disciplinary boundaries presently are converging in a most productive synergy to establish "visual exegesis" within the traditional canon of exegetical methods. On the one hand, iconography emerged as a new subject for textual and contextual inquiry.⁶ Paul Zanker's *Power of the Images in the Age of Augustus*, written by an archaeologist and art historian from outside the field, undoubtedly had an (unintended) catalytic effect.⁷ Demonstrating the immediate contextual importance of Roman visual sign-systems in communicating imperial ideology, it coincided and productively interacted with emerging empire-critical and postcolonial approaches in New Testament scholarship.⁸ From another, primarily tex-

4. David L. Balch, "Paul's Portrait of Christ Crucified (Gal 3:1) in Light of Paintings and Sculptures of Suffering and Death in Pompeiian and Roman Houses," in *Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*, ed. David L. Balch and Carolyn Osiek (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 84–108.

5. Exemplary for the "visual turn" outside the theological discipline, among many other prominent names, are, e.g., John Berger, *Ways of Seeing: Based on the BBC Television Series with John Berger* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation; New York: Penguin, 1977); and W. J. T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

6. For the turn to material images, see, e.g., David L. Balch, *Roman Domestic Art and Early House Churches*, WUNT 228 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008); Rosemary Canavan, *Clothing the Body of Christ at Colossae: A Visual Construction of Identity*, WUNT 2/334 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012); Brigitte Kahl, *Galatians Re-imagined: Reading with the Eyes of the Vanquished*, Paul in Critical Contexts (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010); Davina C. Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered: Reimagining Paul's Mission* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008); Harry O. Maier, *Picturing Paul in Empire: Imperial Image, Text and Persuasion in Colossians, Ephesians and the Pastoral Epistles* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013); Annette Weissenrieder, Friederike Wendt, and Petra von Gemünden, eds., *Picturing the New Testament: Studies in Ancient Visual Images*, WUNT 2/193 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005).

7. Paul Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, trans. Alan Shapiro, Jerome Lectures 16 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988).

8. Zanker's contribution is, for example, prominently included in the seminal col-

tual point of departure related to ancient rhetoric and *ekphrasis*, Vernon K. Robbins and his colleagues who employ sociorhetorical interpretation (SRI) have drawn attention to the importance of visuality as a vital component of rhetorical persuasion that does not build solely on the widely explored mode of verbal argumentation (*rhetology*) but comprises the long overlooked element of (word-)images and imagination (*rhetography*). This includes a strong emphasis on the related cognitive aspects of how images and concepts are processed and “blended” in the minds of readers/viewers, as well as on “critical spatiality.”⁹

While the practitioners of sociorhetorical interpretation have already developed an approach to dealing with *verbal* images inside the texts, the work with *visual* images taken from material artifacts outside the text is still in its nascent stage. Apart from terminology and categorization of the different approaches, in particular the methodology and praxis of actually “reading” images by themselves and in conjunction with New Testament texts is an ongoing endeavor.¹⁰ The first and primary task addressed in this

lection of essays in Richard A. Horsley, ed., *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997). In 2004, the first strongly image-based exploration of Paul from an empire-critical perspective appeared: John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan L. Reed, *In Search of Paul: How Jesus's Apostle Opposed Rome's Empire with God's Kingdom; A New Vision of Paul's Words and World* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2004). In the same year a conference on “New Testament and Roman Empire” at Union Theological Seminary, New York, for the first time included several key presentations that in new ways drew on work with images (Ellen Bradshaw Aitken, Brigitte Kahl, Davina Lopez, and David Sánchez); see the proceedings in Brigitte Kahl, Davina Lopez, and Hal Taussig, eds., *New Testament and Roman Empire*, *USQR* 59.3–4 (2005). For a postcolonial, image-based approach, see Aliou Niang, “Seeing and Hearing Jesus Christ Crucified in Galatians 3:1 under Watchful Imperial Eyes,” in *Text, Image, and Christians in the Graeco-Roman World: A Festschrift in Honor of David Lee Balch*, ed. Aliou Cissé Niang and Carolyn Osiek, *PTMS* 176 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012), 160–82.

9. For a succinct introduction, see Vernon K. Robbins, “Socio-rhetorical Criticism,” in *Oxford Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Steven L. McKenzie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 2:311–18. For the specifics of rhetography, see Roy R. Jeal, “Blending Two Arts: Rhetorical Words, Rhetorical Pictures, and Social Formation in the Letter to Philemon,” *SiCS* 5 (2008): 9–38; Vernon K. Robbins, “Rhetography: A New Way of Seeing the Familiar Text,” in *Words Well Spoken: George Kennedy's Rhetoric of the New Testament*, ed. C. Clifton Black and Duane F. Watson (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008), 81–106.

10. Helpful summaries of the various approaches are given in Canavan, *Clothing the Body of Christ*, 31–52; and Maier, *Picturing Paul in Empire*, 7–34.

essay thus is to present a concrete model for “exegeting” an image such as *The Galatian Suicide* with the basic tools familiar to biblical interpreters. In a multistep manual for visual exegesis of images, some of the standard procedures of sociohistorical and sociorhetorical critical interpretation will be adapted and employed, if in a somewhat generic and experimental way. A structural-semiotic component is added to aid the visualization of meaning-making and, furthermore, to develop a “compatibility code” that allows images and texts to become mutually readable.¹¹ Particular emphasis will be placed on the “rhetoric” and early reception history of the image, including the responsive role of the “reader” and the de-/reconstructive activity of “reading” the sculpture, for example, through the lens of Paul’s text-image of *Christ Crucified*.

Another question requires attention. There is no doubt that in the complex encounter between image(ry) and text there is, on the side of the text and its authors or readers, generally a robust element of conformity with the contextual imaginary. While the conscious or unconscious use of conventional patterns by an author such as Paul is indisputable, the more controversial question is to what extent and in which ways he actually conforms or does not conform to them. Both Balch and Maier, for example, in principle acknowledge a basic component of dissent and contextual dissonance in Paul’s theology of *Christ Crucified*, but they do so only in passing, while putting their main emphasis on comparative aspects of contextualization and accommodation.¹² The larger controversy looming in

11. How texts and images actually can be made mutually “readable” and interactive is a question for further debate. Rosemary Canavan, for example, employs a broad-stroke interpretational approach to imperial images to identify certain themes or “points of reference” (such as identity, clothing, and body) that establish a relatively loose but nonetheless meaningful relation between her text (Col 3:1–17) and these images (*Clothing the Body of Christ*, 193, 183–84). She does not, however, “exegete” the images in any in-depth way comparable to the sociorhetorical interpretation of the Colossians text that she presents.

12. Maier cites Michel de Certeau, Edward Soja’s “thirdspace,” and Michel Foucault’s “heterotopia” to distance himself from “simple binary oppositions of accommodation and resistance” (Maier, *Picturing Paul in Empire*, 145) and, rather, to show how (Deutero-)Paul and his communities appropriated imperial imagery, ideology, and space “to construct an order in some ways at home in their imperial world and in other ways opposed to it” (ibid., 11). Although I widely agree with Maier in terms of Paul’s paradoxical in-between existence, I think the radical nature of his “opposition” and its substance matter needs to be stated more clearly, especially in the encounter

the background concerns the question of how and how far exactly Paul's texts are resistant to their Roman imperial context or, rather, are not. Does, for example, *critical reimagination*, first introduced in 2004 as a transbinary visual hermeneutic of Galatians within an empire-critical paradigm,¹³ overemphasize binary constructs and the element of political conflict, ideological nonconformity and theological resistance in Paul's most influential letter, which also became the core document of the Protestant Reformation? Do we need to return to a more consensual model of "picturing Paul in empire," as Maier, for example, proposes?¹⁴

It hardly needs to be stated that this question is as much a historical as a contemporary one; more than the methodology of visual exegesis, it concerns politics. Ultimately, it addresses no longer the Galatians but us and our relationship towards present day constructs of suicidal power over life and death that have not ceased to be embedded into binary matrices of Self versus Other, their postmodern denial notwithstanding. This problem at the core of Paul's entire theology of cross and justification, while interwoven into the exegesis and interpretation of *The Galatian Suicide* (parts 2–3) at every step will be explicitly addressed in parts 4–5—if only in shorthand and almost as an afterthought. In an interactive reading of the two images, facilitated by the "common code" of their binary semiotics, Paul's verbal icon of *Christ Crucified* (Gal 3:1) emerges as the transbinary messianic reimagination of *The Galatian Suicide*: a life practice outside as much as inside the "iron cage" of its binaries, yet never reconcilable with them.

2. EXEGESIS/ICONOGRAPHY: *THE GALATIAN SUICIDE*

Reading images is not a skill usually taught in the exegetical classes of theological schools. Expert verbal literacy with regard to the core documents of the Christian canon often goes hand in hand with complete visual illiteracy. But although images undoubtedly are a species of their

between Paul and deuterio-Paul. This requires attention to (the first) Paul's fundamental deconstruction of the prevailing binaries.

13. Brigitte Kahl, "Reading Galatians and Empire at the Great Altar of Pergamon," *USQR* 59.3–4 (2005): 21–43.

14. "Both the uncontested and contested letters of Paul do indeed invite re-imagination, but they do so in a way that subtly negotiates Roman imperial realities in complex and subtle, but not always oppositional, ways" (Maier, *Picturing Paul in Empire*, 21).

own and need specialized knowledge to be borrowed from art historians, there are also striking parallels in reading images and reading literary texts. Exegetes, after all, do have skills that are most useful for decoding iconography. Scrutinizing unfamiliar pictorial elements and learning how to interpret them is not so far from translating foreign words and memorizing Greek or Hebrew vocabulary. Syntactic and narrative analysis can be applied both to the grammar of a text and an image, as we will see. There are visual objects, subjects, and predicates arranged by the image in a particular temporal and spatial setting with an inherent causal logic and plot—and a built-in rhetorical component reaching out to readers/viewers, who in return reach out to the image from specific social locations and at particular moments in time. In other words, virtually no “drawer” in the vast toolbox of biblical exegesis is irrelevant to the exegesis of images.

2.1. First Reading/Pre-iconography

Textual exegesis usually starts with a first cursory reading that scans the passage for its main content, structure, and most eye-catching features. Art historian Erwin Panofsky (1892–1968), whose work on iconography and iconology remains influential for the study of images up to the present time, proposes a similar step of taking stock in the initial encounter with an object of art. At this first level the viewer, for Panofsky, just perceives the “pure forms” of an image—the configurations of lines and colors, certain shapes of stone or bronze, their mutual relation as events, and the expressional qualities embedded into certain postures, facial features, environments. Nothing more than our practical experience is required at this stage of *pre-iconographical description*, which establishes the “primary subject matter” of a work of art. Only in a second and third step will more in-depth exploration (*iconography*) and interpretation (*iconology*) be added.¹⁵ We will loosely follow Panofsky’s three-step sequence, combining it with the steps familiar from scriptural exegesis.

At first sight, hardly any viewer of *The Galatian Suicide* (fig. 2) will be able to remain immune to its immediate aesthetic and emotional impact. The white marble sculpture, slightly over-life sized, is a striking view of

15. Erwin Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), 27–28.

breathhtaking beauty and stirring drama. Choosing a frontal view to begin with, we are looking at two bodies, male and female, nude and clothed. Both are connected but in a starkly polar design: the male upright and in a forward move, the female sunk down towards the ground and completely static. Not for a heartbeat could we miss the primary subject matter (to use Panofsky's term)—namely, *suicide*. The man vigorously lifts his muscular arm to plunge a sword into his clavicular cavity and down towards the heart; blood is spilling from the wound as the blade enters his body right at the edge of a cloak that covers his neck (see fig. 7 below).

While he is standing tall, the woman to his left is slumped on her knees and falling over in a sideways movement. Her right index finger already touches the ground, but she is held up by his left arm, which reaches out from above to support her by her upper right arm in a gesture that appears gentle and affectionate. Yet this moment will pass quickly. He will not be able much longer to keep her from falling. His collapse must be imminent. Her face, void of expression as if she was asleep, might indicate that she is dead already. A closer look at the original sculpture reveals something that is not immediately visible in the rendering of figure 2: blood is trickling from underneath her right armpit; someone must have stabbed her. Was it he or someone else? The emotional intensity and drama of the scene is unsettling, almost unbearable. Both the suicidal man and the dying or dead woman can be anticipated as lifeless corpses on the ground the next moment.



Figure 2. *The Galatian Suicide*. Roman marble copy from the late first/early second century CE of a lost Pergamene bronze original from ca. 230 BCE. Rome, Museo Nazionale di Roma, Palazzo Altemps.

We have, so far, taken an initial inventory of configurations, lines, shapes, relations, events, and emotional expressions and entered this inventory into a basic description of our sculpture and its primary subject matter as the suicide/death of a man and a woman. Nonetheless, we are not yet at the point of interpretation. For Panofsky, after the first pre-iconographical exploration, a more thorough *iconographic* analysis (analogous to an exegesis of the verbal text) needs to follow, before the final step

of an *iconological* synthesis as meaning-making can be taken.¹⁶ Interestingly, Panofsky admits that this linear sequence is rather artificial, as the consecutive operations of description (iconography/ pre-iconography) and interpretation (iconology) happen in some sense also simultaneously and “merge with each other into one organic and indivisible process.”¹⁷ For textual exegetes, it is a very familiar phenomenon that individual steps in exegesis are taken in a somewhat “spiral” sequence of constant back-and-forth between different operations, which are all geared towards the interpretive goal; nonetheless, they have to be performed in a disciplined and step-by-step manner, adding gradually more and more knowledge and insight to the text from various points of view. The basic activity of close reading and precise seeing, however, at all stages of the process are key to relevant work in the exegesis of texts and images alike.

2.2. Context: Sociocultural and Historical Location

There is another dimension that needs to be considered. As important as is reliance on readers’ or viewers’ natural faculties of keen observation, practical experience, and intuition at all stages, they do not guarantee the correctness of the observations. Cultural and iconographic knowledge must be added that allows, in a next step, identification of the “conventional subject matter,” as Panofsky frames it. This “added knowledge,” as he explains with a compelling example, makes the difference between reading Leonardo da Vinci’s famous painting as a “dinner party” or the “Last Supper.”¹⁸ Familiarity with certain topics, themes, motifs, and visual types in art history is required to “read” an image adequately—that is, in accordance with its author-embedded and culturally established “reading-instructions.”¹⁹

For example, is the woman in our sculpture supposed to look beautiful or perhaps ugly? Is the man nude or naked?²⁰ Masculine or monstrous? Before we even can start to “translate” the image, we must know its “language.” If we exegete a scriptural passage, we usually have a basic fluency

16. Ibid., 28–29, 32.

17. Ibid., 39.

18. Ibid., 28–29, 35.

19. For the “implied reader” and reception theory with regard to images, see below, n. 53.

20. That is, unclothed or exposed.

regarding certain introductory facts about the texts, such as date and historical context, authorship, sources and traditions, forms and function, or basic trajectories of interpretation. We “naturally” know that a New Testament text requires a Greek lexicon rather than a Hebrew one. In the exegesis of images, we still have to learn about such things if we do not want to risk, metaphorically speaking, misreading a Latin text as Greek or English.

The basic introductory information about *The Galatian Suicide* is well established. The sculpture is in all likelihood the Roman marble copy of a Pergamene bronze original created by master-sculptor Epigonos around 230 BCE. The traditional title of the sculpture has been the *Suicidal Gaul* or (after its findspot on the grounds of the Villa Ludovisi at Rome, around 1620 CE) the *Ludovisi Suicidal Gaul*.²¹ To understand the switching between “Gaul” and “Galatian,” one needs to keep in mind that ancient Greek and Latin mostly do not make a terminological distinction between the two expressions. Both denote the large and diverse ethnic group of Celtic tribes that migrated over all of Europe, including upper Italy and as far east as present-day Turkey between the fifth and third centuries BCE.²² Sacking Rome in 387 BCE and attacking Delphi a hundred years later in 279 BCE, they clashed in numerous landmark battles and countless skirmishes with both Romans and Greeks and became the quintessential representation of “barbarian-ness” from the perspective of the civilized Self.²³

The Galatian Suicide, according to the common legend shows a defeated Celtic chieftain of Asia Minor around 230 BCE. After blackmailing, raiding, plundering, and terrorizing the region for almost half a

21. For a basic introduction, see R. R. R. Smith, *Hellenistic Sculpture* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1991), 99–104.

22. For a general timeline and maps, see Kahl, *Galatians Re-imagined*, xix–xxvii; for overall historical information, see H. D. Rankin, *Celts and the Classical World* (London: Croom Helm; Portland, OR: Areopagitica, 1987); Kahl, *Galatians Re-imagined*, 48–75.

23. As Edith Hall has shown, the formal “invention” of the dichotomy “Greek-versus-barbarian” as a totalizing opposition comprising “all of humanity” emerges during the Persian Wars in the fifth century BCE, although many of its dualisms already were present at earlier stages. The “Persian barbarian” as non-Greek, nonself, noncivilized other is partnered with mythological creatures such as giants, centaurs, or Amazons, and later with more contemporary enemies such as Galatians/Gauls and Egyptians/Orientals (Edith Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-Definition through Tragedy*, Oxford Classical Monographs [Oxford: Clarendon, 1989]; Kahl, *Galatians Re-imagined*, 46–48, 133).

century, the three Celtic tribes of the Tolistobogii, Troceni, and Tectosagi who arrived there around 279 BCE had finally been conquered by the Kingdom of Pergamon. In order to avoid capture and humiliation, the chieftain has most likely killed his wife himself and is now committing suicide. As the Celtic inhabitants of Asia Minor in our current English use are commonly called “Galatians” (including the addressees of Paul’s letter), the adequate title of the sculpture thus should be the *Suicidal Galatian* instead of the *Suicidal Gaul*—or, rather, in order to decenter the exclusively male perspective in the customary title, *The Suicidal Galatians* or *The Galatian Suicide*.²⁴

In order to commemorate their victory as a triumph of civilization over barbarian terror and lawlessness, the Attalid rulers of Pergamon commissioned not only *The Galatian Suicide* and its twin-sculpture, *The Dying Galatian* (or *Trumpeter*), placing both prominently at Athena’s temple on the Pergamene acropolis, but also a large number of other dying or dead “small” barbarians such as the four we already encountered at the Berlin Pergamon Museum. A collection of them was displayed on the outside wall of the Parthenon in Athens, at the heart of Greekness, featuring the signature battles of the civilized Hellenistic Self in defense against the chaos-bearing barbarian Other.²⁵ Around 170 BCE, the Great Altar of Pergamon became the ultimate antibarbarian victory monument of the ancient world; its renowned Gigantomachy Frieze depicted the Galatians under mythological disguise as primeval giants in their rebellion against Mount Olympus and the entire world order; they are crushed by a divine alliance under the leadership of Zeus and Athena.²⁶

24. A fascinating list of different titles used for the sculpture, prior to determining its subject matter as *Suicidal Galatians*, is given by Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture, 1500–1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 282.

25. For a most comprehensive and incisive exploration of the “small barbarians” and their “large” counterparts, see Andrew Stewart, *Attalos, Athens and the Akropolis: The Pergamene “Little Barbarians” and Their Roman and Renaissance Legacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

26. Ralf Grüssinger, Volker Kästner, and Andreas Scholl, eds., *Pergamon: Panorama der antiken Metropole—Begleitbuch zur Ausstellung* (Berlin: Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 2011); Andrew Stewart, “Pergamo Ara Marmorea Magna: On the Date, Reconstruction, and Functions of the Great Altar of Pergamon,” in *From Pergamon to Sperlonga: Sculpture and Context*, ed. Nancy T. de Grummond

As in New Testament work with texts, the originals of the objects we are studying here—the first manuscripts or “manu-facts,” as it were—are lost. Not accidentally, however, the only extant versions of the *Suicidal* and other *Dying Galatians* are Roman copies and for a long time were named the *Suicidal* or *Dying Gauls*, in line with the Latin *Galli* rather than the Greek *Galatai*. Created as a testimony to Pergamon’s victory and hegemonic claims amidst post-Alexander power struggles, the sculptures nonetheless soon came to monumentalize the ultimate triumph of Rome. After Julius Caesar’s most bloody and profitable conquest of Gaul in 58–52 BCE, the Roman Empire under his successor Octavian/Augustus in 27 BCE rose gloriously from four centuries of anti-Gallic/Galatian warfare. Although it had been waged by Greeks and Romans alike, this foundational combat against the barbarian forces of anarchy and terror was ultimately won by Rome alone, the new savior of the world. Already in 189 BCE, on the eve of the Apamea Peace Treaty, which established Rome’s future hegemony in the East, Rome had unexpectedly retaliated with a brutal preemptive massacre in Asia Minor against three totally unprepared Galatian tribes, who lost 40,000 people. Over the next two hundred years, after the Pergamene Kingdom had long become the Roman province of Asia (133 BCE), Rome successfully colonized and “civilized” these Galatians by gradually grooming and co-opting their elites. Finally, in 25 BCE, Augustus established the Roman province of Galatia, into which some seventy-five years later Paul wrote his letter “to the assemblies/churches of Galatia.”²⁷

To conclude this brief journey into the cultural and historical context of *The Galatian Suicide*: Obviously, what we are looking at is not primarily the suicide/death/murder of two individuals but the well-established and widespread motif of *Dying Galatians/Gauls*, which constituted a type (or even archetype) of high visibility, conceptual coherence, and plausibility in ancient Greco-Roman art. Its “language” is the Greco-Roman visual *Koinē* of antibarbarian warfare and victory, and the lexicon we need to consult for translation is the (fictive) dictionary of occidental civilization that has its

and Brunilde S. Ridgway (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 32–57; Kahl, *Galatians Re-imagined*, 77–127.

27. For a summary of the Galatian history in Asia Minor, see Stephen Mitchell, *The Celts in Anatolia and the Impact of Roman Rule*, vol. 1 of *Anatolia: Land, Men, and Gods in Asia Minor* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993); Karl Strobel, *Die Galater: Geschichte und Eigenart der keltischen Staatenbildung auf dem Boden des hellenistischen Kleinasien* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1996); Kahl, *Galatians Re-imagined*, 169–207.

entries ordered in a strictly binary sequence: all terms and themes orbiting around the core notion of civilization have an oppositional counter-term pertinent to barbarism.

2.3. Translation: Visual Vocabulary and the Virtual “Dictionary of Occidental Civilization”

Iconographically, each side of this binary semiotic system has specific visual markers attached to it that carry meaning. For example, spiky hair, nakedness in combat, oval shields, torques around the neck, and mustache in the ancient visual *Koinē* are “words” denoting Galatians in particular and barbarian foreignness in general.²⁸ Like the unfamiliar terms of a foreign language, this visual vocabulary needs to be learned and memorized. Moreover, as in our general work with translation, there are also “false friends” we need to be aware of—visual elements that seem immediately comprehensible but, in fact, carry a quite different meaning from what we think they have. So there is a twofold challenge: on the one hand, in the study of images, everything depends on our capacity to “see,” that is, to look closely and precisely; on the other hand, we cannot take the meaning of our observations and responses for granted, for there is a foreign cultural context with aesthetic signs and significations different from ours that needs to be respected in its alterity. It is only through the *foreignness* of the language that we can start to become familiar with what these images actually are communicating. As part of this translation work, we will look at a few exemplary elements in the visual vocabulary of our sculpture.

2.3.1. Visual Marker: Masculinity

At first sight and from a present-day perspective, the Galatian man may feature a gorgeously built body with strong muscles and a vigorous, youthful stride. This might not have been the impression of ancient spectators, however. Looking at him through the lenses loaned from art historians produces some shocking disillusionment. As Andrew Stewart has pointed out, the male body in Greek iconography mirrors the image of the polis. Muscles, for example, are expected to be well- but not too well-developed

28. R. R. R. Smith, *Hellenistic Sculpture*, 101; John R. Marszal, “Ubiquitous Barbarians: Representation of the Gauls at Pergamon and Elsewhere,” in de Grummond and Ridgway, *From Pergamon to Sperlonga*, 200; cf. Diodorus, *Bib. hist.* 5.27–31.

in order to show balanced structure, disciplined work, and self-mastery, as well as “hard” martial and manly power to defend and rule the city.²⁹ Compared to these “canonical” ratios and rules for depicting the Greek Self, the image of *The Galatian Suicide* fails miserably (fig. 3).

What we see (or need to learn to see) is a most appalling image of excess, wrong measure, and defect. The muscles in this alien body are clearly overdeveloped and “pop out like tumors all over its surface,” as Stewart notes.³⁰ This is linked to the topic of missing balance as a stock argument in antibarbarian rhetoric: σωφροσύνη, meaning restraint, moderation, self-control and right measure, is the focal characteristic of civilization and the reason for its superiority vis-à-vis the barbarians.³¹ “They” have either too much or too little of everything. Despite their terrifying physical presence and ferociousness, they will fail because



Figure 3. Well-built body or barbarian excess and defect? Detail of *The Galatian Suicide*, view from the left.

they have never been subject to proper (self-)discipline and bodily or intellectual training. While the Greeks show *true* manliness, the barbarians are either effeminate cowards/Orientals or brainlessly overheroic like the “northern” Galatians; instead of true wisdom they oscillate between stupidity and intelligence. As their long history of ruthless attacks at the shrines of Greco-Roman civilization (condensed in the fierce attack mode of *The Galatian Suicide* in fig. 3) shows, they are also lacking proper justice, law, and religion. This lawlessness and godlessness includes vastly improper codes of sacrifice, commensality, and sexual conduct.³² In other words, despite the traits of the “noble savage” that our Christian imagination might prompt us to perceive, the Galatian chieftain is not really

29. Andrew Stewart, *Art, Desire and the Body in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 93–95.

30. Ibid., 220.

31. Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*, 121–27. For the connection between barbarians and Orientals, see Brigitte Kahl, “Galatians and the ‘Orientalism’ of Justification by Faith: Paul among Jews and Muslims,” in *The Colonized Apostle: Paul through Postcolonial Eyes*, ed. Christopher D. Stanley (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 206–9.

32. Kahl, *Galatians Re-imagined*, 46–48.

meant to be perceived as a fellow-human deserving our compassion. He is a dangerous alien belonging to an inferior, irrational part of humanity that is closer to ferocious wild animals than true men.

2.3.2. Visual Marker: Hairstyle

Again, at first sight one could be inclined to see the female to the left of the Galatian in figure 2 as an attractive young woman, but once more we need to look twice if we want to decode the original language of the image and see what the ancients might have seen. What about her facial and bodily features? What does the dress signal as it slides over her right shoulder?³³ And then: her hair! One probably would not know to call it “shaggy” until being informed by ancient historiographers such as Diodorus or Livy what language is properly to be used in this case. The Galatians have horse-like manes like pans or satyrs, Diodorus tells us. They wash their hair in lime-water to make it coarse and stiff, suiting the eccentricities of their barbarian lifestyle (Diodorus, *Bib. hist.* 5.28). Beginning to notice her, in fact, unkempt coiffure (fig. 4), we immediately can see the same feature in him as well (fig. 3). The hair of both is (un)shaped in thick tufts that signal a lack of cultivated manners, refinement, and restraint, thus indicating a wide range of negative features such as savagery, impudence, gluttony, lustfulness, insensitivity, and stupidity typical of the “northern barbarians.”³⁴



Figure 4. Human drama or barbarian hairstyle? Detail of *The Galatian Suicide*, frontal view.

33. On disheveled clothing as a marker of defeated barbarian women/ethnicities, see Canavan, *Clothing the Body of Christ*, 123–32.

34. For a fascinating reading of the hairstyle of the Naples Giant (see fig. 1) from an ancient physiognomer's perspective, see Stewart, *Attalos*, 135.

All throughout antiquity (and to the present), hairstyle has been a very sensitive cultural marker; it can indicate uncivilized, subhuman, and near-beastly *or* superior, even god-like status—being assimilated with the distinction between nature/animals (bushy and wild hair) and culture/human (= well-groomed hair or no hair). For example, it is a telling sign of his repulsiveness if the Naples *Dead Giant* from the group of the “small barbarians” (fig. 1) features armpit hair—still a visual sign in our own culture—and a lion’s skin to protect his arm (fig. 5).³⁵ Armpit hair is also used in the Gigantomachy Frieze of the Pergamon Altar to indicate the barbarian and beastly nature of the Giants/Galatians—together with snake legs, birds’ claws and even a lion’s head, all of which mark them as “mixed” creatures less than fully human (fig. 6). They represent, in one word, the terrifying, threatening power of anticivilization and of nature as such.



Figure 5. Wild beard, body, and armpit hair signal the “animal” nature of the Naples *Dead Giant*, which is also underlined by the lion’s skin that he wears as protective arm gear. Detail of fig. 1.



Figure 6. *Dying Giant* on the East Frieze of the Gigantomachy at the Pergamon Altar (170 BCE). With his unshaven armpits and the wild hair and beard, he seems to match the furry and vicious fighting dog of the goddess Artemis (to his right) that bites his neck from behind.

2.3.3. Building Up a Visual Glossary

Decoding the sculpture in this manner, we can experience how our perception shifts. We have started to see both the man and the woman differently than we did initially. Many more features beyond build and hairstyle could be added. The man’s facial expression, for example, is not just

35. Ibid., 135.



Figure 7. Detail of *The Galatian Suicide*, frontal view. Note the blood gushing from the wound rendered in relief and the dramatic thrust of the blade through the thick flame-like tufts of his hair. It might be that in his impulsiveness he has caught a bit of his cloak which is pushed into the wound in a somewhat macabre parody. All of this denotes excess and lack of control.

emotional (and understandably so) but clearly out of control, which means out of order. His nudity and the dramatic visibility of the wound he has inflicted on himself, with blood gushing out, are another case in point. Wounds, according to Stewart, are never rendered in classical Greek battle scenes, at least as far as the Greeks are concerned. Additionally, although nudity is a well-known feature of gods and humans in Greek art, in this case it is simply appalling and insane, as a nightmarish travesty of the “barbarian berserker.” “Inverting the classical Greek heroic nude, these statues turned it into a corpse like specter, a death demon from hell” (see fig. 7).³⁶

By now we have started to learn and visualize the vocabulary of mutually intersecting binaries from the iconographic “dictionary” of our civilization: lack of moderation and self-control equal stupidity equals unmanliness equals lawlessness and godlessness—in sum: subhuman barbarian otherness. All of these terms that are translated into pictorial markers in our sculpture represent the nonvalues or vices directly opposed to the four “cardinal virtues” of Greek civilization: restraint/measure, wisdom/intelligence, manliness/courage, and justice/law.³⁷ Compared to the balanced and harmonious order of Greek civilization, the Galatian’s emotion is irrational, destructive, and thus repulsive. His explosive vitality and masculinity are an ugly monstrosity. He is an enemy, an agent of terror whose fate is preordained. Although there might be an element of empathy, the ancients

36. Stewart, *Art*, 220.

37. It is noteworthy that two of Paul’s key theological terms—*δικαιοσύνη* and *νόμος*—thus are embedded in the stock argument of ancient rhetoric defining the “virtuous” Greco-Roman Self over and against the *ἀδικία*/lawlessness of its barbarian/Galatian Other.

“would not have considered these alien bodies as beautiful and would certainly have objectified and savored the violence done to them.”³⁸

To conclude our “word study” of the visual vocabulary and its translations: the key “terms” of *The Galatian Suicide* belong to the semantic field of barbarian foreignness and denote aspects of the alien and ugly, the inferior “not us.” They distance the viewer from the drama and trauma of the Galatians, rather than establishing a bond of shared humanity and compassion, and they reinforce a sense of righteous superiority and victory. “These statues appease the gaze with a vision of moral virtue and justice (δίκη in the sense of both right and order) triumphant over absolute evil and absolute chaos.”³⁹ Without being in the picture, the superiority of the victors is the image that is nonetheless communicated in powerful ways.

2.4. Syntax and Narrative Grammar

Having examined the individual “words” of our visual text so far, we need to proceed to its “syntax” and overall “narrative grammar” to understand the full picture of our sculpture and the “story” it tells. In a textual exegesis, exploring the literary or inner texture requires us to analyze each sentence and the sum of the sentences in their structure and progression. This on the most basic level entails attention to subjects (who acts?), objects (who/what is acted upon?), and predicates (what is the action?). Other important elements are the temporal and spatial settings, the “when” and “where” that are key to the sequential unfolding of a narrative in time and space. Are these standard procedures applicable to visual exegesis of images as well?⁴⁰

38. Stewart, *Art*, 220.

39. *Ibid.*

40. As we are operating on a tentative model of iconographic exegesis here, only the most generic outline of standard socioliterary/rhetorical procedures grouped around the somewhat “neutral” terms of context, translation, narrative grammar and syntax, temporal and spatial setting, actors, plot, readers, and so on is given. For a more detailed description of exploratory tools for the “inner texture” of texts, see Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-rhetorical Interpretation* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 7–39. Several of Robbins’s inner “textures and patterns” such as “progressive,” “narrational,” “opening-middle-closing,” and “sensory-aesthetic” are easily recognizable in the exegesis of *The Galatian Suicide* presented here. Others such as “repetitive” or “argumentative” textures (which I would locate in the reader-response-oriented and rhetographical section in part 4) need fur-

2.4.1. Temporal Setting

No story can be told without a progression of time, minimally a “now” and “after” or a “before” and “now.” On the other hand, putting events in a sequence of past, present, and future inevitably narrativizes them, no matter how disparate they may appear. *The Galatian Suicide* in figure 2 presupposes such a “before,” “now,” and “after”: The falling woman (now) must have been standing at some point earlier (before). Something or someone must have made her fall, so that the man standing next to her had to extend his arm to support her (now). But there is also an “after” inscribed into the narrative “now.” With the sword penetrating his chest, the Galatian is going to fall momentarily, and she will be falling with him (soon). The present time of the image—in other words, what is visually represented—is stretched out between a tangible past and a visceral futurity; both are invisible but are made present through the *rhetography* of the sculpture that induces the brain to imagine what has happened and what will happen next.⁴¹

2.4.2. Spatial Setting

The spatial structure of the image is organized primarily on a vertical axis that extends between above/high/heaven and below/down/earth. This focal axis is strongly emphasized by the blunt verticality of the blade’s thrust. Its tip has already disappeared, while the larger part is still visible, suggesting a strong sense of motion while constructing a secondary antithesis between “in” and “out.” The tilt of the sword held by the man’s hand above his head is the highest point of the sculpture, its lowest position the ground underneath on which he stands with his bare feet, while the kneeling woman tentatively touches it with the middle finger of her right hand.

ther discussion—as well as the overall tool set of sociorhetorical interpretation in its applicability to images and iconographic exegesis in particular.

41. See n. 9 above. Whether and how *rhetography* as introduced by Robbins or *phanopoeia* as the “pictorial, graphic narration that occurs in *texts*” (Jeal, “Blending Two Arts,” 12; italics mine) is applicable to the visual rhetoric of *material images* is another question open for debate. Jeal’s visual exploration of the Letter to Philemon shows that “the visualizations produced by texts create a disposition of mind among readers”—they “do” something to their audiences, specifically, in anticipating a new social configuration (ibid., 14). Both apply to the visualizations embodied and prompted by *The Galatian Suicide* as well.

There is also, however, a somewhat horizontal line that is marked by her left arm hanging in the air, pointing outward (yet also downward with its dangling hand) in a vague gesture that might appear as a “crossing out” of the dominant verticality. We will return to this other dimension when we read the sculpture with Paul’s eyes.

Yet another spatial opposition apart from high and low needs mentioning: compared to the dramatic action around sword, arm, hand, head, and chest that fills the upper left half of the image, there is a vivid void on its right-side counterpart. The face, shoulders, and arms of the woman must have been present there just a moment ago, but now the space is marked by an absence that eerily echoes the drama between “him” and “her” that presumably took place there. The spatial play between presence and absence is synonymous with the temporal sequence of past and present tense. Presence is past; absence is present.

2.4.3. Visual Statements and Their Syntax

The “sentences” of our images inscribe themselves into these strongly antithetical spatial and temporal frames. There is a gendered binary of *he* and *she* that is “grammatically” linked to an active and a passive voice: a male subject who acts and a passive female who is acted upon. The visual syntax turns her into a grammatical object. This operates as a spatial binary as well. He is high up and present at the top; she is down and absent from the place next to him. In concrete terms: he is standing; she is falling. He is upright on both of his feet; she is kneeling on both of her legs. His right hand is high above his head; hers is touching down on the ground. He kills himself; she has been killed. He holds her; she is held. His body is dynamic, hers limp. His face is contorted, hers calm.

Next to him and her, however, there is also the third player, an “it” in the image that complicates the simple binary construct of “him/top” and “her/bottom.” In a composition so intensely reliant on the high-low polarity, it might not be accidental that the hilt of the sword, not the hand that holds it, occupies the highest point in the image, from which it plunges down in a straight line. The sword, its blade strongly visible both as presence and absence, outside the male and female body as well as inside (especially if he has just dealt her the *coup de grâce*), is functioning as the “magic wand” in the visual drama of this story. Striking down from above, it vaguely reminds one of divine weapons like Zeus’s lightning bolt which also may strike straight down from heaven. The sword,

in this way, structures the entire order of the image with its polarities of high-low, active-passive, male-female alongside the vertical axis. Yet it also confuses this order, reverting the initial clarity of above and below, of actor and acted upon. The one who kills by the sword is the same one who is killed. Standing, he dooms himself to fall. The male body acting from high up will be deep down like the female and deadly passive the next moment. If we had seen a conventional gender hierarchy of male and female at first, it moves toward collapse. In the paradoxical semiotics of suicide, the subject and its object are made identical. Self kills Self.⁴² *A* and *non-A*, *B* and *non-B* blend, and for a moment all binaries are dissolved in death and defeat.

3. INTERPRETATION/ICONOLOGY

At this point, our analysis evidently has already moved toward interpretation, in Panofsky's terms: iconology. Again, it is important to remember that the different steps and stages are only theoretically distinguishable in a clear manner. On the practical level of exegesis, visual and verbal alike, they constantly overlap and intersect: "So I conceive of iconology as an iconography turned interpretative." Panofsky tries to clarify this synchronicity and distinctness between iconography as "analysis" and iconology as "synthesis"/interpretation.⁴³ While iconography deals with the description and classification of an image as the basis for all further interpretation, iconology moves to the next stage and explores the overall logic as well as the symbolic order of the image that gives it meaning.

We will enter into the process of meaning-making with a brief reflection on a current controversy about binaries with regard to empire-critical and semiotic approaches in New Testament visual studies.⁴⁴ As binaries

42. Latin *sui-cidium*, from *sui caedere*: slaughter, kill, cut down oneself.

43. Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, 32.

44. After an insightful description of the semiotic approach employed in "Critical Re-imagination," Harry O. Maier raises the question of whether the use of Greimas's semiotic system is a good choice for analyzing Roman iconography. Its binaries tend to "force Roman imperial art into predetermined categories with already fixed outcomes. By contrast, Tonio Hölscher offers a semiotic analysis of Roman art in which the classical and Hellenistic forms of imperial iconography are related not to a Greimasian system of binary oppositions, but to the codes of signification appropriate to the programmes of state iconography" (Maier, *Picturing Paul in Empire*, 21). Whether binary oppositions are indeed an "inappropriate" category for analyzing Roman imperial art

undeniably form the semantic deep structure of our image, they have an indispensable function for interpretation. The “semiotic square,” originally developed by A. J. Greimas within the framework of structuralism but used in a modified version here,⁴⁵ is a tool for both analyzing and visualizing the (binary) meaning-making structure of texts; it can be productively employed in the exegesis of images as well.⁴⁶ We will first employ it to “map” the plotline of *The Galatian Suicide* and then continue to work with it at the subsequent stages of our interpretational and comparative endeavor. As an (icono)logical “code” for deciphering both the pictorial text of the sculpture and the verbal text of Gal 3:1, the semiotic square enables us to make the two different “encryptions” visually and logically compatible and reimaginable.⁴⁷ The following two steps will then move from the structural analysis of the “text” to the side of the recipients (§§3.3 and 4.1). Still working with the semiotic square, we will explore the rhetoric of the image and the implied reader’s response to it in two different settings, from the perspective of the victors and the vanquished.

3.1. The Thorny Issue of Binaries and Semiotic Squares

The transition from structuralism to poststructuralism can be described, among other ways, as the rigorous indictment and rejection of hierarchical binaries and binary constructs in the name of nonhierarchical and nonantithetical “differences” (or the differentiating movement engendering them that Jacques Derrida calls *différance*).⁴⁸ This is certainly a much

is going to be contested in our exploration, as much as the assumption that Critical Reimagination (presumably because of its binary approach) puts too much emphasis on Paul’s negotiating Roman imperial realities in “oppositional” rather than—as Maier proposes—“complex and subtle” ways. See nn. 12 and 14 above.

45. For a basic introduction, see Daniel Patte, *The Religious Dimensions of Biblical Texts: Greimas’s Structural Semiotics and Biblical Exegesis* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990); for my own modified version, see Kahl, *Galatians Re-imagined*, 18, 86–89.

46. For a first experiment (2004) of projecting a semiotic square onto an image, in this case the Great Altar of Pergamon, see Kahl, “Reading Galatians and Empire,” 26.

47. See n. 11 above.

48. As Derrida states: “On the one hand, we must traverse a phase of *overturning*. To do justice to this necessity is to recognize that in a classical philosophical opposition we are not dealing with the peaceful coexistence of a *vis-à-vis*, but rather with a violent hierarchy.” After this indispensable first move of an “inversion which brings low what was high,” Derrida goes on to describe the next step (“on the other hand”) as

needed and indispensable move where it targets the all-pervasive rule of power-driven and exclusionary polarities in the encounter of a dominant Self with its cultural, racial, religious, economic, or gendered Other. It is furthermore vital for deconstructing oversimplified antitheses, for example, in models of resistance that ignore the more subtle nuances of hybridity, mimicry, third or liminal spaces, and compromises between accommodation and rejection.

The critique of binaries entirely misses the point, however, if it becomes a habitual disclaimer of the real-life antagonisms that shape human society and that are reflected in sculptures such as *The Galatian Suicide*, with all their deadly force—a force that is fueled by the formative and still virulent binaries at the root of our civilization: victor and vanquished, colonizer and colonized, master bodies and exploitable or expendable servile bodies.⁴⁹ Moreover, the critique of binaries transforms into a deceptive misnomer if it suppresses the truth question that for Paul is a life versus death question indeed and condensed in the text-image of *Christ Crucified*—though in a wholly transbinary mode. Programmatic antibinarism applied as a heuristic tool to the analysis of the factual contradictions and tensions at hand may all too easily slip into a denial that they actually exist. Deconstruction, however, does not mean covering up binaries, either in Derrida or in Paul, for proceeding “too quickly to a *neutralization*” makes practical and political intervention pointless, as Derrida cautions.⁵⁰ Only by doing

an exit from the old (binary) system towards an “interval,” the “irruptive emergence of a new ‘concept’; a concept that can no longer be, and never could be, included in the previous regime” (Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. by Alan Bass [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972], 41–42).

49. For the essentially martial and colonial context of the Western root binary of *civilization versus barbarism* (and the multifaceted *Selves versus Others* attached to it), see Hall’s excellent study. Binary tablets of hierarchical opposites with a dominant and subordinate column were used already by Pythagoras (570–495 BCE) and are rendered in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* (986a22–25); cf. Kahl, *Galatians Re-imagined*, 17–19, and “Galatians and the ‘Orientalism,’” 206–7.

50. “Therefore, one might proceed too quickly to a *neutralization* that *in practice* would leave the previous field untouched, leaving one no hold on the previous opposition, thereby preventing any means of *intervening* into the field effectively. We know what always have been the *practical* (particularly *political*) effects of *immediately* jumping *beyond* oppositions, and of protests in the simple form of *neither* this *nor* that.... The necessity of this phase [of acknowledging binaries] is structural; it is the necessity of an interminable analysis; the hierarchy of dual oppositions always re-establishes itself” (Derrida, *Positions*, 41–42). For a summary of Derrida’s practical and political

the analytical work of truly deconstructing the binaries first do a reconstruction of an *other* model and a reimagination of the *difference* it makes become possible. Only then can *Christ Crucified* start to make sense.

The meaning and message of *The Galatian Suicide* thus cannot be decoded unless we fully understand the basic binary of *civilization versus barbarians* that forms its semiotic matrix in the sphere of culture (or ideology). It is this very constitutive “mold” that generates all other interrelated binary systems that structure the sculpture on the narrative level of time, space, and agency. The nature of this structure, however, and the plot it creates are quite complex and subtle, as much as Paul’s response to it is far from simple “opposition.”

3.2. Socionarrative Semiotics and Plot

The two most obvious polarities shaping *The Galatian Suicide*, as we have observed so far, are the antitheses in space (high versus low) and grammatical agency (active versus passive). Informed by the groundbreaking work of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, these bodily and spatial polarities immediately translate into social meaning. The spatial placement of human bodies serves as a symbolic marker for their social standing as well, including their gendered location. It is not accidental that “he” still stands and “she” is falling. As Bourdieu notices: “Male, upward movements and female, downward movements, uprightness versus bending, the will to be on top, to overcome, versus submission—the fundamental oppositions of the social order . . . —are always sexually overdetermined.”⁵¹ In our case the immediate narrative corroboration of that embodied sociospatial position of dominance is the Galatian chieftain’s supreme power to act from a position of vitality and virility, leadership and rule, martial heroism, power over life and death. While the sword marks him as warrior subject, it also defines the stark contrast to “her” being passive and killed, acted upon as object, defeated, powerless, dead, or at least without any vital signs. His left arm, on the other hand, in its intriguing diagonal/horizontal countermove

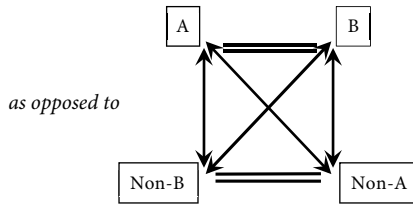
interventions, see the helpful study by Theodore W. Jennings, *Reading Derrida/Thinking Paul: On Justice* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 8–10.

51. Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 72. For an overall introduction into Bourdieu’s main concepts, see Jan Rehmann, *Theories of Ideology: The Powers of Alienation and Subjectation* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 221–39.

hints at his supportive and caretaking function, his power to nurture and sustain life that could be associated with his role as tribal chief and head of a household. Yet the impression that this life-giving agency could “cross out” the deadly logic of the binaries constructed by the image is illusory: his support will vanish momentarily as they both fall.

The analysis so far yields two antithetical axes of a primarily physical/spatial A as opposed to a non-A and a primarily social B as opposed to a non-B:

A = HIGH/ACTIVE/LIFE corresponds to B = SUPERIOR/POWER/MALE



non-A = LOW/PASSIVE/DEATH corresponding to non-B
= INFERIOR/POWERLESS/FEMALE

With this, we have already constructed a “semiotic square.” The two axes of A versus non-A and B versus non-B, chiasmatically arranged, can be perceived as the basic functional elements in creating visually and iconologically the semiotic space where the plot and the meaning of the sculpture are generated (see fig. 8 below).

Thinking about plot, however, requires another category to be considered again—namely, time. The sculpture by definition is a “still image.” Yet plot needs movement and a minimal sequence of opening, middle, and closing. As we have seen, the sculptor embedded this flow of time organically into the image by portraying the very moment of a *now* that is soaked with the past and pregnant with the future. In terms of plot this moment would be the *peripety*—the turning point—in the middle, where the beginning of the story ends and the end begins. This is precisely the moment depicted by the sculpture. The male warrior has just turned his sword against himself; his female counterpart, suspended between heaven and earth, has begun to fall but is not yet fallen. The way this *peripety* is visually constructed by the image, it has only one possible endpoint: the complete downfall of both the man and the woman.

In figure 8, both beginning and end are outside the image that only represents the “now” of the middle or turning point of the plot (*peripety*). Yet through the rhetoric of the image, the imaginative capacity of the viewer’s mind is activated to supplement visually the missing beginning

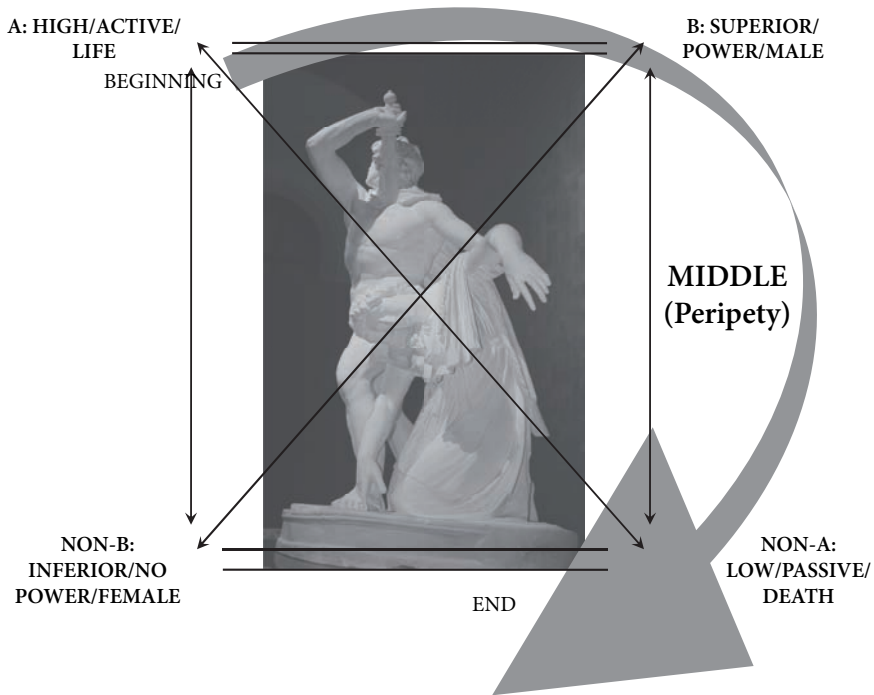


Figure 8. Semiotic square of *The Galatian Suicide* and its plotline. The diagonal and vertical arrows indicate oppositions between A and non-A, B and non-B, as well as A and non-B, B and non-A. The horizontal double lines between A and B, non-B and non-A indicate complementary and supportive relations. The resulting “square” constitutes and maps the semiotic space into which the plot of the sculpture inscribes itself, indicated by the curved outside arrow, as the movement from the beginning of A (HIGH/LIFE) in the past to the end point of non-A (LOW/DEATH) in the future.

and end. It is noteworthy that the plot as the sequence of a beginning (= Galatian in full power and high up/before) through a turning point (= suicide/now) towards an end (= inevitable breakdown/soon) is not identical with the “meaning” of the sculpture, which is more complex. For one thing, while the capacity of the image to “make sense” entirely rests on its binary construct of hierarchical and mutually exclusive polarities, the very process of meaning-making consists precisely in *deconstructing* these very binaries from which its meaning is derived. “He” uses his superior capacity to act by deactivating himself; his aliveness, by killing himself; his

subject-hood, making himself an object—that is, an Other. He has made the woman he holds fall. He exercises his superior power and high standing to impose the ultimate powerlessness and lowliness of death on both of them. Yet his imminent physical collapse is also the symbolic collapse of the semiotic universe that gives him (and her) meaning. The turning point in the plot, where he plunges the sword into his own chest, is also the point where he makes himself meaningless as warrior, leader, male, subject. The “meaning” of the sculpture is that he makes no sense anymore—a “typically barbarian” trait, if we think of stupidity, irrationality, and lack of right measure as standard items in the list of Galatian vices. This brings us again to the level of cultural signification and the role of the reader.

3.3. Reader Response: Spooky Charades and the “Order of Things” Restored

So far we have exclusively argued on the level of the “text,” that is, the inherent meaning-making capacity of the image itself and by itself. But the “reader” or viewer is another indispensable player. We can safely assume that the beholder who is implicitly intended and aimed at by the sculptor/sculpture—that is, the “implied” reader in the classic categories of reception theory⁵²—ascribes to the civilized Self rather than the barbarian Other. After all, this sculpture and its twin images were commissioned as victory art. However, from the perspective of reception and rhetorical effects one could construe another plot for the sculpture. This time, rather than just restricting ourselves to the frontal view, we would consider the three-dimensionality of the sculpture and scrutinize it from left (opening) to turning point (middle) and right (closing), following the viewer’s gaze. Obviously, the sculpture conveys different perspectives, depending on the angle from which it is observed.⁵³

52. See Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 50–67. For the employment of reception theory (originally developed for literary works) in visual arts, see Michael Ann Holly, “Reciprocity and Reception Theory,” in *A Companion to Art Theory*, ed. Paul Smith and Carolyn Wilde (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 448–57.

53. Balch, “Paul’s Portrait of Christ Crucified,” 100, drawing on Hans-Joachim Schalles, “Pergamon: Sculpture,” in *Dictionary of Art*, ed. Jane Turner (New York: Grove, 1996), 24:413.

3.3.1. View from the Left (Opening)

If we approach the statue from the left (fig. 9), we see a powerful male warrior in combat pose. With his sword raised and in a dynamic forward-stride, his stola is floating behind him as he is moving ahead. His gaze is turned upward (perhaps invoking the gods) and onward, and he at first sight seems unstoppable. The contours of the slumped body against his leg on the other side are barely visible; it could be a fallen enemy or a woman he took as booty—the incontestable right of the victorious warrior. He is triumphant; he is moving on. What we are decoding here is the visual rhetoric of victory and conquest. Within the occidental cultural-semiotic framework of civilization versus barbarism, there is a standard pattern for denoting victory through constructing a binary semantic space. Victory (A) is the epitome of the triumphant civilized Self that gains or defends life and freedom, which is synonymous with rule (B) over the conquered and enslaved barbarian Other (non-A). As his gaze toward the “above” might signal, the position of the victorious Self (A) implies the supportive stance (B) of the superior/heavenly entities—the gods who give victory or refuse it. This includes divine legitimation, sanctioned by cosmic and political law: if the conqueror is divinely chosen, he must be righteous. Furthermore, within a patriarchal order the master position B as part of the symbolic-societal “above” commonly also features masculinity.

The oppositional sphere “below” in this system then is attributed to all that is “not,” to the nobodies who are/have nothing: the defeated and enslaved (or dying) barbarian Other (non-A), who is godless, lawless, ruled rather than ruling, and thus also unmanly/female (non-B). Portraying conquered nations, tribes, or locations as women was indeed a well-established convention in ancient iconography as is known from rich pictorial evidence, for example, on coins and sculpture.⁵⁴ At this



Figure 9. *The Galatian Suicide*, view from left.

54. See Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered*, 42–48.

point one would inevitably identify the slumped, vague figure of the woman behind the victorious warrior as the representation of this defeated female (or feminized) body that is required by the iron law of this “combat semiotics.”⁵⁵ Reading the sculpture from this side, the full story of occidental civilization from triumphant conquest to righteous colonization, exploitation, or extermination of the conquered barbarians is on display.

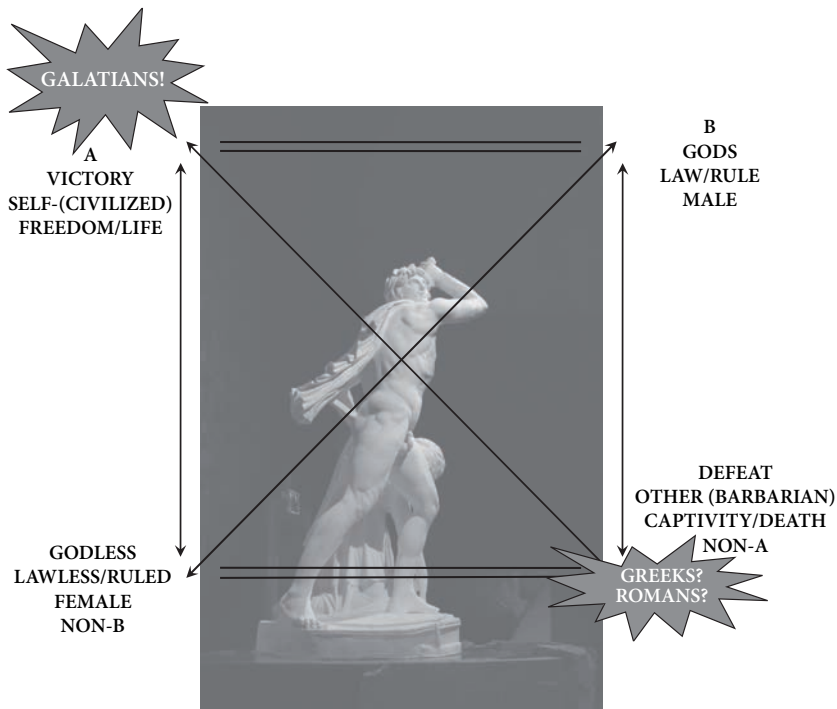


Figure 10. Reader-response semiotic model of *The Galatian Suicide*, view from the left.

However, there is a serious flaw in this depiction, at least from the perspective of those who produced the sculpture, for the victorious warrior is a Galatian and barbarian, as indicated by clearly legible visual markers: his hair, bulging muscles, and excessive emotion. He is

55. Because the superior positions in the semiotic square, as far as it renders the dominant symbolic universe of the West, are defined by war and victory, I also use the terms “combat square” and “combat semiotics.”

a nobody who does not belong to the collective body of the winners—or does he? For a moment, and as long as one looks at the sculpture from this precise angle, the proper order of things is suspended and the frightening possibility of another universe comes into view. What if the Galatians had won? Then the falling, defeated, enslaved, demasculinized, and dying body at the bottom would be the Pergamenes, Greeks, Romans. This is no longer an image of noble victory; rather, it is the nightmare of civilization trampled down and vandalized by the barbarians. The rhetorical effect of the image at this stage would be remarkable—a shocked outcry and a dramatic back and forth between stunned exclamations and incredulous questions regarding this blasphemous reversal of roles, claims, and positions. Figure 10 seeks to capture this dynamic. In a visual ruse the Galatian barbarian appears victorious. Within the “combat order” of the binary semiotics, this would mean the end of Greek and Roman civilization. The rhetorical effect on the reader/viewer would be shock, the response perhaps a reinforced determination to fight to the death in order to defend the order of civilization against barbarian chaos and terror.

3.3.2. Frontal View (Middle)

However, as we shift our position from right to left, another “text” emerges, already familiar from our prior reading and plot analysis (fig. 8). The frontal view of the statue (fig. 2) reveals a complete and dramatic deconstruction and reversal of what we thought we had seen. The Galatian is not at all a victorious warrior but a suicidal enemy combatant who recognizes that his battle is irreversibly lost. Our prior nightmares vanish as we see the gushing wound underneath his throat and the sword that he turns against himself about to penetrate his heart. We watch the absurd contradiction of him looking behind (rather than up toward heaven, as we thought), while his legs seem to move forward. We recognize that he is terrified because he probably sees his victor approaching from behind. Suddenly it occurs to us that he in fact might be trying to run away! Yet he cannot run because his sword and the woman he has killed and is supporting are joining forces to drive him to the ground. This is a comical confusion that ridicules and mocks all non-Greek/non-Roman resistant heroism: the total deconstruction of the male warrior if he happens to be a barbarian. On the side of the “implied reader,” there might be a liberating outburst of laughter. What frightened us was nothing but a scarecrow.

3.3.3. View from the Far Right (Closing)

If we proceed to the far right of the sculpture (fig. 11), it becomes even more evident how unsubstantiated our fears were. Both figures will be on the ground momentarily. The woman will draw the man with her. Their hands, seen from this angle, are already parting. Their fall cannot be stopped, and this is the end of their story.



Figure 11. *Galatian Suicide*, view from the right.

From the interactive perspective of the reader/viewer, however, this is not yet the end of *The Galatian Suicide*. In the story the sculpture tells, there is an untold end point, a σκοπός at which the story line is aiming like an archer shooting an arrow. It is an image not present physically but produced mentally through the rhetography of the sculpture, its visual rhetoric and persuasive force operating within the semiotic order of combative and mutually exclusive binaries. This inherent dynamic prompts the brain into generating new images, to fill in the blank spaces on the screen of the scene with vivid visualizations of the yet unseen but about to happen. Though the Galatian warrior is still standing, it is clear that he stands in order to fall. This is the anticipated end of the plot on the level of the text, as we have seen. On the level of the reader, though, a

somewhat more happy ending is implied, for as the Galatian goes down, the Greeks, the Pergamenes, and, finally, the Romans can rise and move to the top, drawn up from their imaginary “below” by an invisible puppeteer’s strings, which are attached to the four corners of the binary square: if the barbarians are down, civilization is automatically reinstalled on top. After a fleeting moment of self-doubt and the cathartic crisis of a pretended downfall, the collective “we” of the civilized viewers can return safely and with even more self-assurance to the coveted location of rule and superiority that is legitimately “ours” and not “theirs.” Figure 12 captures this simultaneous down/up movement.

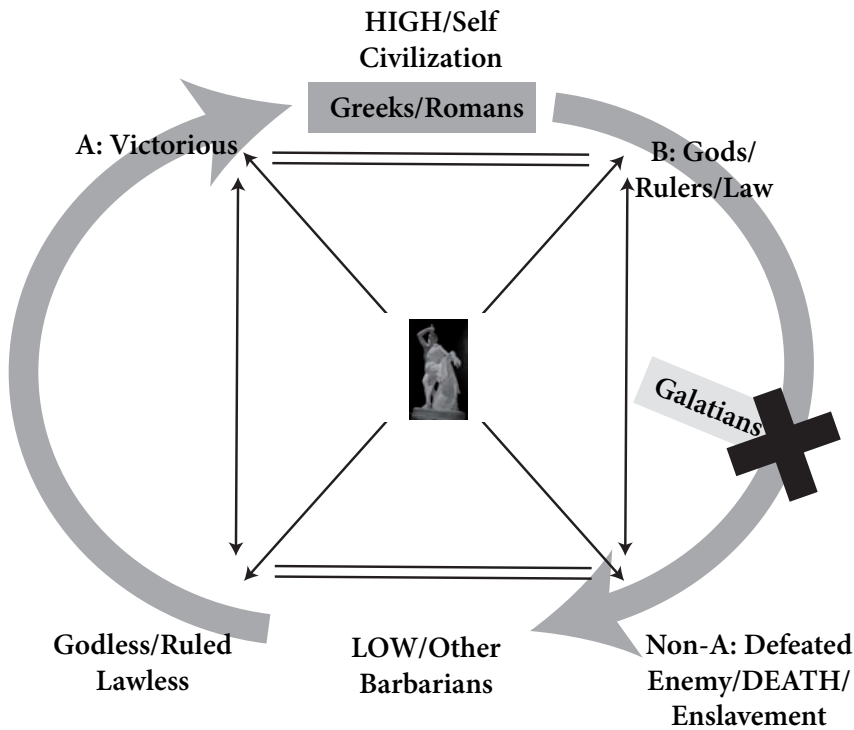


Figure 12. Reader-response based semiotic model of *The Galatian Suicide*. The Galatian warrior's going down from the superior position of Self and victory to the position of the barbarian Other and non-Self demonstrates who rightfully owns the position at the top—and who does not. The same self-induced force that irresistibly draws him to the ground induces an upward movement that lifts his conquerors from the bottom of non-A/non-B to the high ground of a civilization destined to rule over its barbarian Other.

This fatal charade, the inversion between up and down, down and up, with its firmly established outcome (seen from the perspective of the victorious) is the fascination, the horror and suspense, but also the comfort and confirmation embedded into this sculpture, there to be reaped by anyone who can “read” the image. Long after Pergamon's power is gone, during Paul's time, this type of imagery retained its rhetorical force as a cogent demonstration that “now,” with the Galatians/Gauls vanquished both in the east and west, Rome is destined to rule the world of nations—Galatians, Jews, and all other *ἔθνη* alike.

4. REIMAGINATION:

CHRIST CRUCIFIED (GALATIANS 3:1) AND THE GALATIAN SUICIDE

It would be a gross oversimplification, however, to assume that the antagonism of oppressors and oppressed in its plain and unembellished form was the only dynamic shaping the life of the communities that Paul addresses in his letter “to the ἐκκλησίαι of Galatia” (Gal 1:2). Although the precise location and ethnic identity of these Γαλάται (Gal 3:1) is unclear, we know for certain that they lived in the Roman province of Galatia. All inhabitants of this multiethnic administrative unit—tribal Galatians with a Celtic background to the north as much as people of other ethnicities (including Jews and Greeks) farther south—had been collectively “naturalized” as Roman Galatians when Emperor Augustus in 25 BCE decided to call his newly founded province in Anatolia/Phrygia “Galatia.” This act of naming was in itself an extraordinary piece of “victory art” that commemorated the *undying* triumph of Rome over *dying* Celtic/Galatian chaos and barbarism. In the meantime the Galatians of Asia Minor had gradually grown into “orderly” allies and power brokers of Rome, at least as far as their elite members were concerned. Native Galatians now provided an efficient policing force and a stable caste of client rulers who maintained law and order in the region and disciplined other ethnic groups on behalf of Rome. A “civilizing mission” had been successfully accomplished.⁵⁶

A few examples illustrate this “moving up” of the Galatians. The last Galatian king, Amyntas (36–25 BCE), installed by Rome like his predecessor Deiotaros (59–40 BCE), died in an antiriot operation against the rebellious mountain tribe of the Homonadeis. High priests “of the Galatians to God Augustus (θεῷ Σεβαστῷ) and Goddess Roma (θεῇ Ῥώμῃ)” with unmistakably Celtic names like “Albiorix, son of Ateporix,” or of known Galatian lineages officiated at the new imperial temple in the provincial capital of Ancyra. They provided, among other things, the huge amounts of money necessary to hold arena shows with animal fights and gladiatorial combats or to make other significant donations such as banquets or

56. Aliou Cissé Niang has presented an intriguing postcolonial reading of Galatians within the context of the French *mission civilisatrice* in Senegal, West Africa, a mission explicitly based on the Gallic/Galatian origins of France. See Aliou Cissé Niang, *Faith and Freedom in Galatia and Senegal: The Apostle Paul, Colonists, and Sending Gods*, BibInt 97 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 123.

oil to the public.⁵⁷ Galatian soldiers, prized for their military prowess all throughout the ancient world, served in the Roman army or as mercenaries elsewhere. The (in)famous Egyptian queen Cleopatra had a guard of 400 Galatians who, upon her defeat and death, was presented as a gift to Rome's Jewish client-king Herod the Great, her archenemy. Moving away from the image of the savage Celtic warrior, already King Deiotaros, a host of Caesar and friend of Cicero who was praised for his cultured manners, had started to train his Galatian troops in Roman military ways. An entire Roman legion was eventually named for him as *Legio XXII Deiotariana*.⁵⁸

4.1. Imperial Reimagination: The Galatian "Berserker" as Roman Legionary

One could call this process of co-optation the "*imperial* reimagination" of *The Dying Gauls/Galatians*, who were resurrected to life by the emperor and rehabilitated as lawful subjects, servants, and soldiers of Rome. In terms of our sculpture, one might imagine the suicidal Galatian actually pulling the sword out of his own chest and turning it "properly" against his enemies again, the enemies of Rome. The difference would be the all-decisive distinction between a "barbarian berserker" and a lawful soldier fighting on the side of the gods, accruing honor and glory rather than shame and infamy. Suddenly we notice how the terrifying and demonic enemy that we came to see in figures 3 and 9 is shifting shape to become "one of ours." A dramatic change in the image, or rather its perception in the mind of the viewer, indeed, but the iconological "deep structure" would stay exactly the same. No matter whether Galatians are the shameful barbarian Other conquered by Rome or are honorably aligned with the Roman Self to fight against another barbarian Other like the Homonadeis; the binary "law of combat" persists as the foundational matrix for making sense of Self and Other.

As provincials, Galatians of all ethnicities were to be forever subservient to Rome, as far as Rome was concerned. Yet within this confining structure, Rome provides and supports numerous mechanisms for regaining a sense of officially acknowledged selfhood, agency, and pride by

57. The list of imperial priests, inscribed at the imperial temple at Ancyra, is easily accessible in S. Mitchell, *Celts in Anatolia*, 108.

58. For a more detailed analysis of this process, see Kahl, *Galatians Re-imagined*, 169–207.

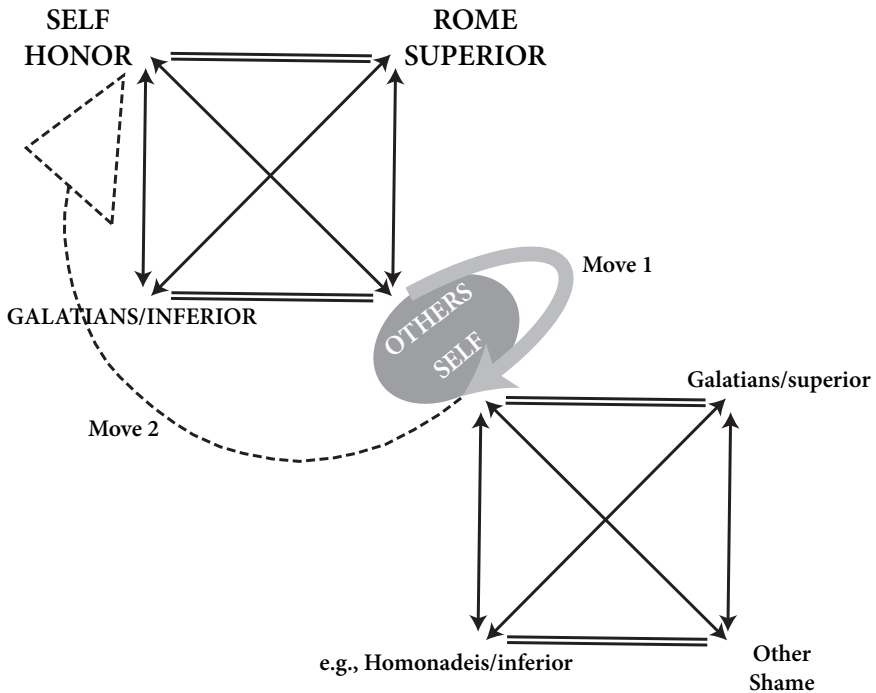


Figure 13. Reception-history-oriented semiotic visualization of *The Galatian Suicide* from an imperial perspective in the first century CE. Move 1: Within the Roman colonial order, the Galatians as Other (together with other conquered ἄλλοι) can regain selfhood and life by establishing themselves as superior over another Other—for example, as soldiers, client rulers, imperial priest(esse)s, patrons, and benefactors. Move 2: This (relative) restoration of selfhood implies an imaginary move upward in identifying with the ruling Roman Self, a “reconciliation” that counteracts resistance and stabilizes the Roman order. However, while this “resurrection” and “reimagination” indeed bridges and hybridizes the antagonistic binary between colonizing Self and colonized Other, it at the same time (and perpetually) draws on its relentless reinforcement vis-à-vis other Others.

allowing the vanquished to fight against or compete with another Other (or simply among one another) in the never-ending contests for the symbolic capital of honor, pride, status, recognition, privilege. Fighting for Rome in the legions was one option, cheering the victorious fighters in the arena another one. Or people could outdo one another by offering more generous donations to the public than their predecessors—for example, in orchestrating imperial worship at the capital of Ancyra or elsewhere in

the province.⁵⁹ It was part of the ingenuity and longevity of Roman rule that it did not base its hegemony on the power of its legions alone but also on the persuasive force of military service, arena entertainment, imperial religion, public offices, patronage, and euergetism, all of which integrated both indigenous elites and non-elites.⁶⁰ The most efficient way of pacifying the conquered was to educate them about how to turn the law of the winners against each other. The losers subscribe to the law of their own defeat by putting down others and thereby imagine themselves to be part of the victorious Self. This process is visualized in the “staircase” model of figure 13 above.

4.2. Messianic Reimagination: “Crossing Out” the Binary with *Christ Crucified* (Galatians 3:1)

Only recently, and with help from philosophers such as Derrida and Agamben, have we started to understand that precisely this self-perpetuating *law* of Self/Other-opposition might be at the heart of Paul’s theological and political/ethical intervention, and of his most exasperated and authentic apostolic outcry: “You stupid Galatians” (Gal 3:1). From a far too narrow focus on Judaism and the torah, the projection screen widens to the common plight of Galatians, Jews, and other colonized nations under Roman *nomos*. An “exodus” was not possible for any of them. All ways “up” or “out” always led back to Rome. Suddenly, Paul’s statements about freedom and slavery or about law, works, and curse versus faith, grace, and blessing shine a strikingly new light. The colonized are no longer tied to the “cursed” (self-)colonizing logic of competition nor to the law of combat that, in endless spirals, chases one’s self-value by devaluing an Other, utterly self-defeating in the end because it never can lead out of the maze of infinitely reproducing “combat squares.”

59. The Ancyra priest list clearly reflects a competitive edge in the individual donations; Mitchell, *Celts in Anatolia*, 112.

60. For a succinct introduction to the asymmetrical and hierarchical relations established through patronage and euergetism as a means of using “inequality of wealth to perpetuate structures of dependence more effective than those based on mere violence,” see Richard Gordon, “The Veil of Power,” in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society*, ed. Richard A. Horsley (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), 130. For the “unifying” effects of the arena, “where the Roman pledge of allegiance and civic code of conduct were collectively recited through images,” see Kahl, *Galatians Re-imagined*, 148–67 (esp. 166).

We are reminded of Derrida's cautionary statement that "the hierarchy of dual oppositions" needs to be watched because it "always re-establishes itself." For Derrida, this necessitates a perpetual twofold procedure of "overturning" these oppositions—a move still inside the old binary field—while simultaneously, leaving them behind as "the irruptive presence of a new 'concept'" makes itself felt, "a concept that can no longer be, and never could be, included in the previous regime."⁶¹ However, as Derrida starts to describe this "irruptive presence," his language becomes opaque and difficult to understand. One could see this almost incomprehensibility as an inevitable effect of moving conceptually beyond binaries while binaries still govern the meaning-making and conceptualizing logic of our existing language.

This might be the point where Paul and Derrida meet, in the confusing need to express the presence of a radically new, nonbinary world order in a new language within the constraints of the old world and its binary language.⁶² Right into the visual space we have created by framing and crisscrossing *The Galatian Suicide* with the binary arrows of semiotic squares, Paul's cruciform messianic justification through grace and by faith projects itself with striking accuracy as the categorical dismantling of the binary law. Everyone is Other/sinner before God, yet everyone is also offered a free share in the collective messianic Self through God's grace alone, entirely without the "works" of competition and combat against an Other. The "body of Christ" therefore connects One and Other into "One" through noncompetitive practices of love and an ethos of horizontal mutuality. Yet there also remains an Other that Paul monitors and decries with the full thrust of his messianic vigilance as "works," or "flesh," or "reenslavement," but this "other" is not the unholy remnant of Paul's own binary disposition or a proof of his authoritarian "politics of othering," of which he is often accused.⁶³ Rather, what he turns against, with

61. Derrida, *Position*, 42; see nn. 48 and 50 above.

62. I owe this insight to the groundbreaking work of J. Louis Martyn on Paul's theology of law in Galatians as an annihilation of the "antinomies" or pairs of opposites that were seen as foundational for the structure of the whole cosmos in antiquity; J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 33A (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 405–6, 560, 571; see also Kahl, *Galatians Reimagined*, 19–25.

63. See, e.g., Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Paul and the Politics of Interpretation," in *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation*, ed. Richard A. Horsley (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000), 45–47.

an alertness similar to Derrida's, is precisely the permanent return of the binary order that again and again invades the messianic body, concretely in Galatia with the circumcision-demand of his "opponents."

You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly exhibited [προεγράφη] as crucified. The only thing I want to learn from you is this: Did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of the law or by believing what you heard? (Gal 3:1–2, NRSV)

Space does not permit a detailed exegesis of this passage within the overall context of Galatians, which has been more extensively explored elsewhere.⁶⁴ What we focus on here is the direct interaction or intertextuality between the two images of *The Galatian Suicide* and *Christ Crucified* when they are read/viewed next to each other. The following exercise of having Paul critically reimagine the *The Galatian Suicide* through the visual lens of *Christ Crucified* is, of course, entirely fictive. Nonetheless, it can open up modes of seeing that can reconnect us in glimpses, fragmentary as they may be, with the real life encounter between Paul and the Galatians two millennia ago—layers of meaning and memory not easily accessible otherwise, though indispensable for deciphering Paul's theology of cross and justification in its original persuasive impact.

4.2.1. "Downfall" as Dying to the Self

The collapse of the Self-Other polarity in an act of suicidal Self-Othering and the complete loss of meaning and selfhood resulting from it mark the core drama of *The Galatian Suicide* expressed as "downfall." Yet the suicidal setting only aggravates and highlights the transition into traumatic meaninglessness and nothingness which is an inevitable consequence of conquest on the side of the vanquished and the vast majority of the marginalized low-class "nobodies" in general (cf. τὰ μὴ ὄντα, 1 Cor 1:28). For Paul, this is a familiar experience as well, not only as a colonized Jew who is in the same position as the colonized Galatians, but even more so as a zealous Jew turned into a mediator of peace. In almost a mirror image of the

64. For a more in-depth exegetical treatment, see Brigitte Kahl, "Galatians," in *Fortress Commentary on the Bible: The New Testament*, ed. Margaret Aymer, Cynthia Briggs Kittredge, and David A. Sánchez (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 503–25.

left-view of *The Galatian Suicide* (fig. 9), Paul in his pre-Damascus period could boast in militant terms of a triumphant “policing” campaign against a deviant Other (Gal 1:13–14). A forceful intervention from “above”—not entirely dissimilar from the sword striking down like a Jovian lightning bolt in *The Galatian Suicide*⁶⁵—stopped him in his tracks while simultaneously turning him around towards the Gentile Other: to the sinner, the not-us (Gal 1:15; 2:15). The divine revelation of the crucified Jesus as God’s Son delegitimizes the Holy War Paul had been fighting. It is no longer God’s War. Paul is made to die to his old warrior Self. In this way, Damascus marks the breakdown of the binary combat-square.

Paul describes this “dying to the Self” with intense vividness in the passage immediately preceding Gal 3:1, where he gives a summary of his “theology of the cross”: “For through the law I died to the law.... I am co-crucified with Christ ... and it is no longer I [ἐγώ] who live (or: I am no longer living as I)” (2:19–20). Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection have deconstructed the binary order as a constitutive device of making sense of one’s Self through suppressing an Other. For at the cross *God-Self* is revealed as completely *Other* when a crucified criminal and law-breaker, a figure in strong visual and conceptual correspondence with the “lawless” figure in *The Galatian Suicide*,⁶⁶ becomes acknowledged and resurrected as God’s Son. At that moment, God-Self had died to the commonplace image of God as aligned with a superior and victorious Self that represents law and righteous rule, an image that provides divine legitimacy to the binary order, equally established among Jews and gentiles, Greeks and barbarians (see figs. 10 and 12).

Identity/Self is no longer accessible by contrasting a superior, law-abiding in-group Self sponsored by God with an inferior, lawless and godless out-group Other, as Paul himself had habitually done before: “We are by nature Jews and not Gentile sinners” (Gal 2:15). Not accidentally, Paul’s

65. This spatial verticality of a high-low dynamic, however, is absent from Galatians and has been inserted into the Christian imagination only through the Damascus report of Acts (Acts 9:3–4).

66. While the cross-beams are a variable, the vertical stake to which the victim is nailed or bound is indispensable in the various forms of crucifixion. See Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 24–25. This dominant verticality in the two images of (self-) execution for lawlessness and insurgence, together with the bloody penetration of skin and flesh through nails or sword are strongly corresponding visual markers in *The Galatian Suicide* and the *προγράφη* of *Christ Crucified*.

“turning around” at Damascus has often been visualized in Christian art as the (imaginary) fall from a horse. In their “downfall/death” as a total collapse of meaning to the point of Self-annihilation, the suicidal Galatian fighter, Christ crucified, and the co-crucified holy-warrior Paul share a similar symbolic universe.

The next step is different. Processing the meaning of “Christ crucified,” Paul after Damascus came to “see” this plunge into meaninglessness as the transition into an entirely new way of “making sense” as an individual and as a community: an opportunity to become “free” and “Self” again even under the constraints of enduring subjugation and otherness, without becoming trapped anew in the binary law of domination.

4.2.2. Love as the New Logic of (Resurrected) Life

The victory monuments of *The Galatian Suicide* and other *Dying Galatians*, not unlike the highly visual message of public crucifixions, prod the viewer to complement mentally the downfall of the defeated barbarians/law-breakers with an upward surge of the divinely assigned, lawful winners and with an urge to embrace the position of the dominant Self, whatever act of submission this “moving up” requires. At no point in this circular movement from High to Low and back to High (see figs. 12 and 13) is the normative binary order of Self over and against Other ever dispelled.

There is also an “upward” movement from death/down back into life in Paul that is propelled by the dynamics of Christ being resurrected “out of the dead.” At first it might look similar to the imperial “resurrection” in figures 12 and 13. Yet, unlike its imperial twin, the messianic resurrection breaks free from the curse of self-perpetuating binaries. For it is propelled by love, not by competition and combative Self-assertion: “I live but no longer as I/Self but Christ lives in me ... who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20). Unlike the death of the Galatian, Christ’s dying was not driven by the logic of war-making but of love and self-giving for an Other (“me”). The life that grows out of this death thus finally can end the combat between Self and Other. If Christ “lives in me,” then the Self has already been attributed its status and “standing” as righteous (δίκαιος), through mere grace. The Self no longer needs to become someone through “works of the (binary) law” that turn others into nobodies. It has received the recognition/justification every human being needs to live humanely. As long as (s)he stays faithful to this (baptismal) transformation of dying to the Self and living Christ’s life, (s)he is no longer forced to fight aggressively

for Self-recognition but instead becomes centered in love (5:6, 13–14) This, in a nutshell, is the essence of Paul's signature theology of justification by grace and faith rather than through victory and other "works" of self-distinction in line with the "law" of hierarchical binaries (Gal 2:15–21).

The vertical and antithetical logic of life within the "law of combat" is crossed out in a horizontal move toward mutuality and relationship that makes the One bear the burdens of the Other, thus fulfilling the law of Christ (Gal 6:2). If we picture Paul in front of his Galatian communities trying to paint the verbal picture of *Christ Crucified* with an eye to *The Galatian Suicide*,⁶⁷ the "pagan" and "imperial" image suddenly reveals aspects of a "messianic reading," at which we have only hinted so far. Paul, perhaps, would point out that it is not just the suicidal and ultimately self-destructive logic of victory but also the paradoxical counter-momentum of love that are inerascably embedded into this image. The tenderness with which the dying man supports the falling woman and holds onto her beyond death is one of the most stirring features of the image. It signals a relational quality of support and care for the Other that in itself points beyond the binary gender and Self-construct that frames it. Paul might see the messianic spark in this paradoxical entanglement of love in stark contrast to the militant self-destruction embodied by the Galatian's other hand holding the sword.⁶⁸

This messianic moment in *The Galatian Suicide* resonates strikingly with what Paul himself tries to persuade the Galatians to remember as their initial encounter with *Christ Crucified*. He himself had been weak and obviously in a miserable situation, close to death, practically a piece of "human trash" reduced to complete nothingness (ἐξουθενέω, 4:14). The Galatians could have spat on him and let him die, but they held their hands out toward the vulnerable stranger in an act of extraordinary hospitality and self-giving for an alien Other. This is, Paul reminds them, how they originally received not just the gospel of Christ (4:13) but Christ himself (4:14)—by receiving him, the damaged human Other, as if he were one of their own. This is how they broke free from the ideological constraints

67. For the meaning of προεγράφη in Gal 3:1 as a sketching of word pictures (*ekphrasis*) through Paul's preaching and practice, see Balch, "Paul's Portrait of Christ Crucified," 86–87.

68. Ironically, Paul's common iconographic marker later on would be the sword, usually explained as an allusion to Heb 4:12 or to his martyrdom in Rome under Nero.

imposed on them by the dominant order, how they defied the binary law and became seedlings of the new creation.

The hatched straight lines of the antithetical “combat-square” are deflected into a circular movement that continuously flows from A to non-A to B to non-B to A (fig. 14). It embraces, bridges, equalizes, and transforms the adversarial binaries of OneSelf (high) and Other (low) into a horizontal mode of one-an(d)-otherness (cf. Gal 6:2) that has the cross as its center. The binary order is transcended from within, “already” and “not yet” overcome. The upper and inner part of this circular messianic motion follows the position of his and her left arms: He uses his “high” position (A) to support her and hold her up (B) against the pull of her falling (non-B). The diagonal downward movement of his left arm at first seems to parallel the binary line of A versus non-A, before it is “caught up” by the messianic logic and “crosses over” from the Self into the realm of the Other, lifting her in fact up from non-B to B. In Paul’s model these movements of support constitute the “circulatory system” of the body of Christ, where grace flows, as Self and Other mutually hold each other up, though constantly tempted to fall back into the binary system of Self versus Other.

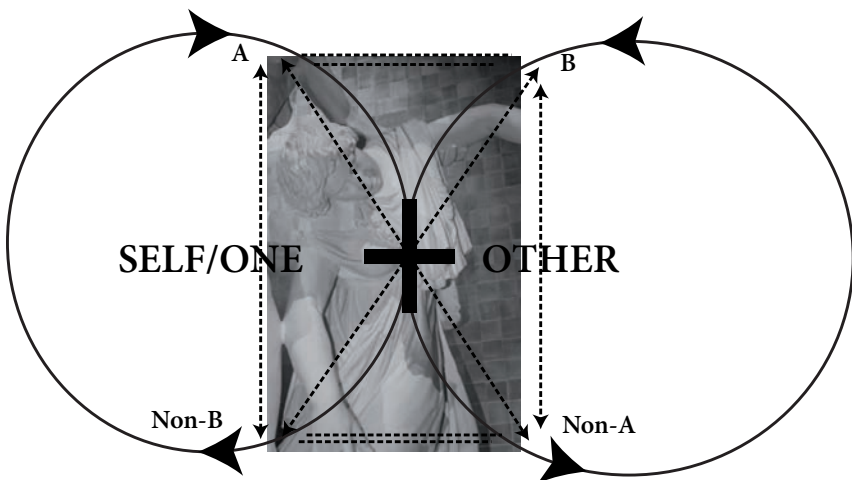


Figure 14. SELF/ONE + OTHER: Semiotic model for a transbinary “Critical Reimagination” of *The Galatian Suicide* as “One-an(d)-Otherness” (Gal 6:2) through *Christ Crucified*.

5. POSTSCRIPT: REDRAWING THE LINE OF DIVISION

Paul may be aligning himself here with existing survival practices of solidarity, hospitality, and mutual support among those at the bottom of the Roman order who follow a law different from the law of combat and competition. His point is that the horizon of this mutuality as One-an(d)-Otherness must be extended beyond the confines of one's own clan, tribe, ἔθνος, or any other in-group identity, including Jewish and Galatian identities. In this way, the left arm of the woman in *The Galatian Suicide* becomes a pointer toward a reality outside the binary frame of the image, a signifier of the "weak" messianic force (cf. 2 Cor 12:9) that nonetheless is capable of infusing the reality of death with the power of new life, transforming murderous polarities and competitive hierarchies into a horizontal movement that "weaves" Self and Other together into a life-sustaining network of interdependence and solidarity.

Ekphrasis: The Body That Breathes and Agamben's "Cut of Apelles"

Giorgio Agamben has tried to illustrate this paradoxical messianic entity of One Self + Other by relating an episode from a contest between two master painters, Apelles and Protogenes, in ancient Greece (Pliny, *Nat.* 35.81–83). The contest concerns a line drawn so finely by Protogenes that it does not seem to be real. Yet Apelles is able to draw an even finer line into this line, splitting it lengthwise in half. For Agamben, this "cut of Apelles" becomes a metaphor for the "messianic aphorism" that "does not have any object proper to itself but divides the divisions traced out by the law."⁶⁹ The law splits humanity into Jews and non-Jews, yet this split is

69. Agamben picks up the reference to Pliny from Walter Benjamin. The story is more evocative in the original version told by Pliny, where there are actually three lines in three colors, each finer and located on top of the previous one: the first is drawn by Apelles to show his supreme mastery. He is "topped" by Protogenes, however. "Shame/defeat" (*vinci erubescens*, Pliny, *Nat.*, 35.82) versus victory and honor are at stake for Apelles. The third line again by Apelles on the one hand makes Protogenes declare himself defeated (*victum se confessus*, Pliny, *Nat.*, 35.83). But it also "cuts" the two prior lines (*tertio colore lineas secuit*) and leads to an obviously reconciliatory move between the two rivals, beyond the "combat logic" of their competition: Protogenes declares that the canvas with nothing other than the three lines on it should be handed down to posterity as it is. It was subsequently much admired in Caesar's palace on the Palatine, until consumed by a fire.

divided again. Jews are divided into Jews “according to the breath or to the flesh,” as non-Jews/gentiles split into non-Jews “according to the breath or to the flesh.” This “now leaves a remnant on either side, which cannot be defined as a Jew, or as a non-Jew.” The “remnant” consists of Jews and non-Jews *according to the breath* (πνεῦμα). This means that spirit/πνεῦμα as “breath” for Agamben invalidates the law-based split between (Jewish) Self and (gentile) Other. It is only through the “flesh” (σάρξ) as antagonist of the “spirit” (πνεῦμα) that the binary order is preserved (cf. Gal 5:13–26). Agamben refers to the Renaissance philosopher and mystic Nicholas of Cusa (*De non aliud*), for whom “the A/non-A opposition admits a third term which then takes on the form of a double negation: non non-A.”⁷⁰ In this way, the messianic “division of divisions” produces a commonality of “non non-Jews” from among former Jews and gentiles.⁷¹

Although this exercise in abstract logic is immensely helpful for comprehending some of the paradoxes of Paul’s argument and the enormous impact of his theology for completely rethinking “universalism” and “particularism,” it is vital to understand that the “cut of Apelles” for Paul is foremost a practical and politically subversive “cut” into existing social codes of distinction/discrimination, rather than a merely logical issue. One could say that “reconciliation” as the “division of divisions” is the return to messianic One-an(d)-Otherness and the core theme of his interventions in all his letters. The cross, as shown in figure 14, becomes the permanent “switch” that “derails” the self-centered movement on both sides of the divide—among Jews and non-Jews alike— and redirects it toward each other’s Other. In this way the cross both “crosses out” and “rewires” the binary as solidarity.

Perhaps glimpses of this messianic “body of breath” (πνεῦμα) could be caught for some short moments during the autumn of 2014. Following the decision of a grand jury that the fatal choking of an unarmed black man by

70. Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, trans. Patricia Dailey (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 49–53.

71. It is important not to name this “remnant” of *non non-A* prematurely as “Christian,” thus creating a new binary of Christian versus Jew. Rather, one is reminded of Derrida’s “undecidables,” for example—categories “that can no longer be included within philosophical (binary) opposition, but which, however, inhabit philosophical opposition, resisting and disorganizing it, *without ever* constituting a third term ... neither the inside nor the outside ... neither confusion nor distinction, neither identity nor difference” (Derrida, *Positions*, 43).

a police officer was not punishable by law, people of black, brown, white, and many more colors across the United States and all lines of binary division came together and joined in chanting “I can’t breathe,” which were Eric Garner’s last words. This image of a collective yearning for the “breath of life” in the suffocating embrace of death—the death of an Other no longer declared as other and lawless—might be seen by Paul as the bodily imprint of resurrection. It is there that his messianic resistance inevitably clashed with the *nomos* of Roman power during his day, as it continues to clash with the exclusionary and power-driven law of our own order today, at its most self-destructive and, ultimately, suicidal point.

ARMOR, PEACE, AND GLADIATORS: A VISUAL EXEGESIS OF EPHESIANS 6:10–17

Rosemary Canavan

INTRODUCTION

Ephesians 6:10–17 employs clothing and armor imagery to describe the spiritual struggle of the Pauline communities addressed in the letter. A growing field of interpretation looks to the systematic interpretation of such imagery in relation to and in dialogue with the sociopolitical visual landscape. For my part, I wish to engage with the iconographic panorama of the cities in which the biblical texts were written, heard, and read to illuminate the meaning of the text. In this essay, using an adapted sociorhetorical analytic, I engage in a visual exegesis of the clothing and armor images in Eph 6:10–17 in light of findings in a gladiator graveyard in Ephesus and in the context of the *Pax Romana* in Asia Minor. Although there are difficulties with provenance, destination, and dating for the Letter to the Ephesians, I examine the schema of visual images in the broader context of cities strategically connected with Ephesus via trade routes and where other Christ-communities may have received and heard the Letter to the Ephesians.¹ I propose that the detailing of “the whole armor of God” in 6:10–17 evokes vivid images of military armor that are enhanced by the spectacle of gladiatorial combat in a time of relative peace. This spectacle recalls the victories of Rome that brought about the Roman peace across the Empire. The spiritual battle that the Ephesians are called to is for a lasting reign of peace, the peace of Christ.

1. The Letter to the Ephesians is generally considered to be a circular letter written to a group of Christ-following communities in Asia Minor.

CONTEXT

In examining the context I address three specific areas: Ephesus and surrounding cities in the period of the *Pax Romana*, the Letter to the Ephesians as a circular letter, and the discovery of a gladiator graveyard at Ephesus.

The *Pax Romana* was celebrated with the Secular Games of 17 BCE. The Secular Games were inaugurated in Republican Rome in 249 BCE and held only once per century.² The Secular Games were a once in a lifetime experience and heralded a new age. According to the decree of the Senate, "For religious reasons it would be appropriate for as many as possible to witness them."³ After a lapse of many years, Augustus seized the opportunity to reinstitute the games, interweaving Greek and Roman religious elements in "an invention of tradition."⁴ This sacred ceremony marked the dawning of the golden age of peace. The Calendar Inscription at Priene and fragments of inscriptions at Halikarnassus, Apameia, and Eumeneia in Asia Minor proclaim the introduction of the Julian calendar reform and praise Augustus as the savior (σωτήρ) who would bring an end to war.⁵ Coins depict images of the reign of peace, including the closed Temple of Janus (fig. 1).⁶ This peace is understood in the Roman order as pacification and subjugation. It is often referred to as the "Augustan peace," and it gives rise to one of Augustus's proud claims inscribed on the *Res gestae divi Augusti*:

Janus Quirinius which our ancestors ordered to be closed whenever there was peace, secured by victory, throughout the whole domain of the

2. Mark Reasoner, *Roman Imperial Texts: A Sourcebook* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 195.

3. Allan Chester Johnson et al., *Ancient Roman Statutes: A Translation with Introduction and Commentary, Glossary and Index* (Clark, NJ: Lawbook Exchange, 2003), 116, document 138.

4. Oliver Taplin, ed., *Literature in the Greek and Roman Worlds: A New Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 410.

5. Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World*, trans. Lionel R. M. Strachan, 4th ed. (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1927), 366; W. Dittenberger, ed., *Orientalis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae*, 2 vols. (Hildesheim: Olms, 1960), 2:48–60 (OGIS 458).

6. Janus was the two-faced Roman god of doors and beginnings. His temple had doors on both sides. When the doors were open, there was war; when they were closed, there was peace. Augustus refers to Janus in *Res gest. divi Aug.* 13.



Figure 1. Nero (54–68 CE). The coin is a sestertertius (34 mm, 26.63 g) and was struck at the mint in Rome, 65 CE (during Nero's reign). Obverse: laureate head left. Reverse: Temple of Janus with latticed window and garlanded and closed double doors. Image reproduced courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group Inc. <http://www.cngcoins.com>.

Roman people on land and sea and which before my birth is recorded to have been closed but twice in all since the foundation of the city, the senate ordered to be closed thrice while I was princeps. (Res gest. divi Aug. 13)⁷

Following the civil war of 69 CE, the Flavian dynasty emerged with what was perceived as a divinely ordained mission to restore the Augustan order.⁸ As part of this mission, the Flavians exploited images on coins in a systematic manner in order to reach a mass audience through a large range of denominations of coins. The major themes of the images were *Concordia* and *Pax*, reconnecting to the harmony and global peace espoused in the pre-Neronian era (figs. 2–3).⁹ The interrelationship of *Pax* and Victory is illustrated on a coin issued to commemorate the death of Mark Anthony. *Pax* appeared within a victory wreath on the reverse of this coin, minted in Ephesus.¹⁰ On the obverse around the image of Augustus is the

7. Velleius Paterculus, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, trans. Frederick W. Shipley, LCL 152 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1924), 13.

8. Harry O. Maier, *Picturing Paul in Empire: Imperial Image, Text and Persuasion in Colossians, Ephesians and the Pastoral Epistles* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 113.

9. Ibid., 113–14.

10. The reverse shows *Pax* standing at an angle to the left, holding a caduceus in

legend IMP CAESAR DIVI F COS VI LIBERTATIS P R VINDIX, celebrating Augustus as the champion of the Roman people's liberties, *libertatis populi Romani vindix*.¹¹ The release of this coin to commemorate Anthony's death heralds peace with the image of *Pax* but also ushers out Mark Anthony, whose coins distinctly portrayed the *cista mystica* (basket used for housing sacred snakes) surrounded by a wreath of ivy leaves on the obverse.¹² This commemorative coin style did not appear for any of the succeeding Caesars.

During the reign of Vespasian (69–79 CE), the imperial mints issued about 230 coin types.¹³ Vespasian had inherited the “dispersed, opportunistic, perhaps chaotic production of his predecessors.”¹⁴ By the end of his ten-year reign, there was only one mint operating at Rome. The imperial mint in Ephesus issued coins only during the period 70–74.¹⁵ Coins issued at the beginning of Vespasian's reign depicted themes of the restoration of peace, the new dynasty, and Victory.¹⁶ An example of this is a denarius minted in Ephesus with Vespasian on the obverse and on the reverse Victory is striding right, holding a palm and a wreath with PACI AUGUSTI

her right hand, and the *cista mystica* with snake to the right—all within a wreath. See “Pax,” in *Dictionary of Roman Coins* (London: George Bell, 1889), available at <http://tinyurl.com/SBL4819f1>.

11. Ibid.

12. The *cista mystica* with the ivy leaves alluded to Dionysus and specifically to initiation rites. In the Dionysian mysteries, a serpent, representing the god Dionysus, was carried in a *cista* (basket or box) on a bed of vine leaves. The symbol of the *cista mystica* was linked with Eumenes II and then taken up by Mark Anthony. The diminution of the *cista mystica* to a small symbol next to the significant presence of *Pax* indicates a new era. See Lyn Kidson, “Minting in Ephesus: Economics and Self-Promotion in the Early Imperial Period,” *Journal of the Numismatic Association of Australia* 23 (2012): 29, fig. 2. Interestingly, the established Latin translation of μυστήρια (myster-ies) became *initia*, meaning “initiation.” See Walter Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 7.

13. Maier, *Picturing Paul*, 113 n. 28, quoting Jan Eric Blamberg, “The Public Image Projected by the Roman Emperors (A.D. 69–117) as Reflected in Contemporary Imperial Coinage” (PhD diss., Indiana University, 1976), 32.

14. Ian Carradice, “Flavian Coinage,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Coinage*, ed. William E. Metcalf (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 376.

15. Ibid. These were predominantly silver denarii, a few rare aurei and, in 72 CE, some extremely rare cistophoric tetradrachmas (ibid., 377).

16. Ibid., 383.

inscribed around her.¹⁷ Vespasian includes images of his sons Titus and Domitian on the coins struck during his reign, connecting the future Flavian reign with the Augustan peace via the depictions of *Pax* and Victory on the reverse (see fig. 2). Vespasian also built the Temple of Peace beginning in 71 CE, dedicating it in 75 CE (Suetonius, *Vesp.* 9.1 [Rolfe, LCL]).

In a style similar to the Vespa-sian denarius struck at the mint in Rome (fig. 3) with seated *Pax* on the reverse is a silver denarius from the mint at Ephesus with *Concordia* on the reverse. Ceres is draped and seated left in a decorated chair with a high back, likely a throne. She holds two ears of corn and a poppy in her right hand and a cornucopia in her left.¹⁸ These coin styles distributed in Asia and Rome contribute to the ideology of global peace through victory, recalling Augustus's reign.



Figure 2. Titus under Vespa-sian (79–81 CE). A sester-tius (36 mm, 27.39 g, 6 h), Rome Mint, struck 80–81 CE. Obverse: IMP T CAES VESP AVG P M TR P P P COS VIII, laureate head right. Reverse: PAX AVGVST, *Pax* standing left, holding an olive branch and cornucopia; S C across field. RIC II 154; BMCRE 175–6; BN 161. Image reproduced courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group Inc. <http://www.cngcoins.com>.



Figure 3. Vespa-sian (reigned 69–79 CE). AR denarius (18 mm, 3.44 g, 7h), struck in Rome, January–June 70 CE. Obverse: IMP CAESAR VESPASIANVS AVG, laureate head right, COS IT ER TR PO[T]. Reverse: *Pax*, draped, seated left, holding an olive branch in her extended right hand and cradling a winged caduceus with her left arm. RIC II 29; BMCRE 26-30; BN 18; RSC 94h. Image reproduced courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group Inc. <http://www.cngcoins.com>.

17. An example of this is Vespa-sian (69–79 CE), denarius struck at Ephesus, 74 CE: IMP CAESAR VESPAS AVG COS V TR P PP. On the reverse, PACI AVGVSTAE around Victory, advancing right with a wreath and palm. Available in the Tricario collection at Asia Minor Coins, <http://tinyurl.com/SBL4819g1>.

18. Silver denarius, Ephesus Mint, RIC II, part 1 (2nd ed.), Vespa-sian 1394. 1996.72.1. Available in the Online Coins of the Roman Empire (OCRE) database, <http://tinyurl.com/SBL4819h1>.

The Letter to the Ephesians was written in this sociohistorical and ideological context to communities of messianic believers. It was likely a circular letter, possibly the lost letter to the Laodikeians (cf. Col 4:16), perhaps a warning against magical practices associated with the cult of Artemis, or having some other function.¹⁹ As a circular letter, it addresses a group of believing communities in Asia Minor. MacDonald suggests 90 CE as the date of writing, though that seems late.²⁰ This dating would place the audience in the reign of Domitian. I prefer an earlier date, between 70 and 80 CE in the time of Vespasian. My preference is grounded in a considered opinion that the writing of Colossians was by a close disciple of Paul shortly after his death.²¹ Ephesians clearly seems to be dependent on Colossians, written some amount of time later.²² The visual imagery in Colossians appears to align closely with the time of Nero (54–68 CE), and that of Ephesians has synergy with the time of Vespasian (69–79 CE).

The Letter to the Ephesians offers its audience members a rich narrative of imperial political language, imagery, and metaphor aimed at building their identity and unity as believers and taking up the spiritual struggle “against the wiles of the devil” (6:10). In its dependence on Colossians, I believe this to be a letter from a Pauline school of thought located in the region of Ephesus with links to the Lycus Valley and other strategically connected cities such as Smyrna, Philadelphia, Pergamon, Sardis, and Thyatira.²³ Here I include Ephesus and the surrounding cities of Asia Minor as the likely geographical context.

The third element of the context is the spectacle of gladiatorial combat and gladiators’ armor, notably in relation to Ephesus, with reference to

19. Maier elucidates a comprehensive list of proposals in *Picturing Paul*, 104–5.

20. Margaret Y. MacDonald, “The Politics of Identity in Ephesians,” *JSNT* 26 (2004): 435.

21. Rosemary Canavan, *Clothing the Body of Christ at Colossae: A Visual Construction of Identity*, WUNT 2/334 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 33.

22. Andrew T. Lincoln and Alexander J. M. Wedderburn insist that, if Pauline authorship of Colossians is denied, then also Ephesians should be. They claim a date of 80–90 CE. See Andrew T. Lincoln and Alexander J. M. Wedderburn, *The Theology of the Later Pauline Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 85–86.

23. On the Pauline school, see Eduard Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon: A Commentary on the Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, trans. William Poehlmann and Robert Karris, ed. Helmut Koester, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 181; Paul Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 92–94. For general provenance, see Maier, *Picturing Paul*, 106.

the discovery of a gladiators' graveyard. First discovered by archaeologists in 1933, the graveyard has attracted more recent attention following the unearthing of human remains. Fabian Kanz and Karl Grossschmidt from the Medical University of Vienna undertook analysis of the remains of sixty-eight individuals, comprising sixty-six males ranging in age from twenty to thirty years, one female, and one male approximately forty-five to fifty-five years of age. The focus of their investigation was on the injuries sustained by the gladiators.²⁴

My attention was drawn to the images of the armor of the gladiators and the possibility that these images interplay with the network of imperial and emperor images.²⁵ In this period of restoration of peace, could the images of armor and weaponry, both military and gladiatorial, provide a vivid parallel to and illustration for the metaphors used in the Letter to the Ephesians? When the Roman peace and the peace of Christ are juxtaposed and connected to battle, armor, and weaponry, it appears that these images have specific relevance in the Letter to the Ephesians. With these considerations of the intersecting contexts, I turn briefly to the methodological model.

THE MODEL

The model I employ is drawn from my recently published work *Clothing the Body of Christ at Colossae: A Visual Construction of Identity*.²⁶ In the present essay, I engage in a “visually literate reading” of the available “image network” in order to demonstrate a visual exegesis of Eph 6:10–17 with specific reference to 6:11, 14, 15, and 17.²⁷ My interest is the dialogue

24. Fabian Kanz and Karl Grossschmidt, “Head Injuries of Roman Gladiators,” *Forensic Science International* 160 (2006): 207–16.

25. Similar links between the images are located in a publication accompanying the British Museum exhibition of 2000–2001, entitled “Gladiators and Caesars: The Power and Spectacle of Rome.” See Ralph Jackson, preface to *Gladiators and Caesars: The Power and Spectacle in Ancient Rome*, ed. Eckart Köhne, Cornelia Ewigleben, and Ralph Jackson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 6.

26. Canavan, *Clothing the Body*, 53–66. The model is described in the chapter entitled “Methodology.”

27. I combine terminology drawn from Davina Lopez and Takashi Onuki: Davina Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered: Reimagining Paul's Mission* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 168–70; Takashi Onuki, *Jesus' Time: The Image Network of the Historical Jesus*, ESEC 13 (Dorset, UK: Deo, 2009), xvii–xviii.

between the material data of the Greco-Roman world and its represented form in the text. How do these images of putting on military armor and taking up weapons adopt, adapt to, and interact with the material culture iconography in the built and lived environment of the author and recipients of the letter? Diagrammatically (see fig. 4), I illustrate this as engaging the five arenas of texture identified by Vernon K. Robbins in a dynamic structure that interacts with the Greco-Roman world and the world of the interpreter. A further modification illustrates *sacred texture* as both intersecting with the other textures and having its own layer in the text.

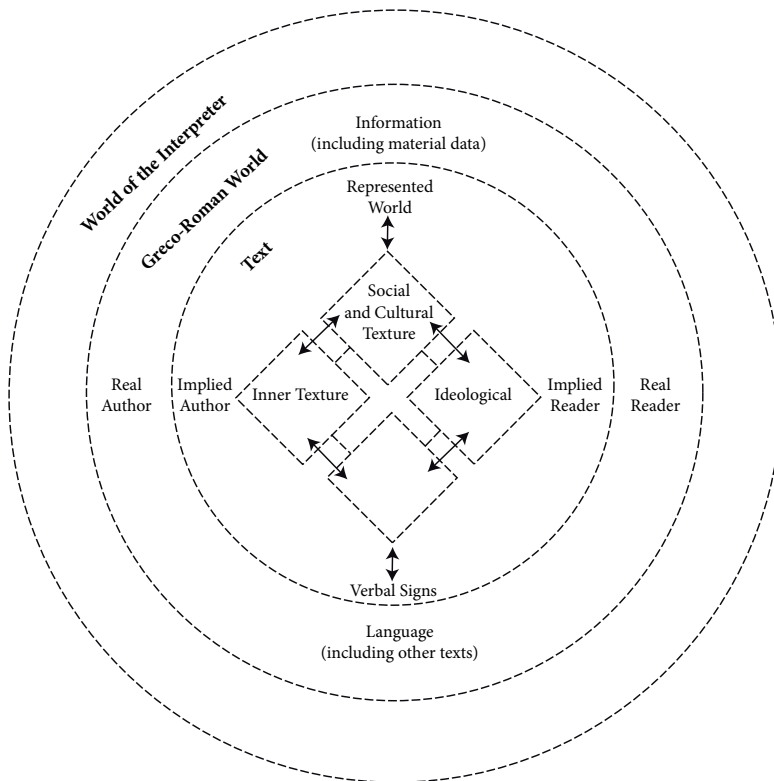


Figure 4. Adapted sociorhetorical model. Updated from the adaptation in Canavan, *Clothing the Body*, 63, fig. 1 © Mohr Siebeck Tübingen (with permission).

I will concentrate initially on *inner texture*, which involves the texture of the language itself, and then move to the *intertexture* defined as “the interaction of the language in the text with ‘outside’ material and physical

‘objects,’ historical events, texts, customs, values, roles, institutions, and systems.”²⁸ These are two perspectives in this complex system of interpretation that add value to the layers of meaning available to those reading or hearing the text of Ephesians in the context of the first-century city of Ephesus or its strategically connected cities. In engaging these textures, I will briefly comment on the ideological and sacred textures with regard to the *Pax Romana* and the gospel of peace.

INNER TEXTURE

Inner texture involves “the texture of the language itself.” Such “inner textual analysis” centers on words as the locus of communication.²⁹ An interpreter observes and listens to how words are used in a text: repeated, sequenced, and structured for meaning.³⁰ In Eph 6:10–17, the author creates a framework for this communication, bringing before the eyes of hearers or readers an Opening-Middle-Closing structure that elucidates and transforms the vivid imagery of armor:

- Opening: 6:10–12
- Middle: 6:13
- Closing: 6:14–17

In this way 6:10–12 introduces the call to “be strengthened [passive of ἐνδυναμόω] in the Lord” and to “put on [or clothe yourself (ἐνδύω)] the whole armor of God.” The opponents or enemies are identified (vv. 11–12), and from this beginning it becomes clear that the “struggle” (πάλη, v. 12) and “armor” (πανοπλία, v. 11) imagery are to be applied to a different realm of existence. The middle, 6:13, is signified by the use of “on account of this” (διὰ τοῦτο) and instructs recipients now “to take up” (ἀναλαμβάνω, rather than put on/clothe themselves) with “the whole armor of God.” The “whole armor” and the purpose are repeated here, heightening the emphasis and urging what is unfolding as a “call to battle.”³¹ In the closing, 6:14–17, the author moves with “therefore” (οὖν) and the command “stand” (ἵστημι),

28. Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of the Texts: A Guide to Socio-rhetorical Criticism* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 40.

29. *Ibid.*, 7.

30. For an explanation and example of the inner texture of a text, see *ibid.*, 7–39.

31. Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC 42 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 432–34.

reiterating the force by the repetition of this verb (ἵστημι) in both 6:11 and 6:13. Previously the imperatives have been to “put on” and “take up” the whole armor so that the hearers and readers will be ready to stand firm, and now, in the closing, the imperative is to “stand firm,” ready for battle, and ready for the onslaught. Then follows a graphic elaboration of the components of the “armor of God,” drawing on the experience of the hearers and readers to apply the images of armor to the spiritual battle. In this way the “closing” delivers the ekphrastic detail available to be interpreted by the hearers or readers in relation to their own knowledge of the imagery of armor and weaponry, whether military or gladiatorial.



Figure 5. Roman oil lamp with depiction of gladiator, Burdur Museum. Photo by Carole Raddato, 2013, <http://tinyurl.com/SBL4819k1>.

The pattern of verbs across the Opening-Middle-Closing framework of the passage presents a battle strategy, indicated earlier as a “call to

battle.” The audiences must engage with language that commands preparation for fighting.³² The battle plan is elucidated in a progressive pattern, beginning with the clothing with full armor in 6:11 (see appendix 1). The terminology employed by the author gives insight into his experience, which may well include the divine warrior motif of Isaiah as well as the Roman imperial army and the spectacle of the gladiatorial arena.³³ It is not my intention to speculate on the mind of the writer or on that of the audience. It is important to recognize that the audience will also interpret terminology employed by the writer through their own experiences in their sociocultural context. The investment of emperors in providing games and spectacles reflected, in part, the popularity the emperors derived from providing them. For instance, Tiberius (14–37 CE) did not provide games, but Caligula (37–41 CE) did, and he won popularity at least in the short term. The popularity of the games is also observed in the images of gladiators included in mosaics, painting on glass and pottery, and oil lamps.³⁴

At the outset, the terminology employed is military in origin. The full armor (*πανοπλία*) in its Greek context refers to the suit of armor of *hoplites* (*ὁπλίτης*, pl. *ὁπλίται*), known to be heavily armed foot soldiers.³⁵ This panoply included shield, helmet, breastplate, greaves, sword, and lance and largely corresponds to the descriptions found in Polybius (ca. 200–118 BCE).³⁶ Roman historian Titus Livy (ca. 59 BCE–17 CE) in his *History of Rome* records first-class armor as that of the Greek hoplite panoply: helmet (*galea*), shield (*clipeum*), greaves (*ocreae*), cuirass (*lorica*), all of bronze, plus a spear (*hasta*) and a sword (*gladius*) (1.43.2). Second-class armor is identical but has an oblong wooden shield (*scutum*) and no cuirass (1.43.4). This rank of soldier and armor corresponds to the Roman infantry. The breastplate (*θώραξ*; Eph 6:14) was recognizable body armor for the upper torso and was also known as the cuirass. The cuirass was also used as the dress of victory by emperors and military leaders. The

32. The warrior motif has been elucidated from Isaiah to Ephesians in Thomas Yoder Neufeld, *Put on the Armour of God: The Divine Warrior from Isaiah to Ephesians*, JSNTSup 140 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997).

33. See Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 432–34; Neufeld, *Put on the Armour of God*, 94–153.

34. Thomas Wiedemann, *Emperors and Gladiators* (London: Routledge, 1995), 23.

35. See “*πανοπλία*,” LSJ, 1298.

36. Polybius states that the armor and weaponry of the Roman army was fashioned on that of Greece in the Hellenistic Period (Polybius, *Hist.* 6.23–25).

“shield” (θυρέος: 6:16) is a large oblong shield that in Latin is *scutum*, as mentioned above.³⁷ In the imperial period the *scutum* was modified to become a shorter rectangular shield.³⁸ The *scutum* and *gladius* (sword) are often paired as the weapons of the infantry. The *gladius*, a short sword used for both thrusting and stabbing, was considered “the hallmark of the Roman soldier” from the period of the Republic.³⁹ The word *gladiator* is derived from the name of the sword.⁴⁰ However, the sword (μάχαιρα: 6:17) was a large knife that, as a weapon, was a short sword or dagger that was the instrument of an assassin, not a soldier.⁴¹ In this instance the military and gladiatorial weaponry fused in meaning though the nomenclature used in Ephesians is less distinct. Similarly, the arrows of 6:16 are βέλοι, a generic term for missiles, darts, and especially arrows.⁴² The shield was one of the best protections for arrows, and this combination was part of the military machine.

The “struggle” (πάλη) certainly has the meaning of “fight” or “battle” yet is particularly linked to wrestling. It can refer to the fine dust or sifted sand sprinkled on oiled bodies before wrestling.⁴³ Gladiatorial combats were often called a πυγμή (boxing match), partly for the etymological link to the Latin *pugna* and *punare*.⁴⁴ The use of πάλη is a *hapax legomenon* here, which indicates a special choice, perhaps in order to emphasize a different arena. In gladiatorial training, the *palus* (Latin, transliterated in

37. θυρέος takes its name from θυρά, meaning “door,” because the shield is shaped like a door. See LSJ, 811. *Scutum* refers to an oblong shield and is also used to describe heavily armed soldiers bearing shields. In general terms, *scutum* can mean a shield as a defense, protection, shelter, or safeguard. See Charles T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (London: Clarendon, 1880), 1651.

38. The shield was made in a semicylindrical shape with straight sides. For further information, see Richard A. Gabriel, *The Ancient World* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2007), 273.

39. Michel Feugère, *Weapons of the Romans*, trans. David S. Smith (Stroud: Tempus, 2002), 108.

40. Silvano Mattesini, *Gladiators*, trans. Anne L. Jackson (Rieti: Associazione Culturale Archeos, 2009), 17.

41. LSJ, 1085.

42. LSJ, 313.

43. πάλη means “wrestling” and in general refers to a fight or battle. πάλη or παλή also means “fine dust,” with the latter version being used to distinguish from the former (LSJ, 1291).

44. Cavan W. Concannon, “Not for an Olive Wreath but Our Lives: Gladiators, Athletes and Early Christian Bodies,” *JBL* 133 (2014): 202.

Greek as *παῖλος*) was the wooden pole used for practicing sword maneuvers.⁴⁵ This name came to indicate not just this pole but the arena and a class of gladiators.⁴⁶

English translations typically employ the words “belt” (6:14) and “shoes” (6:15), although participles are employed in Greek: *περιζάμενοι τῇν ὀσφύν* more literally means “girding the loins”; *ὑποδησάμενοι τοὺς πόδας* means “binding under the feet,” referring literally to a sole bound onto the foot or to a sandal (*ὑπόδημα*).⁴⁷ The Roman *calceus*, which was a shoe or half-boot, was referred to as *ὑπόδημα κοῖλον*, but many authors simply used *ὑπόδημα*.⁴⁸ Neither of these terms is specifically military, and thus the range of meaning is broadened for their use in Ephesians. The binding of the feet appears more related to being ready than to specific styles of shoe, sandal, or boot. The definition given earlier for a suit of armor does not include shoes or boots but does mention greaves.

The “helmet” (6:17) is a *περικεφαλαία*, which literally means “around the head” and is thus a covering for the head, such as a helmet.⁴⁹ From the time gladiatorial contests began and extending through the Republican period, soldiers and gladiators were equipped with similar armor, though some used armor distinctive of their ethnic origin.⁵⁰ Those with distinctive armor may have been captured warriors using their own equipment.⁵¹ Following the reforms of Augustus, gladiators were divided into types, with some symbolizing conquered ethnic groups such as Samnite, Gaul, or Thracian (*samnis*, *gallus* and *thraex*, respectively).⁵²

45. Tullia Ritti, ed., *Museo Archaeologico di Denizli-Hierapolis Catalogo delle iscrizioni greche e latine* (Naples: Liguori, 2008), 154. *παῖλος*, from the Latin *palus* meaning “stake,” also describes a squad or team of gladiators. See LSJ, 1294.

46. The verb *πάλλω* meaning “wield,” “brandish,” or “slay” may also have contributed to the naming. See LSJ, 1293.

47. “ὑπόδημα,” LSJ, 1879.

48. LSJ, 1879.

49. *περικεφαλαία* is a covering for the head such as a helmet, a cap or a bandage. See LSJ, 1376.

50. John Travis and Hilary Travis, *Roman Helmets* (Stroud, UK: Amberley, 2014), 122.

51. Marcus Junkelmann, “*Familia Gladiatoria*: The Heroes of the Amphitheatre,” in *Gladiators and Caesars*, ed. Eckart Köhne, Cornelia Ewigleben, and Ralph Jackson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 37.

52. Christos Potamianos, “The Function of the Roman Spectacle,” *eHumanista: Monographs*, <http://tinyurl.com/SBL4819i>.

The pictorial language of armor and weapons in Eph 6 is obviously metaphorical. From the beginning the author marks out a spiritual battle with enemies not of blood and flesh. The vivid imagery is turned to the defeat of the devil, and the weaponry and specific parts of the armor are transformed into descriptors of the gifts God gave through Jesus: truth (v. 14), righteousness (v. 14), the peace of Christ (v. 15), faith (v. 16), and salvation (v. 17).

The Opening-Middle-Closing framework of the inner texture can be illustrated by the repetitive and progressive components of the battle strategy, as shown in the following table (inner texture progression and repetition; this table is elucidated in appendix 1).

	Verbs	Armor	Descriptor
Opening	clothe–stand	full armor	of God
Middle	take up–resist–stand	full armor	of God
Closing	stand–gird–clothe	belt and breast-plate	truth and righteousness
	bind under–readiness	“shoes” ⁵³	gospel of peace
	take up–extinguish	shield	faith
	receive	helmet and sword	salvation and Spirit–word of God

Through this brief look at inner texture, I highlight the evocative language of battle: the actions of standing, standing ground, resisting, making ready, struggling, and extinguishing. These are incorporated with the static images of armor and weaponry: full armor, belt, breastplate, shield, helmet, and sword.⁵⁴ These take on new meaning in the victory and peace of Christ as they are connected through the armor of God, gospel of peace, and word of God. The significance of the victory and peace won through Christ in contrast to the enacted spectacle of Roman victory and peace provides a context for this use of this military imagery. This military

53. Although English translations often employ the word “shoes,” the Greek text uses the verb *ὑποδύομαι*, meaning “bind under.” Rather than the translation “as shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace,” I prefer “bind under your feet in readiness to proclaim the gospel of peace.”

54. I have omitted “shoes” here for the reason given in n. 53.

imagery in turn has synergy with gladiatorial dress and weaponry, which we now examine through intertexture.

INTERTEXTURE

Intertexture is described by Robbins as

a text's representation of, reference to, and use of phenomena in the "world" outside the text being interpreted. In other words, the intertexture of the text is the interaction of the language in the text with "outside" material and physical "objects," historical events, texts, customs, values, roles, institutions and systems.⁵⁵

In the arena of intertexture, I wish to connect with vivid visual images from the cultural milieu of the audiences of Ephesians. The intertexture with the Old Testament, especially Isaiah, is well documented in connection with the "divine warrior" motif.⁵⁶ Here I want to engage the relationship between the text and the image that Robbins calls *rhetography*.⁵⁷ This term brings together "rhetoric" and "graphic" in one word.⁵⁸ Robbins defines it as "the graphic images people create in their minds as a result of the visual texture of a text."⁵⁹ Rhetography is closely related to *ekphrasis* (ἐκφρασις), known in the Progymnasmata as vivid language that enlivens the imagination.⁶⁰ Aelius Theon, an Alexandrian sophist thought to have written

55. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 40.

56. Neufeld, *Put on the Armour of God*.

57. *Rhetography* is included in the glossary in Vernon K. Robbins, *The Invention of Christian Discourse: Volume 1*, RRA 1 (Dorset, UK: Deo, 2009), xxvii. Robbins explains the term *rhetography* as emerging at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

58. Vernon K. Robbins, "Rhetography: A New Way of Seeing the Familiar Text," in *Words Well Spoken: George Kennedy's Rhetoric of the New Testament*, ed. C. Clifton Black and Duane F. Watson (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006), 89. Robbins explains that "'rhetology' (the art of reasoning)" is not enough when interpreting the imaging of people and objects; thus he combines rhetiology with "'rhetography' (the graphic picturing in rhetorical description)." Robbins draws on classic rhetoric to direct our understanding of both rhetiology and rhetography, elucidating the focus on speaker, speech, and audience as being concerned with both the reasoning and the picturing of the situation. See Robbins, *Invention*, 1:16–17.

59. Robbins, "Rhetography," 81.

60. *Progymnasmata* means "preliminary exercises." The term first appeared in the *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*, which is a rhetorical handbook probably written by

in the first century CE, provides the definition: “*Ekphrasis* is descriptive language, bringing what is portrayed clearly [ἐναργῶς] before the sight” (Theon, *Prog.* 7 [Kennedy, 45]). Theon further clarifies this, noting that the virtues of *ekphrasis* are “most of all clarity and a vivid impression of all-but-seeing what is described” (Theon, *Prog.* 7 [Kennedy, 47]). This puts the responsibility on the writer or speaker using *ekphrasis* to recreate an image in descriptive language that is immediately recognizable to recipients.

What is evident from examining the text is the synergy of armor, weapons, and battle with peace in the order of the Roman Empire. It was Roman victory through war that brought peace. In Asia Minor, in places like Ephesus and surrounding cities, the *Pax Romana* dominated in the form of the new order of the empire. With the establishment of the Roman provinces in Asia Minor, competition and concord were uneasy partners but were developing in the light of the overarching imperial rule. By the time of Vespasian (69–79 CE), the cities were not involved in war. The call to battle was waning. Statuary of victory certainly decorated the urban streetscapes and architecture. The storyboard of the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias narrated the victory of Rome with dramatic attention to the humiliation and bondage of the vanquished and the glory of the victor. But in this context, the military might and power of Rome, with all its armor, struggle, and victory, emerged visibly in the spectacle of gladiatorial combat. In the arena, Roman victories were fought again and again, and the crowd participated in the glory of Rome and the peace that ensued.

In first-century Ephesus, gladiatorial contests were most likely conducted in the stadium in the northern part of the city, at the north foot of Panirdag. The gladiator graveyard is located 300 meters east of this location.⁶¹ The stadium was rebuilt during the time of Nero (54–68 CE) as a place for festivals, chariot and horse races, and athletic contests.⁶² A

Anaximenes of Lampsacus in the latter half of the fourth century BCE and preserved with Aristotle's *Rhetorica*. The author advises students that understanding the forms and styles of composition contained in the progymnasmata would adequately provide them with material for writing and speaking. See George A. Kennedy, ed., *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric*, WGRW 10 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), ix–x.

61. Kanz and Grossschmidt, “Head Injuries,” 208.

62. John McRay, *Paul: His Life and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 184. An alternate theory proposes that the circular space for gladiatorial contest was prepared to the east of the stadium. See Roland H. Worth Jr., *The Seven Cities of the Apocalypse and Greco-Asian Culture* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1999), 23.

circular area at the eastern end of the stadium was set aside for gladiatorial contests.⁶³ There is some argument concerning the location of gladiatorial contests, suggesting that they were held in the theater. The main basis of this argument is an inscription in the theater honoring Titus Flavius Montanus stating that he “finished the theatre, dedicated it during his high priesthood, and gave gladiatorial combat and wild beast hunts.”⁶⁴ This inscription celebrates his modifications in the early second century.⁶⁵ This being the case, some gladiatorial combat could have been held in the theater at this later date. The theater in Ephesus today shows the remains of modifications for holding animals and a wall around the stage.

Gladiators were recruited primarily from among slaves and free volunteers. Occasionally criminals were sentenced to a gladiatorial school.⁶⁶ They could gain their freedom if they survived three years of contest and a further two years of service to the school. Evidence of healed wounds found in the remains examined from the graveyard at Ephesus suggests that people did survive contests and were provided with a high level of medical care due to their economic value.⁶⁷

Professional gladiators, those who chose freely to fight in the arena, took on themselves a life that looked like that of condemned slaves. “Hobby” or volunteer gladiators included citizens, senators, nobles, and emperors who trained in the gladiatorial schools.⁶⁸ The perceived benefits were enough for them to take the risk. Roman citizens are attested as gladiators in graffiti and inscriptions.⁶⁹ In Ephesus, Tiberius Claudius Tatianus Julianus, Asiarch, is described in an inscription in white marble

63. This area was also used for the baiting of animals (McRay, *Paul*, 184).

64. Michael J. D. Carter, “The Presentation of Gladiatorial Spectacles in the Greek East: Roman Culture and Greek Identity” (PhD diss., McMaster University, 1999), 274–75.

65. Carter provides evidence of gladiatorial combat in stadia, including the one in Aphrodisias, where a graffito of a *retiarius*, literally, a “net fighter,” was found on a seat (*ibid.*, 274–76). See *retiarius* as one who fights with a net, a “net fighter,” in Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, 1586.

66. Robert Knapp, *Invisible Romans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 266.

67. Kanz and Grossschmidt, “Head Injuries,” 215.

68. *Ibid.*, 208.

69. Wiedemann lists a number of examples from Pompeian graffiti and a fragmentary list of a gladiatorial family from Venusia (Wiedemann, *Emperors and Gladiators*, 106–7).

as having a family (φамиλία) of gladiators.⁷⁰ Citizens were required to take the gladiator's oath, which described the dishonor that they took on: "to be burnt, to be chained up, to be beaten, and to be killed by an iron weapon."⁷¹ This meant that even a free citizen became fully dependent on his master. It was the lowest form of degradation and would imply the loss of all status, including economic position.⁷² This does not always appear to have occurred for, as will be shown, epitaphs were raised by the wives of gladiators.⁷³

The existence of stelae raised to the memory of gladiators is a testament to these professionals. Most epitaphs are for free or freed gladiators and represent only a minority of those who fought.⁷⁴ One such stela, raised to Palumbus, is in situ near the graveyard in Ephesus.⁷⁵ This stela is a stylized representation that is observed on similar stelae found at Laodikeia and at Herakleia Salbake.⁷⁶ The gladiator is portrayed wearing a loincloth, a banded belt, and a greave on his left leg. In his right hand is a palm frond that stands at least to his height, and his left hand rests on his helmet, which is placed on his rectangular shield, the *scutum*. The *scutum* was used by both the Roman infantry and gladiators. The helmet and shield resemble those of a *secutor* or "follower/chaser," who appeared during the time of Caligula (12–41 CE).⁷⁷ The *thraex* gladiators with Attic

70. "A Family of Gladiators," IEph 1182. See <http://epigraphy.packhum.org/text/249615>, early second century CE. The title "Asiarch" was taken by wealthy inhabitants with Roman citizenship in the province of Asia, but the functions of this position remain unclear. See Richard S. Ascoug, Philip A. Harland, and John S. Kloppenborg, eds., *Associations in the Greco-Roman World: A Sourcebook* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012), 105–6.

71. The wording is attested both by Seneca (who compares the binding power of the oath to the promise to follow Stoic moral teaching in his *Ep.* 37) and in Petronius, *Satyricon*. See Wiedemann, *Emperors and Gladiators*, 107.

72. *Ibid.*, 108.

73. Wiedemann suggests that the dishonor is moral, not economic, and cites instances of honor and wealth given to an ex-gladiator (see *ibid.*, 108–17; also see the funeral stela of Nikephorus in this essay).

74. Knapp, *Invisible Romans*, 267.

75. See the photo by Wolfgang Pietsch, Austrian Archaeological Institute, in Kathleen Coleman, *Science Buzz* (2007), <http://tinyurl.com/SBL4819i1>.

76. Louis Robert, *Les Gladiateurs dans l'Orient grec* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1971), 153.

77. The term *secutor* was drawn from *sequor*, meaning "I follow, come, or go after." The *secutor* was a pursuer, a light-armored gladiator who fought with the *retiarii*

crested helmets and Hellenistic style greaves were the most popular in Ephesus.⁷⁸ As noted above, early types of gladiators included the *samnis*, *gallus*, and *thraex*, representing Samnites, Gauls, and Thracians in contests reenacting Roman conquests. The Samnites, decommissioned in the early imperial period, were the forerunners of the *murmillo* and *secutor*.⁷⁹ Similarly, the *galli* disappeared from the arena when Gaul was incorporated into the empire.⁸⁰ The survival and popularity of the *thraex* in Ephesus are likely related to the number of Greek spectators who could take their side in combat against other types of gladiator.⁸¹ The palm frond symbolizes victory. This symbol was adopted by the Romans from the Greeks and was illustrated on the coin for Vespasian, minted in Ephesus in 74 CE (n. 18).

Following the same style, the stelae from Laodikeia and Heraklia Salbake (fig. 6) illustrate victory with a palm frond.⁸² The gladiator shown on the stela from Laodikeia has a loincloth, a belt of several bands, and a greave on his left leg. With the palm frond in his right hand, his left hand holds his helmet on his rectangular shield. On the stela of Nikephorus from Heraklia Salbake, there is the addition of a *manica* on his right arm.⁸³ The *subligaculum*, a bandage or binding around his loins, gives

(see Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, 1657). Mattesini describes and illustrates the *provocator*, *murmillo*, *thraex*, *hoplomachus*, *secutor*, *scissor*, and *retiarius* among the main categories of gladiators and expands the list to other lesser-known categories (Mattesini, *Gladiators*, 70–147). Junkelmann describes and illustrates the *equites*, *murmillo*, *thraex*, *hoplomachus*, *provocator*, *retiarius*, and *secutor* for the Imperial Period (“*Familia Gladiatoria*,” 45–64). Specifically for the *secutor*, see Mattesini, *Gladiators*, 110. See also Marcus Junkelmann, *Das Spiel mit dem Tod: So kämpften Roms Gladiatoren* (Mainz: von Zabern, 2000); Kanz and Grossschmidt, “Head Injuries,” 208. The *murmillo* (see *mirmillo*), was a kind of gladiator who fought with the *thrax* or *thraex*, or the *retiarius*. The *murmillo* wore a Gallic helmet with an image of a fish on a crest (see Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, 1149).

78. Wolfgang Pietsch, “Gladiatoren und Gladiatorenspele in Osten Des Römischen Reiches,” in *Gladiatoren in Ephesos* (Selçuk: Austrian Archaeological Institute–Ephesos Excavation, 2002), 9–13.

79. Potamianos, “The Function of the Roman Spectacle.”

80. Junkelmann, “*Familia Gladiatoria*,” 37.

81. Potamianos, “The Function of the Roman Spectacle.”

82. The style of this stela replicates that shown in fig. 7 from Heraklia Salbake. An image of this stela from Laodikeia of Lykos can be seen in Robert, *Les Gladiateurs dans l'Orient grec*, pl. 23:119.

83. A *manica* is an overlapping sleeve of metal or leather used by soldiers in the

a visual indication of “girding of loins.” His common name, Nikephorus, means “victorious” and is well suited to a combatant and the arena. The inscription is translated: “Nikephorus, gladiator of the first class. His wife,



Figure 6. Nikephorus stela in the garden at Denizli Archaeological Museum, Hierapolis, Turkey. Photo mine.

Marcellina, prepared the memorial from her own funds” ([N]ΕΙΚΗΦΟΡΩ ΠΑΛΟΥ Α (ΠΡΩΤΩΝ) / ΜΑΡΚΕΛΛΕΙΝΑ Η ΓΥΝΗ ΤΟ / ΜΝΗΜΕΙΟΝ ΕΚ ΤΩΝ ΙΔΙΩΝ / ΚΑΤΕΣΚΕΥΑΣΕΝ).⁸⁴

A fully armored gladiator is visible on a stela in the Selçuk Museum near Ephesus. He is depicted with the familiar palm frond but shown in action, possibly advancing or defending, with shield raised and sword ready to strike. This posture is easily comparable to the description in the text of Eph 6:10–17.⁸⁵ In addition, two gladiator stelae are on view on Marble Street in the ancient city of Ephesus near the theater (see figs. 7a–7b).⁸⁶ Figure 7a depicts a *thraex* type A

gladiator with a small round shield, wearing a helmet, *manica*, and double greaves and wielding a short lance or spear.⁸⁷ Figure 7b is badly eroded but

Dacian war and evident in gladiatorial combat. *Manicae* were arm guards used by soldiers in battle to protect their arms (Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, 1108).

84. Translation mine. The inscription with description and comments are published in Ritti, *Museo Archaeologico di Denizli-Hierapolis*, 154, no. 63.

85. Similar fully armored examples of gladiators can be seen in Robert, *Les Gladiateurs dans l'Orient grec*, pls. 209, 210, 212, 213, 214, 215.

86. The Sacred Way of Roman imperial time (around the first century BCE) extended around the eastern side of Mount Pion to the Artemision and back to Ephesus along the northern side of the mountain, passing on the west side of the stadium, where there was a monumental gate. The stadium was renovated and enlarged during the time of Nero (54–68 CE). For further information, see Ekrem Akurgal, *Ancient Civilisations and Ruins of Turkey*, trans. John Whybrow, 10th ed. (Istanbul: Net Turistik Yayınlar, 2007), 159; John C. Kraft et al., “Ancient Ephesus and the Artemision in Anatolia,” *Geoarchaeology: An International Journal* 22 (2007): 121–49.

87. *Thraex* type A is described as a gladiator using a small round shield similar to those used by Thracian warriors. This type is sometimes denoted as a *hoplomachus*. See Dario Battaglia and Luca Ventura, *De Rebus Gladiatoriiis: Dal gymnasium al ludus attraverso i sepolcri* (Rome: ArsDimicandi, 2010), 111.

may indicate a retiarius with a trident extended. Both show the stance of readiness for battle.



Figure 7a (left). Gladiator stela, possible *thraex*. Photo mine. Figure 7b (right). Gladiator stela. Photo mine. Both figs. 7a and 7b were displayed on Marble Street, Ephesus, in December 2014, near the theater. Their original location is not indicated.

An image of the style of the *secutor* is etched on the wall of a terrace house in Ephesus (fig. 8). The *secutor*'s helmet, rectangular shield, and greaves are clearly evident. His body is clothed in a breastplate that is outlined and inscribed, and there is a belt around his waist. His right hand appears to be wielding a weapon, possibly an ax.



Figure 8. *Secutor* etched into the wall of a terrace house at Ephesus. Photo courtesy of Alan Cadwallader, *Fragments of Colossae: Sifting through the Traces* (Hindmarsh: ATE, 2015), 91, pl. 4:30.

A recent discovery in Honaz (near the site of ancient Colossae) of a relief of gladiators adds to the imagery that was likely known in the circulation range of the Letter to the Ephesians (fig. 9).⁸⁸ This relief shows two tiers of images of gladiators in battle. In the upper register there is an oblong shield at the far left, indicating a *provocator* or *secutor*.⁸⁹ In the lower register of the relief, a fully armored gladiator, likely a *secutor* (according to the shape of the helmet), lies on his back on the ground, defeated, and awaiting the death blow. Above the *secutor* is the victor, his short sword raised, either in victory or indicating readiness to deliver the final blow.



Figure 9. Gladiators Relief on a wall at Honaz, Denizli, Turkey. Photo reproduced courtesy of Alan Cadwallader, *Fragments of Colossae*, 88, pl. 4:27.

These few images begin to build in our minds the complexities of meanings associated with armor, breastplates, helmets, shields, and swords. The language of the biblical text is not consistently or irrefutably only military but prompts images behind the eyes of the hearers or readers from their own visual contexts. This visual context reasonably includes gladiators and gladiatorial combat in the arena and the propaganda of the victory, peace, security, and good

news the empire offered its constituents. The other side of the victorious peace is the storyboard of the vanquished, defeated, and degraded people like those displayed in relief at Aphrodisias (see fig. 10). The crowning of

88. This relief was noticed by Alan Cadwallader on a visit to the site of Colossae and the neighboring town of Honaz (ibid., 88–89).

89. Cadwallader favors *provocator*, citing the other details of armor that are quite indistinct in the photograph of the relief. See the chapter entitled “Theatre,” in *Fragments from Colossae*, ed. Alan Cadwallader (Adelaide: ATF, 2015). *Provocator* means “challenger” and is a gladiator type that wears armor derived from the military (see Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, 1481).

Augustus by the personification of Rome in this relief confirms his victory and the means of establishing peace. Augustus's right hand is on the trophy of his victory, the cuirass of the armor of battle and his armies. Below the trophy a bound and partially naked female kneels. She represents a defeated nation. The female image in disarray dishonors the nation in defeat. The personification of Rome, by contrast, is finely dressed and coiffured. The naked hero image of Augustus adds to his victorious posture. This panel sits in the three-tier structure of the Sebasteion, illuminating the history of Rome's power and victory and serving as a testament to the ongoing victory of the empire.

With the resurgence of imagery associated with the Augustan peace during the Flavian period, pictures of battle and armor or sword and victor are displayed in the arena of the gladiatorial contest. The contest between pairs of combatants wearing various styles of helmets from other parts of the empire reiterates the ideology of conquest, victory, and peace. This ideology is amplified in the reliefs at Aphrodisias.



Figure 10. Relief from the Sebasteion in Aphrodisias showing Augustus crowned by the personification of Rome. Photo mine, taken in 2012. The relief is dated to the first century CE, and is currently located in the Aphrodisias Archaeological Museum, near the modern city of Geyre, Turkey.

DIALOGUE: INTERACTION OF IMAGE AND TEXT

The images on the imperial coins revive the Augustan ideology of victory and peace with the personifications of *Pax* and Victory. The symbolic palm frond held by Victory appears as the mark of triumph on the gladiatorial stela. The battle in which the gladiators engaged contributes to the maintenance of the Roman ideology. In this dialogue and interaction between image and text, ideological texture comes into play.⁹⁰ The author of the

90. Analysis of ideological texture begins at the furthest point from the analysis of the inner texture and engages with the biases and perspectives of the people involved

Letter to the Ephesians evokes the imagery of armor for his own purpose of urging his audiences to take up the armor of God in their spiritual battle.

The juxtaposition of the imperial and military images of *Pax Romana* with the armor of God and the gospel of peace demonstrates the amenability of these images to persuasive speech. The word πανοπλία (“full armor”) is, as described earlier, a military term that commonly referred to a full suit of armor, including shield, helmet, breastplate, greaves, sword, and lance. When the author incorporated this image in his writing, the picture he envisaged may well have been a Roman soldier fully equipped. When this image was conveyed to audiences in Ephesus or other cities in Asia Minor, the hearers may have constructed the image before their eyes from what was in their own sociocultural environment. In this way it can be imagined that “full armor” was perceived as that of gladiators observed in the stadia of the cities. Gladiatorial combat involved two combatants drawn from different gladiator types.⁹¹ There were regular pairings, such as the *retiarius* and the *secutor*, which matched skill and contrasted armor and weaponry. The entertainment of the crowd was heightened as spectators took sides and cheered on one combatant against the other, highlighted by the popularity of the *thraex* in Ephesus. The Roman martial virtues of bravery and skill were displayed in the battle to death where, on the decision of the crowd, the vanquished was expected to accept his fate of death without opposition and to exhibit *virtus* in doing so.⁹²

In a time of relative peace, the spectacle of the gladiatorial combat brings life to the metaphors of armor and military weaponry in the context of the Roman order of power through subjugation and pacification. The message of the author of Ephesians transforms this Roman order specifically with reference to God and through Christ: the helmet of salvation is salvation through Christ; the shield is the shield of faith in Christ; the gospel of peace is the peace of Christ; and the sword is of the Spirit, the word of God. This armor gives protection and acts as an offensive weapon.

in the communication: author, audience, interpreter (see Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 95).

91. Kanz and Grossschmidt draw on Junkelmann to elucidate seven categories of gladiator: *eques*, *provocator*, *secutor*, *thraex*, *hoplomachus*, *retiarius*, and *murmillo*. See Kanz and Grossschmidt, “Head Injuries,” 208 and fig. 1; Junkelmann, *Das Spiel mit dem Tod*. Further types are elucidated by Mattesini and Junkelmann: Mattesini, *Gladiators*, 70–147; Junkelmann, “*Familia Gladiatoria*,” 31–74.

92. Kanz and Grossschmidt, “Head Injuries,” 208.

The protection comes from the strength and might of God to a unified group of communities distinct from the outsiders. As an offensive weapon, they are able to stand firm. The armor makes them strong in the power of God and in the order of right relationship to God through Christ.

The peace of Rome inaugurated by Augustus and restored under the Flavians was won through war. The victor held the power, and the conquered peoples had a place in the new body, Rome and its empire, only through submission to that power. Their place was secured at the lowest level, as slaves stripped of any previous status, humiliated and abused. In contrast, peace in Ephesians is described as that inaugurated through Christ:

For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace.... So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. (Eph 2:14–15, 17)

In the body of Christ there is no longer division between those “who were far off,” gentiles, and “those who were near,” Jews. The struggle (πάλη) is “against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces in the heavenly places” (Eph 6:12). It is in this spiritual battle that the faithful are asked to answer the call to battle, not with the armor of the arena but with the instruments of the gospel of peace: righteousness, faith, salvation, and the word of God.

CONCLUSION

The investigation of the visual context of the words of battle, armor, and weaponry employed in Eph 6:11–17 bring the gladiators and the spectacle of their combat into view. Central to the understanding of the imagery is peace: Roman peace and the peace of Christ. The author of Ephesians creates a synergy of visual imagery transforming the metaphors of armor and weaponry to the purpose of the spiritual battle. He does this within a context where the ideology of the Roman peace is actively being restored by Vespasian and the glories of the victories that secured this peace are played out in the arena. The author transforms the use of weapons and armor in conjunction with the “gospel of peace.” In contrast to the Roman victory-peace narrative played out on the gladiatorial arena, it is righteousness,

faith, salvation, and the word of God that are the implements of the spiritual battle that secure their place in the reign of the peace of Christ.

Ephesians stakes a claim on the unity of the communities of faith it addresses. They are to arm themselves in the manner of combatants, whether soldiers or gladiators. Their fight is “not against enemies of the flesh.” It is a spiritual battle. The call to arms accentuates the serious struggle they face and transforms the armor into the strength they have from God.

Examining the inner texture and intertexture has affirmed for me that gladiatorial armor and combat in the arena offer important images for understanding the metaphors of armor, battle, and peace in the social and cultural environment where the Letter to the Ephesians was written and heard.

APPENDIX 1: THE TEXT OF EPHESIANS 6:10–17 WITH REPETITIONS AND PROGRESSIONS (TRANSLATION MINE)

Opening	6:10		Finally, be strengthened in the Lord and in the strength of his power.	
	6:11	ἐνδύω clothe, put on ἵστημι stand	Clothe yourself with the full armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.	πανοπλία
	6:12	πάλη struggle, wrestle	For our struggle is not against enemies of the flesh but against the rulers, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.	
Middle	6:13	ἀναλαμβάνω take up ἀνθίστημι resist, oppose ἵστημι stand	Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.	πανοπλία

Closing	6:14	ἵστημι stand περιζώννυμι gird ἐνδύω clothe, put on	Stand, therefore, and gird your loins with truth, and having clothed yourself with the breastplate of righteousness.	θώραξ
	6:15	ὑποδέομαι bind under, put on, wear ἐτοιμασία readiness, preparation	Bind under your feet in readiness of the gospel of peace.	εὐαγγελίου τῆς εἰρήνης
	6:16	ἀναλαμβάνω take up σβέννυμι extinguish, quench	With all of these take up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to extinguish all flaming arrows of the evil one.	θυρέος
	6:17	δέχομαι receive	Receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.	περικεφαλαία μάκαιρα

PART 3
VISUAL EXEGESIS USING CHRISTIAN ART

GRAPHIC EXEGESIS:
REFLECTIONS ON THE DIFFICULTY OF TALKING
ABOUT BIBLICAL IMAGES, PICTURES, AND TEXTS

Christopher J. Nygren

Art history is a discipline of images, but more than that it is a discipline that relies on the flexibility of the term *image*. Images are the vital essence at the center of art history, the essential constituent that distinguishes the field from aesthetics. Most art historians study pictures or sculptures, concrete instances of cultural production, items that index the agency of some person, group, or force that created—or even simply chose to frame or set apart—some object. Yet over the last hundred years or so, art history has developed into an increasingly promiscuous field of inquiry that has come to encompass ephemeral things such as performance art and conceptual art, which resist circumscription in permanent physical media. The extent to which art history is a pluralistic discipline is largely due to the variety of things it interrogates. Different images, art historians tell themselves, demand different methods of inquiry. A painted jewelry box from the Renaissance requires a different approach from, say, a painting by Manet, or works of art that no longer survive in their original format.¹ Art historians have sought to enrich the formal analysis of the things they study with the context provided by social history, semiotics, anthropology, postcolonial studies, or any other paradigm of inquiry that offers a fresh perspective on how people have engaged with images. These divergent modes of

1. For thoughtful reflections on the methodological challenges of working with objects versus paintings, see Adrian Randolph, *Touching Objects: Intimate Experiences of Italian Fifteenth-Century Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014). On the problems of studying ephemeral art, see Barbara Ferriani and Marina Pugliese, eds., *Ephemeral Monuments: History and Conservation of Installation Art* (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 2013).

practicing art history have increasingly called attention to the language used to describe art objects.

Following Michael Baxandall's analysis of how Renaissance merchants leaned on terminology borrowed from such varied tasks as barrel gauging and dancing to discuss works of art, art historians have become increasingly aware of the fundamental tension that binds pictures to the words used to describe them.² Image, picture, icon, medium, body, calligraphy—these terms (and many others) are part of the disciplinary jargon, and though art historians may occasionally disagree about the nuances embedded in these terms, there is a general consensus regarding their connotations within the field.³ A picture, for instance, can be defined as an image that appears as a concrete representational object; images, by contrast, might exist even in the absence of a physical medium, such as in the mind of a reader/auditor or a memory emblazoned on the heart of a lover.⁴ Such nonphysical images will be discussed at greater length below. Image, picture, object. Art historians routinely navigate such terminology in an effort to develop a critical explanation or interpretation of their objects of inquiry—to engage images exegetically, as it were.

Theological inquiry is also rooted in the image. The creation narrative in Genesis states that humankind was created in God's image, and to underline the importance of this point the phrase is repeated twice using slightly different linguistic inflections: "And God created man to his own image: to the image of God he created him."⁵ For theologians, the status of images takes on even more weight in the New Testament, where Paul described Christ as the image of the invisible God.⁶ However, within

2. Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972).

3. See, for instance, the thematic essays gathered in Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff, eds., *Critical Terms for Art History*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

4. W. J. T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 4; and Hans Belting, *An Anthropology of Images: Picture, Medium, Body*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 9–36.

5. Because this article focuses attention on early modern Europe, citations will be drawn from the Douay-Rheims translation of the Latin Vulgate. The Latin text will be given in footnotes. Gen 1:27: "Et creavit Deus hominem ad imaginem suam ad imaginem Dei creavit illum."

6. Col 1:15: "Qui est imago Dei invisibilis." 2 Cor 4:4: "Christi qui est imago Dei."

Pauline theology, the image was not simply a theological concept implicating Christ's union with God but also a form of spiritual praxis. In the pursuit of holiness, the faithful seek to conform themselves to the image of Christ.⁷ This speaks to a level of resemblance that is not physical but spiritual; Christians do not try physically to look like Christ but to imitate his holiness. As Paul notes in 2 Cor 3:18, "Beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, [we] are *transformed into the same image* from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."⁸

Parsing the myriad interrelated concepts that are folded into the term *imago* has been a major concern for theologians since the early period of Christianity. For Augustine (354–430 CE), *image* was a form of resemblance related to but distinct from likeness and equality; he insisted that these notions must be distinguished if Christian theology and spiritual practice are to remain coherent (see, e.g., *Div. quaest. LXXXIII* 74).⁹ This remains true in contemporary theological discourse. Rainer Volp has gone so far as to call *the image* one of the fundamental categories of theology and to offer an exhaustive categorization of all the possible connotations that the term carries in Christian discourse.¹⁰ As Gerhart B. Ladner has demonstrated, restoration of mankind's pristine image-likeness of the Godhead has remained *the* central trope of the Christian literature on spiritual reformation throughout the centuries.¹¹

Both theology and art history, then, turn upon images. Despite this shared investment in images, the disciplines remain largely independent.

7. Rom 8:29: "Nam quos praescivit et praedestinavit conformes fieri imaginis Filii eius ut sit ipse primogenitus in multis fratribus."

8. 2 Cor 3:18, emphasis added: "Nos vero omnes revelata facie gloriam Domini speculantes in eandem imaginem transformamur a claritate in claritatem tamquam a Domini Spiritu." For a discussion of Paul's theology of the "icon," see C. Kavin Rowe, "New Testament Iconography? Situating Paul in the Absence of Material Evidence," in *Picturing the New Testament: Studies in Ancient Visual Images*, ed. Annette Weissenrieder, Friederike Wendt, Petra von Gemünden, WUNT 2/193 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 289–312.

9. See Augustine, *Eighty-Three Different Questions*, trans. David L. Mosher, FC 70 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1981), 189–91.

10. Rainer Volp, "Das Bild als Grundkategorie der Theologie," in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, ed. Gerhard Krause and Gerhard Müller (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980), 6:557–68.

11. Gerhart B. Ladner, *The Idea of Reform: Its Impact on Christian Thought and Action in the Age of the Fathers*, Harper Torchbook 149 (New York: Harper & Row, 1967).

While there are numerous methodological parallels that unite art history and theology, especially biblical exegesis, these two disciplines have struggled to engage one another in meaningful dialogue, except in rare instances such as the seminar that gave rise to this volume. Art historians pillage exegetical sources in order to crack the code of obscure biblical subjects, while exegetes invoke pictures as illustrations of textual praxis. The emergence of rhetography as a mode of biblical exegesis concerned with the imagistic qualities of texts offers a unique occasion to reflect upon the considerable overlap between these two distinct disciplines.¹² Art history and rhetography share a fundamental concern for the problem of images, but they approach this issue from different angles. Art history has continually been forced to confront (or perhaps appreciate) how the squishiness of the term *image* can be put to use in describing a host of non-material images that were nevertheless theorized in historical sources *as though* they were manufactured pictures. Similarly, biblical exegesis began with textual analysis and has only recently awakened to the power of rhetorical images evoked through parables, *ekphrasis*, and evocative language (*enargeia*). Yet while rhetography and art history seemingly converge on a unified concern for the image, they often employ this word and other critical terms—such as vision, visuality, and representation, to name only a few—in ways that reflect specific disciplinary agendas. By calling attention to the overlapping terminology used by art historians and rhetographers, this intervention examines on the one hand how the disciplines might illuminate one another and on the other where inquiry begins to push uncomfortably beyond the limits of interdisciplinarity.

The image-text palaver has occupied Western thought since its origins.¹³ Ancient literary and artistic theory was deeply invested in probing the boundary between image and text. For instance, in the *Cratylus* (432b), Plato's analysis of language draws together Cratylus the person, a painting of Cratylus, and the name Cratylus in an attempt to understand the limits of representation in both art and language. Plato's commingling of image and text set the tone for much of the discussion in the Western

12. Vernon K. Robbins, "Rhetography: A New Way of Seeing the Familiar Text," in *Words Well Spoken: George Kennedy's Rhetoric of the New Testament*, ed. C. Clifton Black and Duane F. Watson (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008), 81–105.

13. For an outline of the state of the question in art history, see W. J. T. Mitchell, "Word and Image," in *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 51–61.

tradition, but a general review of the scholarship on the theme of *ut pictura poesis* remains beyond the scope of this paper. While this essay may appear to be merely the most recent manifestation of the recurrent word/image problematic that is embedded in Western culture, aesthetics, and art, circumscribing our inquiry to the realm of biblical exegesis offers the possibility for sustained examination of how the image operates in both art history and rhetography.

This essay will seek to understand *image* in all of its ambiguity and to identify the generative power nestled within that ambiguity. The image is an essential actant in the Christian religion which seeks to mediate the word/image dichotomy endemic to the biblical text itself, which on the one hand privileges humankind as the “image” of God (*imago Dei*) while simultaneously presenting Christ as the “word” of God (*verbum Dei*). Working in tandem, art history and rhetography can demonstrate how pictures, texts, and images exist in dialectical tension that reverberates with the potential for spiritual enlightenment. After examining the overlap between rhetography and the historical study of biblical illustrations, this paper will turn to examine a painting by the sixteenth-century painter Titian (ca. 1490–1576) as an illustrative exercise in what I call *graphic exegesis*, a term that is predicated on the conviction that there is a subset of biblical pictures that proffer their own exegesis of biblical texts and stories. Because of their unique dispensation, pictures can produce exegesis that is not reducible to verbal form.

The term *image* is productively ambiguous. It can refer to a physical representation, a mental projection, or a literary figure, among other things. Classical sources had a number of different terms that can all reasonably be translated using the term “image.” Plato, for example, used the terms *eidōlon*, *phantasma*, and *eikōn* more or less interchangeably.¹⁴ The semantic flexibility of images carried over into Christian exegetical writings. As noted above, Augustine defined *image*, *likeness*, and *equality* as three distinct but mutually reinforcing concepts that were not exclusively pictorial. Augustine’s approach carried forward into the Christian image

14. Nigel J. T. Thomas, “Plato and His Predecessors,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter 2012 ed., <http://tinyurl.com/SBL481911>.

theory developed by subsequent generations. In defending Christian images against the attacks of iconoclasts, John of Damascus (676–749 CE) outlined six different categories of images, only one of which might be called pictorial representation. The sixth category of images encompasses both written and pictorial records of miracles and virtuous deeds. By contrast, the other five categories of images are explicitly nonvisual.

The first three categories are divine modes of creation (Jesus as the image of God, God's knowledge of Christ's fate, and mankind's creation "in the image" of God), while "the fourth kind of image is when Scripture invents figures, forms and symbols for invisible and incorporeal things, and the latter are represented in bodily form for the sake of a faint understanding of God and the angels" through a process of anthropomorphic description. The fifth category of images involves what we would call prefiguration: the biblical description of the Brazen Serpent serves as a prefiguration, a literary "image," of Christ on the Cross.¹⁵

By the eleventh century, John of Damascus's categories had been somewhat simplified. John Italos (ca. 1023–ca. 1082) wrote about them in a way that makes explicit the literary character of many images, which in turn justifies the use of pictures: "Images are of two kinds: either they are written words, as when God himself engraved the law on tablets of stone, and old holy books he commanded to be written, or they are material contemplations, as when God arranged everything together, the manna jar and rod kept in the ark as a memorial. According to the custom of excellent men, we make and set up holy and venerable icons."¹⁶ For premodern theologians such as John of Damascus and John Italos, pictures and words made up an economy of representation that turned upon a flexible understanding of images.¹⁷

If ambiguous images lay at the heart of image theology, they are similarly central to the practice of art history. The German term *das Bild* enfolds many of the connotations of the classical Greek terminology used by Plato and later Christian theologians, and this was felt even

15. John of Damascus, *De imag.* 3.16–23 (PG 94:1337–43); translation from Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312–1453: Sources and Documents* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 171–72.

16. Cited in Herbert L. Kessler, *Spiritual Seeing: Picturing God's Invisibility in Medieval Art* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 30.

17. Marie-José Mondzain, *Image, Icon, Economy: The Byzantine Origins of the Contemporary Imaginary* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).

in the earliest manifestations of art history as an academic enterprise. The flexibility of the *concept* image can make it difficult to parse how the linguistic inflection given to *das Bild* often conveyed radically divergent concepts, sometimes even within the same sentence. This can be seen in one of the foundational documents of the discipline of art history, Johann Joachim Winckelmann's (1717–1768) *History of the Art of Antiquity*, first published in 1764. Toward the end of the first chapter, Winckelmann turns to consider the capacity of the English for image creation and surprisingly discusses the art of poetry rather than the visual arts.

The superior talent of the Greeks for art is still evident today in the great, almost universal talents of men in the warmest states of Italy. Imagination rules this gift, just as reason controls the imagination among the pensive British. Someone has said, with some justification, that the poets on that side of the mountains speak through images but produce few pictures [*daß die Dichter jenseits Gebürge durch Bilder reden, aber wenig Bilder geben*]; one must also admit that the astonishing, sometimes fearful images in which [John] Milton's greatness resides cannot be the subject of a noble brush and are altogether unsuited to painting. Milton's descriptions are, with the single exception of love in Paradise, like beautifully painted Gorgons, all alike and equally frightful. Images of many other poets are great to the ear but negligible to the mind. In Homer, however, everything is painted, or conceived and imagined for painting. The warmer the region of Italy, the greater the talents that it fosters and the more fiery the imagination: the Sicilian poets are full of rare, new, and unexpected images.¹⁸

Winckelmann was not unique in exploiting linguistic ambiguities as a means for opening up art-historical inquiry to include images *tout court*. Indeed, the problematic nature of images has always haunted the practice of art history.

Alois Riegl's (1858–1905) *Late Roman Art Industry* is shockingly democratic in the way that it considers belt buckles and flasks as being as worthy of scholarly consideration as painting, sculpture, and architecture. But the more radical move is that Riegl's primary interest in discussing

18. Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *History of the Art of Antiquity*, trans. Harry Mallgrave, Sources and Texts (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2006), 122. For the German text, see Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* (Dresden: von Zabern, 1764), 28.

the shift from a haptic regime to an optic regime has little to do with the objects themselves, and everything to do with the mental images produced in the beholder. For Riegl, the emergence of optic art is important principally because it marks the emergence of a new form of subjectivity.¹⁹ For all of the attention that Riegl lends to works of visual culture, his interest remains an investigation of the “relation between man and objects as we perceive them with our senses.”²⁰ Similarly, Heinrich Wölfflin (1868–1945) leaned upon the broad, imagistic mandate of art history in his foundational text, the *Principles of Art History*. The famous dyads he developed as the heuristic toolkit of every art historian (linear versus painterly, planar versus recession, etc.) were aimed at revealing “a history of the development of occidental seeing.”²¹ Again, his concern is not with art as such, but with how objects are perceived as images in the human mind.

The perceptual art history practiced by Riegl and Wölfflin fell largely out of favor in the middle of the twentieth century, but the legacy of their approach can be detected in the increasing attention dedicated to issues of “visuality” and visual culture, which push the discipline to consider new modes of image-making that are often ephemeral, either because of the affordances of their material substrate or because the images under consideration resist circumscription within a physical medium, such as mental images or performance art.²² Studies of the medieval period have made great strides in explicating how the three modes of vision developed by Augustine (corporeal, intellectual, and spiritual) align, or in some cases fail to align, with medieval visual culture.²³ This has been especially fruitful with regard to our understanding of visionary experience and mysticism.²⁴

19. Alois Riegl, *Late Roman Art Industry*, trans. Rolf Winkes (Rome: Bretschneider, 1985), esp. 21–23.

20. *Ibid.*, 231.

21. Heinrich Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art*, trans. M. D. Hottinger (New York: Dover, 1950), 12.

22. James D. Herbert, “Visual Culture/Visual Studies,” in *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 452–64.

23. Margaret Miles, “Vision: The Eye of the Body and the Eye of the Mind in Saint Augustine’s *De trinitate* and *Confessions*,” *JR* 63 (1983): 125–42.

24. Among other titles, see Jeffrey F. Hamburger, *The Visual and the Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany* (New York: Zone, 1998); Jeffrey F. Hamburger and Anne-Marie Bouché, eds., *The Mind’s Eye: Art and Theological*

Walter Melion and others have similarly drawn attention to the imagistic practices of Jesuit spiritual exercises, which capitalize on a classical concept of the mind's capacity to produce images that are effective spurs to individual spiritual reformation.²⁵ Similarly, Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood have noted that obfuscating the distinction between original images (in whatever medium, whether physical, spiritual, or mental) and physical pictures was a strategy utilized to great effect in the cult practices surrounding miracle-working pictures in early modern Europe.²⁶ The inscription on a fifteenth-century woodcut of a cult image known as the *Madonna in the Robe of Wheat Ears* is indicative of this: "The image is the image of Our Lady when she was in the Temple, before she was betrothed to St. Joseph; in this way the angels waited on her in the Temple; and in this way she is depicted in the Cathedral of Milan."²⁷ This syntactically confusing inscription clearly draws upon apocryphal narratives of the Virgin's service in the temple.²⁸ Nagel and Wood have called attention to how the physical picture implicitly derives its authority from a series of images that are physically and historically inaccessible to the beholder: the inscription asserts that the woodcut is both an image of the Virgin and a reliable notation of a picture, now in Milan, which in turn records how the Virgin appeared in the temple in Jerusalem.

In the case of miracle-working images, the language of theology collides with the practice of art history due to their shared derivation from the Greek notion of the *eidōlon*, or image. In Greek thought the *eidōlon* lacked material substance. As Moshe Barasch notes, "The *eidōlon*, though

Argument in the Middle Ages (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); and David Ganz, *Medien der Offenbarung: Visionsdarstellungen im Mittelalter* (Berlin: Reimer, 2008).

25. See, most recently, Walter Melion, Ralph Dekoninck, and Agnes Guiderdoni-Bruslé, 'Ut pictura meditatio': *The Meditative Image in Northern Art, 1500–1700*, Proetus: Studies in Early Modern Identity Formation 4 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012).

26. Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance* (New York: Zone, 2010), 21–28.

27. Ibid., 21–22. The German text reads, "Das bild ist unser lieben frauen bild als sie in dem tempel war, ehe das sie Sankt Joseph vermahlet ward; also dyntten ihr die engel in dem tempel und also ist sie gemelt in dem tum zu maylandt."

28. Meredith Elliott Hollman, "Temple Virgin and Virgin Temple: Mary's Body as Sacred Space in the Protevangelium of James," in *Jesus and Mary Reimagined in Early Christian Literature*, ed. Vernon K. Robbins and Jonathan M. Potter, WGRWSup 6 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 103–28.

devoid of tangible matter, is fully articulate in form, and is clearly outlined. As far as its visible shape is concerned, the 'image' is a precise replica of the person whose image it is."²⁹ Within the context of Western Christianity, the *eidōlon* served to help define the theology of the prototype, which marginalized the physical image as a means of coping with fears of idolatry that were raised by the Orthodox theology underwriting icon veneration. For Westerners, the presence of the deity was not bound within the physical image but expanded to encompass a wide array of portable images not dependent on material conscription. These could be carried interchangeably in the heart or the mind, and it was to these internalized images that the faithful most often made recourse.³⁰ The power of the nonmaterial image lay in its ability to abrogate the distance separating the faithful from the object that might offer them succor. By countering the Orthodox notion of the inherence of the prototype in the material substrate of the picture, Western theologians unwittingly fostered cult practice that was rooted in cult sites, while simultaneously being physically untethered from the icons themselves.³¹ Thus, when studying miracle-working icons, art historians are forced to account not only for the cult history of the actual painting or sculpture but also for the role that the dematerialized *eidōlon*, or image, plays within the economy of popular devotion. In an effort to cope with linguistic ambiguities that originate in Greek and Latin philosophy and theology, contemporary art history has been forced to expand to encompass "visual culture" as it is most broadly defined in order to advance a more complex understanding of the position that images (physical, mental, and spiritual) occupied within the religious life of the pre-modern period.³²

29. Moshe Barasch, *Icon: Studies in the History of an Idea* (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 26.

30. See Ottavia Niccoli, *Vedere con gli occhi del cuore: Alle origini del potere delle immagini* (Bari: Laterza, 2011), 80–84; and Christopher J. Nygren, "Figuring Miraculous Agency between Literature and Art: An Analysis and Translation of Eustachio Celebrino's *Li stupendi et marauigliosi miracoli del glorioso Christo di San Roccho* (ca. 1523)," *Modern Language Notes* 131.1 (2016): 20–56.

31. Christopher Nygren, "Non-agentive Efficacy: Some Data on Presence, Absence and the Ontological Entanglement of Miraculous Images" (forthcoming).

32. For an overview of the issue, see Fredrika Jacobs, "Rethinking the Divide: Cult Images and the Cult of Images," in *Renaissance Theory*, ed. James Elkins and Robert Williams, Art Seminar 5 (New York: Routledge, 2008), 95–114.

For as divergent as these methodological approaches are, they all carry forward a philosophical approach to images that began in antiquity, passed through the Christian Middle Ages, and stands at the origins of art history as an academic discipline. The fungible concept of the image inherited from antiquity is central to the history of art as it is practiced in the contemporary academy. However, as a matter of best practices, whenever possible art historians insist upon the distinction between images and pictures: the former constitute representations which may or may not be material or figurative; by contrast, the latter are generally understood to be physical, concrete objects. W. J. T. Mitchell, who has written extensively on the question of images, notes that while this distinction is not universally applied, it is taken as a general rule.³³ Doing so is a luxury that Anglo art historians share with their counterparts in most Romance languages, where the distinction between *pictura* and *imago* generally holds sway. While the distinction between image and picture does not always align with how the terms were employed in historical sources, it is a useful convention that brings desirable clarity to the arguments of art historians writing in the present. By contrast, our German counterparts (or those working on German subjects) have often reveled in the ambiguities of the term *das Bild*. This can lead to a certain disconnect between art history written in German and other national/linguistic schools that goes beyond linguistic competency and instead touches a deep conceptual divergence.³⁴

One major intervention along these lines has been made by Hans Belting, who has generated new interest in the status of images through his study *Likeness and Presence: The History of the Image before the Era of Art*. It should be noted that Belting's work first appeared in German under the title *Bild und Kult: Eine Geschichte des Bildes vor dem Zeitalter der Kunst*.³⁵ The German title of this work reveals in a way that its English translation does not how Belting capitalized on the long-standing ambiguities surrounding the concept of the image. Belting's book is one of the

33. W. J. T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 4, n. 5.

34. For a thoughtful analysis of this problem, see Hans Belting, "A New Introduction for the English Reader," *An Anthropology of Images: Picture, Medium, Body*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 1–8.

35. Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

founding documents of a subset of scholarship known as the “anthropology of art,” which examines pictures and objects not for their aesthetic properties but for the ritual practices that surround them. This method has sought to drive a wedge between “devotional images,” encoded with a social and religious function, and “works of art,” endowed with a proto-Kantian notion of autonomy in purpose and design.³⁶ Understanding the dialectical relationship between *art* and *image* currently constitutes one of the major points of contention in the literature on early modern art history. While the definition of art need not concern us, Belting’s contribution has drawn renewed attention to the flexible heritage of images within the history of art by highlighting the agency of objects within social and religious rituals.

Another strain of scholarship generally known as *Bildwissenschaft* has considered how the presence of a work of art can result in an intensification of the lived experience of the beholder that ruptures the conceptual boundaries that scholars have traditionally attributed to classical representation.³⁷ As Gottfried Boehm observed, pictures must be understood not only as “facts but also acts.”³⁸ This approach has been amplified in Horst Bredekamp’s theory of the *Bildakt*, which aims to trouble binary distinctions that have been internalized by many art historians, such as the divisions between art and craft, the subject and the object, or vital organic material versus inert stuff. The concept of the *Bildakt* attempts to open up space for new modes of inquiry that bring a more democratic approach to the interactions between people and things.³⁹ All of these methodological forays are united in granting a certain amount of agency (political, social, diplomatic, religious, etc.) to the images under investigation while simultaneously challenging any simple notion of what constitutes an image.⁴⁰

36. On the philosophical underpinnings of Belting’s method, see Christopher S. Wood’s review of *Bild-Anthropologie: Entwürfe für eine Bildwissenschaft*, by Hans Belting, *Art Bulletin* 86 (2004): 370–73.

37. Horst Bredekamp, “A Neglected Tradition? Art History as *Bildwissenschaft*,” *Critical Inquiry* 29 (2003): 418–28.

38. Gottfried Boehm, “Representation, Presentation, Presence: Tracing the Homo Pictor,” in *Iconic Power: Materiality and Meaning in Social Life*, ed. Jeffrey Alexander, Dominik Bartmansk, and Bernhard Giesen (New York: Palgrave, 2011), 16.

39. Horst Bredekamp, *Theorie des Bildakts* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010), 88–89.

40. Keith Moxey, *Visual Time: The Image in History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 53–75; and W. J. T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 28–56.

As the history of art expands beyond its Eurocentric roots, the challenge of finding a language sufficiently capacious to include all manufactured, artistic objects while nevertheless maintaining a level of conceptual precision that adequately reflects the diversity of historical contexts becomes a more pressing issue. David Summers has made an ambitious attempt to develop a “world art history.” His linguistic rigor is admirable, and his use of the term *image* falls broadly in line with the trend outlined here of distinguishing between images and pictures, the former encompassing the various permutations of images (physical, mental, and spiritual) that have been at play in the history of art, while the latter insists upon pictures that have a physical medium. For Summers, *image* is taken as an extremely flexible term.⁴¹ But one of the thrusts of the book is to insist on *real* artist objects, whether they are paintings, sculptures, or monolithic rock formations. He writes of a tiny Rembrandt drawing that represents an expansive winter landscape: “However much the illusion of the virtual space Rembrandt has made may seem to have transformed and even to have denied the bit of paper supporting it, that bit of paper still exists in *real space*; that is, it exists in the space we share with it and has meanings and values—and a history of meanings and values—in that space.”⁴² Summers’s insistence upon the concrete reality of pictures and art objects as opposed to the ephemeral quality of images brings us back to the point articulated above: while art history is a discipline of images, clarity is gained when the discipline consciously distinguishes between “images” and “pictures.” The discipline is capacious enough to deal with all pictorial, visual, and imagistic phenomena; however, it is best practice to be as precise as possible in distinguishing between these categories. This is one place where art history’s practice can serve as a model for biblical exegesis and rhetography.

Images have been a central conceit in Christian theology since the period of the church fathers. Early theologians found that appropriating the classical rhetorical concept of the *figura* lent new force and precision to the tropological readings of the Old and New Testaments that they were for-

41. David Summers, *Real Spaces: World Art History and the Rise of Western Modernism* (London: Phaidon, 2003), 251–342.

42. *Ibid.*, 51.

mulating.⁴³ While figural interpretations of Scripture are not always explicitly imagistic, Augustine often employed related terms, especially *imago* and *similitudo*, and both terms insist on the imagistic intellectual genealogy that underwrites the metaphor of the theological *figura*.⁴⁴ Figural interpretations of biblical texts have remained widespread in the Christian tradition since late antiquity, although they were sidelined somewhat in the twentieth century by the emergence of historical and archaeological modes of biblical interpretation.

The emergence of sociorhetorical interpretation has helped return attention to the imagistic qualities of the biblical text. Vernon K. Robbins has insisted that the etymological origin of “text” in the Latin verb *texō*, *texere* must be taken as more than mere metaphor. It is impossible to *look through* a text in order to uncover the historical truth that it purports to inscribe. Rather, textual practice must always be understood to enfold layers of meaning that include the social, cultural, and ideological context in which a text was originally created, read, and interpreted. Grasping the multiple textures of a literary source becomes a transaction between the author, text, and the interpreter, and the results of that interaction need not be univocal. “The interpreter faces a challenge to allow the tension and conflict that emerge from the different approaches to inform the overall process of analysis and interpretation rather than to allow one arena substantially to close down information from the other. The tensions and conflicts are to remain significant data for analysis and interpretation even as the interpreter draws final conclusions.”⁴⁵ Sociorhetorical criticism is predicated upon a dynamic transaction between the “text,” the “reader,” and the historical context in which the text was produced. As Robbins notes, “Authors create texts in their world; readers create a world of the text in their own world. Socio-rhetorical criticism interactively explores the world of the author, the world of the text, and the world of the interpreter to interpret the inner texture of a New Testament text.”⁴⁶ In this regard, it resonates with other recent modes of interpretation that have

43. Erich Auerbach, “Figura,” in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature* (Gloucester, MA: Meridian, 1959), 11–76.

44. David Dawson, “Figure, Allegory,” in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 365–68.

45. Vernon K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society, and Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1996), 33.

46. *Ibid.*, 30.

emphasized understanding the dynamic aspect of economies of representation rather than taking representation as a static process of decoding.⁴⁷ It is this transactional, or economic, hermeneutical disposition that I would like to foreground, since it parallels the approach that I will unfold vis-à-vis graphic exegesis.

While sociorhetorical criticism approaches a text as an interactive environment of authors and readers, it was only with the emergence of rhetography as a model of biblical exegesis that the figural and imagistic qualities of textual practice explicitly reemerged as a site of serious and sustained inquiry.⁴⁸ As Robbins explains, “Rhetography refers to the graphic images people create in their minds as a result of the visual texture of a text. Rhetography communicates a context of meaning to a hearer or reader. A speaker or writer composes, intentionally or unintentionally, a context of communication through statements or signs that conjure visual images in the mind which, in turn, evoke ‘familiar’ contexts that provide meaning for a hearer or reader.”⁴⁹ I take Robbins’s use of the term *graphic* here to mean simply “striking” or “noteworthy,” but I would like to flag that term as something worth holding in reserve until we return to the concept of “graphic exegesis.”

Rhetography is deeply informed by the rhetorical culture of classical antiquity, and it focuses the critic’s attention on the common topoi that distinguish a particular regional, ethnic, or imperial environment that produced a given text.⁵⁰ In some respects, rhetography seems closest to the technique of *enargeia*, which was a rhetorical practice aimed at producing a sensation of presence through the evocation of the imaginative faculties.⁵¹ Quintilian (35–100 CE) was perhaps the most succinct when he described how *enargeia* provokes “an image of the matter which is, in a way, painted by words” (*Inst.* 8.4.63–65 [Butler]).⁵² Mary Carruther’s

47. See especially Webb Keane, *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); and Mondzain, *Image, Icon, Economy*.

48. On rhetography as a model for interpretation, see Robbins, “Rhetography.”

49. *Ibid.*, 81.

50. Robbins, *The Invention of Christian Discourse*, 81–85.

51. See Heinrich F. Plett, *Enargeia in Classical Antiquity and the Early Modern Age* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); and Francois Rigolot, “The Rhetoric of Presence: Art, Literature, and Illusion,” in *The Renaissance*, ed. Glyn P. Norton, vol. 3 of *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 161–67.

52. “Rerum imago quodammodo verbis depingitur.”

description of *enargeia* is remarkably close to Robbins's description of how rhetography focuses on the "visual images" evoked in the reader's mind: "Quintilian expected that readers normally tried to 'see' what they read, that seeing or listening to language could—and should—involve some procedures of mental imaging."⁵³ Despite this general similarity between rhetography and *enargeia*, they are not interchangeable concepts.

As Quintilian remarks in his description of *enargeia*, "oratory fails of its full effect, and does not assert itself as it should, if its appeal is merely to the hearing, and if the judge merely feels that the facts on which he has to give his decision are being narrated to him, and not displayed in their living truth to the eyes of the mind" (*Inst.*, 8.4.62 [Butler]). Ultimately, *enargeia* draws upon the lived experience of the reader/listener. Again Quintilian: "Every man applies to himself what he hears from others, and the mind is always readiest to accept what it recognizes to be true to nature" (8.4.71 [Butler]). So, Quintilian tells us, when Cicero describes a disgraced Roman *praetor* who has been caught with his paramour, the readers can imagine the "silent loathing and frightened shame of those who viewed the scene" and ridiculed the couple (8.4.65 [Butler]). Readers seem "to see" the scene, not because it recapitulates a commonplace type, but because they draw on their own storehouse of life experiences and translate them into a story that is being heard for the first time.⁵⁴

Enargeia is fundamentally a work of imaginative projection. This points to the fundamental distinction between *enargeia* and rhetography, which turns on rhetography's recourse to the six rhetorolects that are peculiar to Judeo-Christian Scripture. While *enargeia* speaks generally of the evocative power of language to create mental images, rhetography is concerned with revealing how mental images fit into a narrative of revelation, which is irreducibly teleological. Rhetography examines how topoi "recruit images and pictures in the mind."⁵⁵ The emphasis on topoi is worth underlining. While *enargeia* is imaginative projection, rhetography examines a process of pictorial imagining that is based in the rhetorolects. Clearly the process of visualization *may*—and perhaps inevitably does—draw upon the reader's personal experience, but the process of imagining begins from topoi, thus insisting on a quasi-communal mode of imagining

53. Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400–1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 131.

54. Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, 131.

55. Robbins, *The Invention of Christian Discourse*, 85.

as opposed to the intensely personal imaginative projection at the heart of *enargeia*.

The communal aspect of rhetography is also what makes it a viable field of inquiry. While scholars have dedicated great energy to *enargeia*, it remains a difficult topic of study precisely because of its deeply personal nature. The images evoked by a text will vary from reader to reader; by contrast, rhetography builds on a set of shared images and topoi, thus removing it from the realm of purely subjective experience. Yet as Robbins observes, "Despite all the attention to history and narrative in the Bible, which regularly create story images and pictures in the mind, theology, philosophy, literary interpretation, and rhetorical interpretation do not have vocabulary ready at hand to describe, analyze, and interpret the visual texture of a text."⁵⁶ This is all too true. The vocabulary for analyzing the visual aspect of biblical texts remains underdeveloped. As an art historian, I am left wondering why both images and pictures are invoked by Robbins as dematerialized mental images. The term *picture* gestures toward concreteness, to an autonomous existence beyond the mind of the reader/ beholder. As noted above, art history has a long heritage of discussing images in all of their permutations. To blur the distinction between image and picture risks something serious, as we pass from the realm of created objects into the domain of subjective experience. In the remainder of this essay, I would like to encourage a more precise use of language that can be agreed upon by both rhetographers and art historians. I do not mean to police the use of language. I recognize that each discipline contributes its own competency. But I do believe that for the sake of clarity it is best to circumscribe the use of the term *picture* to instances when we speak of concrete, material objects. The rich history of the term *image* makes it perfectly suitable for all other sorts of images, whether textual, rhetorical, or imagined.

Rhetography is a form of visual exegesis, for it considers how biblical tropes elicit images in the mind of the reader. Similarly, much of the work that art historians do with biblical illustrations can be considered visual exegesis. The generative force of visual exegesis rests in the flexible con-

56. Ibid., 85–86.

notations of the term *image* outlined above; both rhetographical and art-historical engagements with the Bible are imagistic in the broadest sense. I would like to identify a particular subset of art-historical work that falls under the broad rubric of visual exegesis. I am suggesting that the term *graphic exegesis* be employed to describe pictures that have exegetical ambitions. I employ the term *graphic* in order to distinguish the interpretative operation at play here from the sort of visual or image-based exegesis at the heart of rhetographical interpretations of the Bible or from other art-historical engagements with biblical exegesis. The term *graphic exegesis* is predicated on the conviction that there is a category of biblical pictures that proffer their own exegesis of the biblical text or story. These pictures will, by necessity, be biblical illustrations, but to suggest that they merely illustrate the text would be to undersell their ambition.

Not all biblical illustrations ought to be considered graphic exegesis. Some—perhaps even many—paintings, sculptures, stained glass, and so on that illustrate, say, the crucifixion, simply recount the story without offering an exegetical gloss. By contrast, graphic exegesis focuses attention on pictures that interpret the biblical narrative through pictorial means. The utility of this category rests in its explicit acknowledgment that certain pictures do not merely give visual form to biblical exegesis already presented elsewhere in a textual form but instead do the work of biblical interpretation and theological argumentation in themselves. Art historians have long recognized this truth. Herbert Kessler succinctly described the discursive ambition of medieval Christian art in an article titled “Medieval Art as Argument,” in which he unpacks sophisticated pictorial manifestations of theology.⁵⁷ But as Johanna Drucker has observed, with the exception of art historians and those who work with visual culture, “as a scholarly act, interpretation has almost always been textual” and has rarely taken seriously the ambitions of the graphic arts.⁵⁸ Thus, while it may seem obvious to the authors who have contributed to this volume that pictures can do exegetical work, I think that it is nevertheless useful to identify this discreetly ambitious category of biblical pictures and thereby encourage scholars to attend to works of graphic exegesis.

57. Herbert Kessler, “Medieval Art as Argument,” in *Iconography at the Crossroads*, ed. Brendan Cassidy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 59–75.

58. Johanna Drucker, *Graphesis: Visual Forms of Knowledge Production* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 180–81.

Graphic exegesis takes a slightly different angle on visual exegesis than has been seen in recent publications. Melion has drawn attention to the interrelation between visual and verbal hermeneutics by focusing on “exegetical images” (*imago exegetica*).⁵⁹ Such an approach once again capitalizes on the ambiguities inherent in the word *image*, allowing inquiry to shuttle between the realms of pictures, texts, and mental images. The focus of graphic exegesis looks elsewhere.

Why *graphic exegesis*? What does this term convey that *visual exegesis* does not? While acknowledging the value of nonmaterial images, graphic exegesis focuses relentlessly on pictures. I employ the term *graphic* because of how its current usage resonates with its etymology. The Greek word *graphein* means “to write,” and it is distinct from other terms implicating discursive language, such as *logos*, in that it connotes the act of inscribing a surface and leaving legible marks and traces. This is why Plato and the Greeks leaned on the concept *graphein* when identifying the art of painting, which they described as a kind of animated or living writing, *zoographia*.⁶⁰ The term *graphicus* passed into Latin, where it was used by Pliny (among others) to describe the art of painting (*Nat.* 35.77). The Byzantines similarly deployed the term *zoographia* to describe icons as “living writing.”⁶¹ In modern parlance the “graphic arts” have expanded to encompass any two-dimensional art form, including drawing, painting, printmaking, computer design, and so on.⁶² It should be noted, however, that graphic exegesis need not be two dimensional. It is possible to have a sculpted work of graphic exegesis. *Graphic*, here, is used simply to underline the concrete, manufactured nature of the object. This is not an image existing outside physical media but an object or picture that has been rendered graphically legible.

The Greek heritage of the term *graphein* insists upon the constructiveness of pictures, their graphicality. Drucker has recently put this etymology to work in her discussion of *Graphesis*, which she describes as “the visual production of knowledge.”⁶³ Like graphic exegesis, Drucker’s

59. Walter S. Melion, James S. Clifton, and Michel Weemans, eds., *Imago Exegetica: Visual Images as Exegetical Instruments, 1400–1700* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

60. Plato, *Phaedr.* 275d5; *Resp.* 2.373a6; *Phileb.* 39d7, 40a9, and 51c3; *Ep.* 7.342c.

61. Charles Barber, *Contesting the Logic of Painting: Art and Understanding in Eleventh-Century Byzantium* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 136.

62. “Graphic, adj. and n.” (OED).

63. Drucker, *Graphesis*, 3–4.

graphesis takes concrete pictures as the object of inquiry, examining how nonvisual, captured data are given pictorial form in a variety of graphic media. Similarly, graphic exegesis looks at how exegetical readings of the Bible are constructed in pictorial form. Graphic exegesis examines pictures that generate insight.

In contemporary English, the term *graphic* has accrued another connotation, which is to describe something that is “vividly descriptive.” This also helps render some sense of what is characteristic of graphic exegesis: these pictures intensify the biblical text by offering a gloss that is memorable. If, following the Greek etymology, painting is taken as a sort of visual writing, as its own discursive practice, then it can be seen to offer commentary—exegesis—on biblical texts. Rather than unpacking the biblical text through discursive language, graphic exegesis uses pictures to do so. Graphic exegesis thus draws together the mandate of the art historian with the mandate of the rhetographer to produce a truly pictorial mode of biblical exegesis.

To conclude this essay, I would like to give an illustrative example of what I mean by graphic exegesis. I will focus on a painting of a biblical subject done by Titian, a sixteenth-century painter who operated primarily in Venice. As I have demonstrated elsewhere, Titian was particularly attentive to how his paintings could present novel theological and exegetical interpretations of familiar biblical texts through pictorial means.⁶⁴ The picture examined here is similar. In 1543, Titian signed and dated a large canvas that he completed for the Dutch merchant Giovanni d’Anna (ca. 1500–1567).⁶⁵ This picture takes as its subject the biblical account of

64. Christopher J. Nygren, “Stylizing Eros: Narrative Ambiguity and the Discourse of Desire in Titian’s So-Called *Salome*,” in *Renaissance Love: Eros, Passion, and Friendship in Italian Art around 1500*, ed. Jeanette Kohl, Marianne Koos, and Adrian Randolph (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2014), 23–44; Nygren, “Titian’s *Christ and the Coin*: Recovering the Spiritual Currency of Numismatism in Renaissance Ferrara,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 69 (2016): 449–88; and Nygren, “Titian’s *Ecce Homo* on Slate: Stone, Oil, and the Transubstantiation of Painting,” *The Art Bulletin* 99:1 (2017): 36–66.

65. Giorgio Vasari, *Le opere di Giorgio Vasari con nuove annotazioni e commenti di Gaetano Milanesi* (Florence: Sansoni, 1906), 7:429; William Hood, “Titian’s Narrative Art: Some Religious Painting for Venetian Patrons, 1518–1545” (PhD diss., New York Institute of Fine Arts, 1977), 125–61; Dagmar Feghlem-Aebersold, *Zeitgeschichte in Tizians religiösen Historienbildern* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1991); Sylvia Ferino-Pagden, Giovanni Nepi Scirà, and Bernard Aikema, eds. *Der späte Tizian und die Sinnlichkeit*



Figure 1. Titian, *Ecce Homo*, 1543. Oil on canvas. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum.



Figure 2. Albrecht Dürer, *Ecce Homo*, from the series *The Large Passion*, 1498–1499. Woodcut. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

the ostentation of Christ to the Jewish people (John 19:4–5), which lends the painting its title: *The Ecce Homo* (fig. 1). The painting is exceedingly large. Measuring 242 × 361 cm, it is one of the largest paintings Titian ever created.

Titian's painting has often been linked to Albrecht Dürer's (1471–1528) woodcut of the *Ecce Homo* from the *Large Passion* series (fig. 2). Like Dürer, Titian oriented Christ in such a way that his face—the *volto santo*—is withheld from the beholder, who sees only Christ's profile. The most jarring aspect of Titian's painting is undoubtedly the decentering of the composition: the figure of the suffering Christ is relegated to the left edge of the picture. This, too, can be seen in Dürer's woodcut, although the effect of this decentering is heightened because Titian's painting expands laterally, while Dürer's print is oriented vertically.

Titian made a number of other paintings of this same subject, but none was this ambitious. The painting comprises about twenty figures, two large horses, and an array of military standards, shields, and weapons as well as a large architectural setting that includes two life-size sculptures. As scholars have pointed out, many of the figures are portraits of sixteenth-century contemporaries, even if there is disagreement over the identification of some of the figures.⁶⁶ Pietro Aretino's (1492–1556) face is recognizable in the figure of Pontius Pilate; it is often proposed that the young girl at the center of the picture cloaked in white and swathed in soft crystalline light is Titian's daughter Lavinia (ca. 1530–ca. 1574); Doge Pietro Lando (1462–1545) has been identified as the man in the red cloak with an ermine collar, presumably under the guise of Caiaphas, although this identification is highly contested; next to him, bearded and clutching a staff, is the patron, Giovanni d'Anna; Alfonso d'Avalos (1502–1546), Charles V's regent mayor of Milan, has been identified as the rider at the extreme right edge of the composition; next to him is the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman (1494–1566). Other portraits have also been identified.⁶⁷ The passion for identifying these figures has yielded important results,

der Malerei (L'ultimo Tiziano e la sensualità della pittura) (Vienna: Kunsthistorisches Museum, 2007; Venice: Gallerie dell'Accademia, 2008), exhibition catalog.

66. Flavia Polignano, "I ritratti dei volti e i registri dei fatti: *L'ecce Homo* di Tiziano per Giovanni d'Anna," *Venezia Cinquecento* 4 (1992): 7–54.

67. For the most recent consensus on identifications, see Blake De Maria, *Becoming Venetian: Immigrants and the Arts in Early Modern Venice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 133–43.

allowing us to connect both Titian and Giovanni d'Anna to a wider network of acquaintances and allowing some scholars to see in the inclusion of portraiture a covert political message.⁶⁸

Yet this line of investigation is limited by what Georges Didi-Huberman has identified as the “Agatha Christie Problem,” in which an obsession with identification obfuscates the larger questions that the presence of the portraiture raises.⁶⁹ In this case, these portraits serve to render visible the challenge of the Christian message by collapsing the distance between the picture and its beholder. The inclusion of contemporaries transposes the space of the passion from Jerusalem to Venice. The fictive realm of the passion becomes contiguous with the world of the beholder. Indeed, this strategy permeates the painting, for it has been noted that Titian’s architectural setting for this painting emulates the façade of the Venetian mint, or *Zecca*, which had recently been constructed on the edge of Piazza San Marco and was finished in 1542.⁷⁰

Titian was not the first and certainly not the only artist to include contemporaries in a picture of the passion. In a painting of the *Ecce Homo* now in Frankfurt (fig. 3), Hieronymus Bosch (ca. 1450–1516) divided the foreground into two contrasting “publics” that witness the ostentation of Christ: on the right we see the Jewish and Roman crowd clamoring for Christ’s assassination, while on the left we see the ghostlike remnants of painted figures who have mostly faded from view. These figures were painted over at some point, but they were brought to light during a 1983 restoration of the picture.⁷¹ These figures were the donors who paid for the picture, at least one of whom (presumably the oldest male son) appears cloaked in a Dominican habit; their pious comportment is consciously juxtaposed to the raucous crowd on the opposite side of the foreground. While the Jewish crowd shouts *Crucifige Eum*, the donors enunciate something quite different, and the prayer coming from their

68. Marcia B. Hall, *The Sacred Image in the Age of Art: Titian, Tintoretto, Barocci, El Greco, Caravaggio* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 151.

69. Georges Didi-Huberman, “The Portrait, the Individual and the Singular: Remarks on the Legacy of Aby Warburg,” in *The Image of the Individual: Portraits in the Renaissance*, ed. Nicholas Mann and Luke Syson (London: British Museum Press, 1998), 165–88.

70. De Maria, *Becoming Venetian*, 140.

71. On the history of this painting, see Matthijs IJssink et al., *Hieronymus Bosch, Painter and Draughtsman: Catalogue Raisonné* (New Haven: Yale University Press; Antwerp: Mercatorfonds, 2016), cat. 11, 224–35.

mouths is still legible: *Salve nos Christe redemptor*.⁷² The juxtaposition between derision and devotion is theatrically staged, and it is clear where the beholder's sympathies ought to reside: the Jewish and Roman crowd is presented as an Other whose failure to recognize Christ's divinity remains incomprehensible, while the donors model the devotion of those to whom Truth has been revealed.



Figure 3. Hieronymus Bosch, *Ecce Homo*, ca. 1475–1485. Oil on oak panel, 71.4 × 61 cm. Frankfurt, Städel Museum.

Titian's picture is structured differently. Many of the figures in the crowd that he painted look into the painting, and thus proffer their shoulders to the beholder. We do not look *at* them, as we do with Bosch's donors; instead, we look *with* them. They stand in the same relationship to the presentation of Christ as the viewer beyond the picture's threshold. We look at them as they look with us.⁷³ Victor Stoichita has termed figures such as these "empathetic proxies" for the beholder.⁷⁴ In this case the term *surrogate beholders* is perhaps preferable, because these proxies do not necessarily predict an empathetic response by the beholder; rather, they collapse the distance between the painted historical scene and the lived experience of the viewer. Indeed, the

inclusion of contemporary figures as "surrogate beholders" lends the painting a deeply ambivalent character: the abject figure of Christ is revealed to these contemporary spectators, yet it seems to fall upon disinterested eyes. According to the biblical narrative, these contemporaries fill the role of the mocking Jewish and Roman crowd, so these "surrogate beholders" fail to recognize the divinity of Christ. Only the viewer outside the picture is aware of the stunning revelation that takes place through Pilate's ostentation of the body of Christ. This disjuncture between surrogate and actual

72. Ibid., 224. See also Roger Marijnissen and Peter Ruyffelaere, *Hieronymus Bosch: The Complete Works* (Antwerp: Mercatorfonds, 2007), 368.

73. Thomas Puttfarken, *Titian and Tragic Painting: Aristotle's Poetics and the Rise of the Modern Artist* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 100.

74. Victor I. Stoichita, *Visionary Experience in the Golden Age of Spanish Art* (London: Reaktion, 1995), 82.

beholder poses a problem for the devout viewer and indicates a point of concern that occupied exegetes in the early modern period.

Titian was extremely well connected to sixteenth-century religious and cultural elites who expressed these concerns. His relationship to Pietro Aretino, the renowned cleric and man of letters, has been thoroughly studied.⁷⁵ Titian also came into contact with Bishop Antonio de Guevara (1481–1545), who was confessor to Charles V and had accompanied the emperor on his trip to Italy in the 1530s; Guevara and Titian almost certainly met in Bologna in 1532. Independently of one another, both Aretino and Guevara composed lengthy treatises on the passion of Christ.⁷⁶ While Titian may have read these treatises, I do not suggest that they were sources for Titian's painting. Indeed, the translation of Guevara's treatise into Italian postdates Titian's painting. Similarly, while it is often asserted that Titian's choice to include Aretino's portrait under the guise of Pontius Pilate points to the influence of Aretino's treatise on Titian, the connections between Titian's picture and Aretino's treatise—or Guevara's, for that matter—are more general than specific. As I will show, the graphic exegesis that Titian set forth in his *Ecce Homo* resonates with themes discussed by both Guevara and Aretino, though by expressing these themes in pictorial form Titian's picture gives them a unique inflection.

Both Aretino and Guevara devote a considerable amount of their treatises to the scene of the *Ecce Homo*, and both authors use Pilate and his soldiers to make an important point about spiritual practice. Exegetes had long understood the narrative of the *Ecce Homo* to be an event of theophany, in which Christ's divinity was made manifest through his abject state.⁷⁷ Because of this, the moment in which Pilate presents Christ to the

75. Most germane, see Luba Freedman, *Titian's Portraits through Aretino's Lens* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995); Valeska von Rosen, *Mimesis und Selbstbezüglichkeit in Werken Tizians: Studien zum venezianischen Maler-eidiskurs* (Emsdetten: Imorde, 2001), 81–124, 299–332; and Raymond B. Waddington, "Aretino, Titian, and 'La humanità di Cristo,'" in *Forms of Faith in Sixteenth-Century Italy*, ed. Abigail Brundin and Matthew Treherne (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), 171–98.

76. Only Aretino's treatise has been studied in any detail. See Harald Hendrix, "Pietro Aretino's *Humanità di Christo* and the Rhetoric of Horror," in *Il rinascimento italiano di fronte alla riforma: Letteratura e arte, atti del colloquio internazionale*, London, *The Warburg Institute*, 30–31 gennaio 2004, ed. Chrysa Damianaki, Paolo Procaccioli, and Angelo Romano (Rome: Vecchiarelli, 2005), 89–114.

77. Giorgio Agamben, *Jesus and Pilate*, trans. Adam Kotsko (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015).

Jewish people was taken to be an adumbration of the Eucharist, which is understood by Catholics to be a kind of sacramental theophany under the humble species of bread and wine. Already this is echoed on the linguistic level. Christ was first addressed with the deictic “behold” by John the Baptist, who identified Christ as the Lamb of God—*ecce agnus dei* (John 1:29). This deictic pronouncement was inverted by Pontius Pilate, who repudiated Christ’s divinity when he announced, “Behold the man” (*ecce homo*). The biblical language of presentation is consciously evoked in the rite of the mass just after the Consecration, at the moment of Elevation, when the priest announces *ecce agnus dei*. In speaking those words the priest proclaims the assertion made by John the Baptist, but the words are also shot through with an intertextual reference to the scene of the *Ecce Homo*, for Christ’s divinity must encompass not only its acknowledgment by John the Baptist but also its negation by Pilate.

In the premodern era, there was a strong exegetical tradition linking Pilate’s presentation of Christ with the elevation of the eucharistic host during the prayer of Consecration. This connection is perhaps made most explicit in Ludolph of Saxony’s fourteenth-century *Life of Christ*, one of the most widely diffused devotional texts of the early modern period. In his meditation on the *Ecce Homo* passage, Ludolph leaves no doubts about the eucharistic import of this moment:

And so, as proof of this, when the priest raises Christ as he is manifested in the host, it is as though the priest were saying *Ecce Homo*, Behold the Man. Since the sacrament of the altar is the memorial of the Lord’s Passion, and since Christ suffered in his humanity, even though his Divinity cannot suffer, when the priest during the mass displays Christ he says *Ecce Homo* rather than *Ecce Deus*, even if He is both God and man, because in this manifestation it is the man that is visible while God is hidden.⁷⁸

When taken in light of this exegetical tradition, the narrative of the *Ecce Homo* is about much more than a simple presentation of Christ to an unsympathetic crowd. Rather, the narrative hinges upon the capacity to recognize the presence of Christ, even when he appears in the unexpected guise of an abject criminal.

78. Ludolphus de Saxonia, *Vita Jesu Christi ex Evangelio et Approbata ab Ecclesia Catholica Doctoribus Sedule Collecta*, ed. L. M. Rigollot (Paris: Victorem Palmé, 1878), 2:79.

Similar themes subtend the description of the scene of the *Ecce Homo* set forth by Aretino and Guevara. Both authors call attention to the countless Catholics who everyday enact insincere gestures of adoration and pronounce disingenuous claims of Christ's kingship, like those Pilate's soldiers uttered during the passion. Pilate's soldiers made these professions as an act of ironic subversion; they called Christ "King," but only mockingly (John 19:3). For Guevara and Aretino, their pronouncements underscore the inscrutability of human agency. Within the context of the religious turmoil in Europe in the middle of the sixteenth century, a chasm was opened between action and intention. As the Protestants began increasingly to emphasize one's internal disposition, outward gestures came under increasing scrutiny. Genuflecting in front of the Eucharist was no longer sufficient proof of the orthodoxy of one's beliefs. Along these lines, Aretino and Guevara drew a parallel between Pilate's soldiers, who failed to recognize Christ's divinity, and those Catholics whose repetition of ritual is unconscious and spiritually vacuous. To this end, Guevara and Aretino both distinguish between the bodily knees and the knees of the heart (*genua cordis*). While Pilate's soldiers bent their corporeal knees before Christ, in doing so they brought about their own damnation because they failed to bend the knees of their hearts.⁷⁹

One of the most prominent figures in Titian's picture, and the figure who stands most obviously in a relationship of surrogacy to the beholder outside the painting is the soldier clad in green in the foreground at left. This figure, one of Pilate's soldiers, hunches over and kneels on the steps in a posture that is mockingly echoed by his companions on the other side of the steps, receding into the background, who thrust their hands in the air in an ironic recognition of Christ's kingship. The process of deciphering the gesture of the soldier in green is complicated: while he initially scans as recognizing Christ's divinity, the context created by the biblical narrative reveals that this figure is more likely engaged in an act of mockery. The semiotic process is complicated by the rhetorical device of irony, and

79. Antonio Guevara, *Prima parte del Monte Calvario che tratta de gli immensi misterii, che il figliuolo di Dio il quel monte santo operò quando per tutta la generatione humana quivi morì. Composto dall'illustre Signore Don Antonio di Guevara Vescovo di Mondognedo: Predicatore e Consigliere della Cesarea, e Catolica Maesta. Nuovamente di Spagnuolo in Italiano tradotto & illustrato dal Dottore Filippo della Torre* (Venice, 1570), 48. See also Pietro Aretino, *La passione di Giesu composta per messer Pietro Aretino* (Venice: Francesco Marcolini, 1537), 38–39.

Titian gives this textual practice visual legibility by suggesting the disjuncture between the physical act of genuflection and the internal disposition of the soldier in green; when his posture is read against the passages in the Gospel that describe the mocking of the Roman soldiers (John 19:3), his intentions are called into question. The distinction between bodily genuflection and genuine adoration explored in Aretino's and Guevara's descriptions of Roman soldiers reveals itself to be pertinent to an analysis of Titian's painting. The heart of the soldier in green might not align with his bodily posture.

Bishop Guevara traced the trope of the "knees of the heart" back to the Old Testament figure of King Manasseh, who was initially described in Scripture as the most idolatrous king of Judah (2 Kgs 21:1–8 and 2 Chr 33:1–9). However, after being taken prisoner by the Assyrians, Manasseh underwent a conversion and subsequently cast the idols out of Jerusalem (2 Chr 33:15). Manasseh's prayer of penance, now taken to be apocryphal, was included in the Vulgate's text of 2 Chronicles, and Guevara took this prayer as authentic. As Manasseh's prayer states, "Now therefore I bend the knee of mine heart, beseeching thee of grace" (*et nunc flecto genua cordis mei, precans ad te bonitatem, Domine*; Pr Man 1:11). For Guevara, this Old Testament phrase adumbrates the main problem embedded within Christian ritualism. "And if you will, with this example at hand, look back at Pilate's soldiers, how they knelt down at Christ's feet and then look at the Good Thief, how he stands erect next to Christ and you will see very clearly how those cursed ones by kneeling sealed their damnation by Christ, but by contrast the Good Thief who remained on his feet obtained salvation."⁸⁰ Guevara then pivots to give this juxtaposition an explicitly personal gloss: "Be attentive, then, my brother not to kneel down with Pilate's soldiers in front of Christ, since they served him only with their knees while they blasphemed him with their tongues."⁸¹ For Guevara, the narrative of the *Ecce Homo* highlights the risk of failing properly to recognize Christ and the radical personal transformation that his divinity must trigger in the faithful. Aretino makes the same point. Titian's painting of the *Ecce Homo* motivates this mode of spiritual thinking and gives pictorial form to the problem; Titian's picture insists on the importance of recognizing Christ by including contemporary portraits.

80. Guevara, *Prima parte del Monte Calvario*, 47.

81. *Ibid.*, 48.

Titian's painting forestalls a facile dismissal of the onlookers as a Jewish Other and insists instead upon the picture as a vehicle for individualized spiritual reformation.⁸²

Many Renaissance depictions of the *Ecce Homo*, such as the painting by Bosch discussed above were predicated upon the failure of the Jews to recognize Christ's divinity, establishing an implicit dichotomy between the misrecognition of the onlookers within the picture and the more informed beholders outside the painting, who recognize Christ's divinity. However, Titian's picture problematizes this hermeneutic structure by insisting upon the equivalence between the surrogate beholders within the picture and the viewer in front of the canvas. The crowd depicted within the painting consists, after all, of contemporary Venetian portraits. Those contemporaries, though, respond with hostility or indifference rather than devout contemplation. Their recognition of Christ's authority is ironic rather than sincere. Rather than modeling for the beholder an ideal mode of engagement, the Vienna picture invites contemplation by illustrating its opposite: derision. The painting has co-opted the irony of the biblical narrative as a pictorial strategy.

The rhetorical complexity of Titian's picture is embodied at the center of the composition, where the beholder is drawn to an elegantly dressed young man, who wears a red velvet doublet, pale stockings, and clutches a halberd in his left hand. The figure's body faces Christ, though his attention seems drawn by the little girl over his right shoulder. As he turns to meet the gaze of the child, his body is torqued into the pose of the *figura serpentinata*.⁸³ Duplicitously, he simultaneously "faces" two directions, both toward and away from Christ. Titian's use of the serpentine figure seems encoded with all of the ambiguity and equivocation that modern scholars have read into the figure type. The painting is structured around a figure of contradiction. Given the opportunity to recognize Christ's divinity and thereby attain salvation, this man literally turns his gaze away from

82. My mode of thinking about this picture has been informed by Klaus Krüger's study of the staged representation of beholding in Reformation-era images: Krüger, "Authenticity and Fiction: On the Pictorial Construction of Inner Presence in Early Modern Italy," in *Image and Imagination of the Religious Self in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Reindert Falkenburg, Walter S. Melion, and Todd M. Richardson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 37–69.

83. David Summers, "Maniera and Movement: The Figura Serpentinata," *Art Quarterly* 35 (1972): 269–301.

Christ, even though his entire body compels him to look in that direction. The figure in red embodies the tragedy of misrecognition that underwrites the narrative of the passion. His indifference to Christ is in some ways more damning than the mockery of the soldier in green, who kneels next to him.

The picture thus poses a challenge to the beholder; failing to recognize Christ's divinity is presented not as the response of a Jewish Other but as an issue that held purchase in contemporary culture. This is not to suggest that the painting presents Aretino or any of the other figures immortalized in the painting as heretics who failed to recognize Christ. Using easily recognizable figures whose Catholic *bona fides* were, with the exception of the Ottoman emperor Suleiman, irreproachable immediately forestalled such a reading. Moreover, devotional handbooks often instructed the reader to imagine that biblical scenes were happening in front of them, in the presence of people that they knew.⁸⁴ Titian's strategy of beholder identification can be aligned not only with devotional handbooks but also with civic ritual. During the Renaissance citizens were accustomed to seeing their compatriots participate in sacred representations, holy theater in which citizen-actors performed the roles of biblical personages, including the unbelieving crowd of Jews. Such spectacles were an important part of the Holy Week in Venice. Throughout Holy Week important members of the patrician class would perform the roles of the biblical characters.⁸⁵ Performing the role of nonbelievers underlined for citizens that they had the opportunity to recognize Christ's divinity where the historical personages they portrayed had failed to do so. Similarly, rather than proffering accusations of heresy, Titian's picture poses a challenge to its beholders: will they recognize Christ's divinity and therefore bend the knees of their hearts, or will they fail to recognize Christ in the everyday and as a result be condemned for only bending their physical knees in mockery of the God they did not recognize? Will the beholder respond with compassion or enmity?⁸⁶

84. Saint Bonaventure, *Meditations on the Life of Christ: An Illustrated Manuscript of the Fourteenth Century*. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS. Ital. 115, trans. Isa Ragusa (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 320, 387.

85. Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 219–20.

86. On the notion of enmity as a pictorial strategy, see Joseph Leo Koerner,

Titian's painting gives graphical form to the central question of the Christian life: will the faithful be able to see Christ's divinity even when it is shrouded by the thick veil of humanity? More importantly, will the faithful allow that realization to take root? Will they be transformed and kneel before Christ with their hearts, or will they carry on genuflecting only the knees of their body in a ritual display that risks their own damnation?

Titian's picture is an exercise in graphic exegesis. The painting presents Christ at his most abject moment, but it enfolds within that moment an echo of Christ's triumph through his abiding presence made manifest in the Eucharist. The painting thus offers a *figural* exegesis on the narrative of the *Ecce Homo* that aligns with traditional Catholic glosses on the Scripture, but it does so through pictorial means, thus making it a work of graphic exegesis. Graphic exegesis draws its mandate from the overlapping engagement that art history and theology share with the long and ambiguous history of the image in Western thought. The picture is predicated upon a figural and imagistic understanding of Scripture and thus underlines the difficulty of disentangling images, pictures, and texts in the manifold process of biblical exegesis. However, for the sake of clarity efforts must be made to do precisely this. Graphic exegesis is not the same as visual exegesis. While the latter is a broad domain that encompasses numerous approaches to biblical inquiry that emphasize images, the former remains rooted in actual pictures. This is a small distinction but an important one. In a passage cited above, Robbins noted that the vocabulary for discussing the "images and pictures" elicited by biblical narratives remains underdeveloped. This modest intervention has sought to analyze why that is the case. Both art history and theology have capitalized on the fungible concept of the *image*; given that intellectual genealogy, it is perhaps unrealistic (and perhaps undesirable) to expect terms such as *image*, *vision*, and *picture* to be employed systematically across the boundary of the disciplines. Nevertheless, I have attempted to point to one area in which our discussions can become more precise. The concrete, pictorial nature of graphic exegesis distinguishes it from other discursive

"Impossible Objects: Bosch's Realism," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 46 (2004): 73–97.

modes that employ biblical imagery, and this, if nothing else, is a distinction upon which art history and rhetography can build a bridge between their modes of practice.

THE GIFTS OF EPIPHANY:
GEERTGEN TOT SINT JANS AND THE
ADORATION OF THE MAGI

Henry Luttikhuizen

—We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars. (Oscar Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan*)¹

To be human is to be *humus*, to be of the soil or the dirt. Yet for millennia people from around the world have searched the heavens for answers to earthly questions. The stars, planets, and comets, it is believed, might offer gifts of illumination, providing potential signs of the future, premonitions of what is yet to come. Unfortunately, celestial bodies do not readily reveal their secrets. Their truth is latent, waiting to be unconcealed. Interpreting their meaning demands effort, and this can be a risky enterprise. Signals can get crossed, and beholders can lose sight of their position. The pre-Socratic philosopher Thales of Miletus (ca. 620–546 BCE), for instance, was so preoccupied with looking at the stars that on one evening he failed to watch where he was going and fell into a well (Plato, *Theaet.* 174a). A young Thracian servant girl witnessed the philosopher's misfortune. She ridiculed Thales for the failure of vision. Fascinated with the heavens, he was unable to see the world around him. In Plato's dialogue, the tale of this absent-minded scholar serves as a lesson about philosophers in general. The public will laugh at philosophers who pursue the truth of ideas, of the real world, rather than paying attention to sense experience or the world of mere appearances. Yet, the story also encourages Plato's audience to remember Thales as a great astronomer who claimed that the entire cosmos derived from water.

1. See *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), act 3.

Undoubtedly, the bedazzled ancient philosopher discovered the location of the well at the moment of his folly, but it remains uncertain whether he learned anything from above that evening. Yet it would not surprise us if he had done so. After all, since antiquity, wonder has often been described as the impetus for understanding. Both Plato and Aristotle believed that our desire for knowledge was deeply connected to the marvelous (Plato, *Theaet.* 155d; Aristotle, *Metaph.* 982b). Like Thales, we long to understand that which fascinates us. The lingering question remains, however, whether we can accomplish this feat without blindly stumbling into unseen holes blocking our path. We crave moments of eureka, revelatory events of discovery, but can we find such insight without being dumbfounded, without being somehow at a loss? Perhaps there is hope. When the legendary apple hit Sir Isaac Newton on the head, he apparently did not see stars. On the contrary, he recognized the law of gravity. Then again, his discovery happened in the light of day, when the stars, with the exception of the sun, are not visible. Unlike the wandering Thales, Newton was resting under the shade of a tree. Nonetheless, Thales and Newton gained their understanding by accident, by an interruption of their everyday experience. Their apparent misadventures—events that Thales and Newton never saw coming—offered gifts for interpretation. The biblical magi may have encountered a similar phenomenon, for all that was shown to them was provided by grace.

According to Matt 2:1–12, the only biblical account of the magi story, wise men from the east followed a star to Jerusalem in search of the king of the Jews. The magi, who frequently are identified as Persian or Anatolian priestly astrologers, were unable to find him there. So, they consulted the current monarch, Herod. Troubled by the prospect of a new king, Herod summoned his Jewish advisers. These priests and scribes were familiar with the prophecy of Micah (5:2), predicting the city of Bethlehem as the coming king's birthplace. Although these Jewish leaders knew where the forthcoming king would arrive, they did not know when he would appear. The magi, fortune-tellers from foreign lands, provided that information. Herod, anxious to discover and kill the prophesied rival for his throne, told the magi where to look. Lying to them, Herod indicated that his interest in finding the child was also motivated by the desire to worship the newborn. Upon hearing the king, the wise men departed, following the star that they had seen before. Once in Bethlehem, the magi found the Virgin Mary and the Christ child. The wise men praised the newborn, offering him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Warned in a dream

not to reveal Christ's whereabouts to Herod, the magi returned to their homeland by an alternate route.² This essay will investigate some of the ways that a late fifteenth-century Netherlandish artist, Geertgen tot Sint Jans, interpreted this story. Not only will we study the painter's visual exegesis of the adoration, but we will also consider why he may have returned to this subject on multiple occasions.

Geertgen worked in the city of Haarlem. His primary patrons were members of the brotherhood of Saint John the Baptist, otherwise known as the Hospitallers.³ In exchange for his labors, Geertgen received room and board. The confraternity's commandery, also known as their cloister, was located in the heart of Haarlem, only a few minutes' walk from the city's central square. The Haarlem Hospitallers were knightly monks. They followed the Rule of Augustine and were devoted to the protection of pilgrims and the defense of pilgrimage sites in the Holy Lands. Although the Haarlem brothers were members of a military order, dedicated to fighting against the enemies of Christ, they did not actively participate in the Crusades. On the contrary, the knightly monks served as administrators of local properties given to the order. In addition, they managed a *gasthuis* (or hospice), where the Hospitallers provided care for the sick and offered lodging for travelers. From the donations that they received and from the services that they performed, the Haarlem brotherhood became quite wealthy. Geertgen entered the commandery as a lay member. Although the artist did not take monastic vows, he pledged loyalty to the confraternity's leadership. The painter seems to have resided within the cloister throughout his short artistic career. According to Karel van Mander, the author of

2. See Hugo Kehrer, *Die heiligen Drei Könige in Literatur und Kunst*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Seemann, 1909); Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in Matthew and Luke* (New York: Doubleday, 1977), esp. 165–201; and Mark Allen Powell, *Chasing the Eastern Star: Adventures in Biblical Reader-Response Criticism* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001).

3. For more on Geertgen and the Hospitallers, see Eltjo A. Beresteyn, *Geschiedenis der Johannite-Orde in Nederland tot 1795* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1934), esp. 13–24; Truus van Bueren, *Macht en Onderhorigheid binnen de Ridderlijke Orde van Sint Jans: De commandeursportretten uit de Sint Jansklooster te Haarlem* (Haarlem: Schuyt, 1991); van Bueren, *Tot lof van Haarlem: Het beleid van de stad Haarlem ten aanzien van de kunstwerken uit de gesconfisqueerde geestelijke instellingen* (Haarlem: Verloren, 1993); and John Decker, *The Technology of Salvation and the Art of Geertgen tot Sint Jans* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), esp. 9–31.

the *Schilderboeck* (1604), a book that included biographies of prominent Netherlandish artists, Geertgen died young, at the age of twenty-eight.⁴

Not surprisingly, he painted multiple images of the knightly brotherhood's patron saint. For instance, Geertgen depicted the martyrdom of John the Baptist and the preservation of his relics on the exterior of the monumental triptych that he produced for the high altar of the confraternity's chapel.⁵ Geertgen also made an image of Saint John in the Wilderness (Staatliche Museen, Berlin).⁶ In addition, the artist's workshop likely produced a painting of the Holy Kinship (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam), which included a depiction of the Baptist as an infant in the arms of his mother. Yet there is no evidence that Geertgen ever painted the baptism of Christ, one of the most famous narratives associated with the order's patron saint. Judging from existing panels, it seems that Geertgen and his patrons may have been more interested in the adoration of the magi. The artist represented the subject at least three times.

In some ways, the story of the magi revealed the introduction of a new world order, a promise fulfilled. It marked a foretold transition from the old covenant to the new. The early Christian theologians such as Origen believed that the wise men were the descendants of the Old Testament magus, Balaam. This association was not unprecedented. Already in the first century, Philo of Alexandria, a hellenized Jew, had described the Old Testament figure of Balaam as a magus from the east (*Mos.* 1.50). Philo

4. Karel van Mander, *Het Schilderboeck*, facsimile edition (Utrecht: Davaco, 1969), fol. 206 rev.; also see van Mander, *The Lives of the Illustrious Netherlandish and German Painters*, trans. Hessel Miedema (Doornspijk: Davaco, 1994), 1:82–83. For more on Karel van Mander, see Walter S. Melion, *Shaping the Netherlandish Canon: Karel van Mander's 'Schilder-boeck'* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

5. Today only one of the wings of this altarpiece survives. The front and reverse panels of this wing are housed in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna. The rest of the triptych was destroyed in 1573, during the Siege of Haarlem. For more on this altarpiece, see Henry Luttikhuisen, "Late Medieval Piety and Geertgen tot Sint Jans' Altarpiece for the Haarlem Jansheren" (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 1997).

6. John Decker, "'Planting Seeds of Righteousness,' Taming the Wilderness of the Soul: Geertgen tot Sint Jans's *Saint John in the Wilderness*," in *Image and Imagination of the Religious Self in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Reindert Falkenburg, Walter S. Melion, and Todd M. Richardson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 307–27; and Henry Luttikhuisen, "Monastic Hospitality: The Cloister as Heart in Early Netherlandish Painting," in Falkenburg, Melion, and Richardson, *Image and Imagination of the Religious Self*, 332–35.

saw an allegorical connection between Balaam and Moses. According to the biblical text (Num 22–24), Balaam foiled the evil plans of the Moabite king Balak, who sought to kill the Israelite leader Moses. Balak, of course, was not the first monarch to make such an attempt. The Egyptian pharaoh had previously tried to assassinate Moses. Origen extended the allegory to the wise men (Origen, *Cel.* 1.59–60). In the New Testament story, foreign magi, like Balaam, thwart a monarch's malicious plans. Early Christians could have easily viewed Balaam as a prefiguration of the wise men. Not only did Balaam ruin Balak's plans, he also predicted that "a Star shall rise out of Jacob and a sceptre shall spring up from Israel" (Num 24:17 DRA), a prophecy apparently fulfilled, according to Matthew. There is no evidence that Geertgen ever painted Balaam or Moses for that matter. Nonetheless, he and his patrons would have been keenly aware of the power of allegory.

The adoration of the magi, however, was not simply a story about the royal succession of earthly kings. After all, it signified a special kind of advent, a crossing of the border between heaven and earth, namely, the incoming of God as the King of kings. Already among early Christians, the adoration of the magi was readily interpreted as an epiphany, a presentation, of the divine. For instance, Saint Augustine referred to the adoration of the magi as a *manifestatio*, a showing. The event offered a visual demonstration of the mystery of the incarnation. Even though the magi were gentile visionaries, outsiders to the Old Testament covenant, they sought and discovered the Christ child before their Jewish counterparts did. For Augustine, the adoration of the shepherds, described in Luke 2:8–14, reported Christ's presentation to the Jews. To his understanding, these two events not only revealed the human embodiment of the divine to human eyes, they also reinforced the idea that Christ was the God for all nations (*Serm.* 199).⁷ By the late Middle Ages, however, the analogy had broken down. Jews were no longer compared to the shepherds. Although the shepherds continued to be praised as humble witnesses to Christ's birth, their ethnic identity was conveniently forgotten. Whereas the shepherds may have lacked material wealth, Jews were considered spiritually impoverished. Anti-Semitism may have been already implicit in Augustine's reading of the two gospel stories, but in the *Golden Legend* it is made explicit. In the words of Jacobus da Voragine, "The Magi believed one prophet, the

7. See Augustine, *Sermons on the Liturgical Seasons*, ed. Sister Mary Sarah Muldowney, FC 38 (New York: Catholic University of America Press, 1959), 59–60.

Jews refused to believe a number of them; the former searched for a foreign king, the latter did not bother to look for their own; the Magi came a great distance, the Jews lived close by.”⁸ The adoration of the shepherds and that of the magi may have been complementary, but the relationship between Jew and gentile was not.⁹ Jews were considered blind, unable to see the truth of the epiphany. By contrast, the wise men and the shepherds recognized the presence of Christ prior to seeing him corporeally.

The Feast of Epiphany was celebrated on the sixth of January, marking the twelfth day of Christmas. Early Christians readily connected the adoration with other biblical narratives associated with later manifestations of Christ’s divinity. The miracle of changing water into wine at the wedding at Cana, the baptism of Christ, and the feeding of the five thousand were also celebrated on the same day.¹⁰ As followers of the liturgical calendar, Geertgen and his patrons would have readily seen the connection between the adoration of the magi and the baptism of Christ. Both events were epiphanies, important moments revealing Jesus as the Son of God. So it is not surprising that the adoration of the magi may have appealed to the Haarlem Hospitallers. Yet this does not explain why these knightly monks appear to have been far more enamored with this narrative than the baptism of Christ.

Geertgen and his contemporaries did not stick strictly to the biblical text. Throughout the Middle Ages, artists and authors made alterations. They regularly embellished, adding narrative details that could evoke greater empathy with the story’s protagonists and that could reveal the tale’s implicit meaning without contradiction. For instance, the Gospel according to Matthew does not specify the number of magi. Nonetheless, since the third century, the underlying assumption is that there were three. Origen was the first to articulate this number (Origen, *Hom. Gen.* 14.3 [PG 12:238]). He suggested that each of the magi presented a gift of his

8. Jacobus da Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. William Granger Ryan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 80.

9. For more on late medieval anti-Semitism, see Mitchell Merback, ed., *Beyond the Yellow Badge: Anti-Judaism and Antisemitism in Medieval and Early Modern Visual Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

10. Initially, Christmas and the adoration were celebrated on the same day. However, the date of Christmas was changed to the twenty-fifth of December in the mid-fourth century. For more on the dating of Christmas, see Joseph F. Kelly, *The Origins of Christmas* (Collegeville, MI: Liturgical Press, 2004), 53–78.

own. Since the biblical text lists three gifts—namely, gold, frankincense, and myrrh—Origen believed that there must be three donors. The number quickly became the conventional standard. In each of Geertgen's panels, there are three magi.

Geertgen's wise men also wear the crowns of kings. This is nothing new. During the third century, the patristic theologian Tertullian described the magi as kings. In his view, Ps 71:10–11 (Vulgate) served as a prefiguration of the adoration. According to the Old Testament prophecy, the kings of Tarshish and its isles, of Arabia, and of Seba will pay homage to the King of kings. Tertullian believed that these monarchs were none other than the magi found in Matthew (*Marc.* 2.12). This interpretation, however, does not seem to have appealed to Tertullian's contemporaries. In fact, the magi do not appear as kings in the visual arts until the millennium. One of the earliest depictions is rendered in a royal manuscript, the Gospel of Otto III (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 4453). In a miniature of the adoration, the wise men wear crowns rather than exotic Phrygian hats. The kneeling magus closest to the Virgin and Child has gray hair and beard, suggesting growing interest in their age.¹¹

During the eighth century, Pseudo-Bede associated the three magi with the three ages of humanity: elderly, middle-aged, and young (*Excerptiones Patrum* [PL 94:541]). He also linked them to the three continents—Europe, Asia, and Africa—reinforcing the notion that Christ was the king of all nations (*In Matt.* 1.2 [PL 92:13]).¹² Pseudo-Bede's assertion was based on patristic literature. Saint Augustine believed that the magi traveled from different directions, ultimately meeting one another outside Jerusalem (*Enarrat. Ps.* 71 [PL 36:909]). In addition, Saint Jerome suggested that the wise men were the descendants of Ham, Shem, and Japheth, the three sons of Noah (*Expositio Quatuor Evangeliorum* [PL 30:537]). Yet unlike the church fathers, Pseudo-Bede named the anonymous magi. He referred to them as Melchior, Balthazar, and Caspar (*Excerptiones Patrum* [PL 94:541]).¹³ The use of these names was made

11. Eliza Garrison, *Ottonian Imperial Art and Portraiture: The Artistic Patronage of Otto III and Henry II* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012), 39–86.

12. Hrabanus Maurus and Saint Anselm make similar comments; see Hrabanus Maurus, *Comm. Matt.* 1.2 (PL 107:760); and Saint Anselm, *Enarrat. Matt.* 2 (PL 162:1257).

13. See Paul H. D. Kaplan, *The Rise of the Black Magus in Western Art* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Research Press, 1985), 21; and Bruce M. Metzger, "Naming

popular by their inclusion in Jacobus da Voragine's thirteenth-century hagiographic compilation, the *Legenda aurea*. Late medieval authors regularly refer to the three magi or three kings by name. Unfortunately, they are inconsistent in their identification. Although the oldest magus is typically called Melchior, the names of the younger two sages alternate.

The wise men did not arrive at their destination empty handed. Melchior, Balthazar, and Caspar brought gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The early Christian theologian Tertullian described these offerings in terms of regal diplomacy. To his understanding, the kingly magi's adoration was a means of paying tribute (*Marc.* 3.13). As Richard Trexler points out, political gestures such as this were commonplace in ancient Rome. They provided an effective means to reinforce the legitimacy of power and to build alliances between leaders.¹⁴ Yet the adoration of the magi seems to be more than an exchange of *do ut des* (I give so that you give). There is no evidence from the story that the wise men expected anything in return. As we shall see, late medieval authors were careful not to reduce the magi's deed to one of tribute or remuneration. Such an interpretation would not only overestimate their merit, it would also undermine the virtues of self-denial as it potentially canceled out the abundance of grace.

For Origen, the gifts of the magi had a deeper meaning. To his understanding, the donation of gold suggested recognition of Christ's kingship. The gift of frankincense, a substance burned in conjunction with prayers, denoted acceptance of Christ's divinity, whereas myrrh, a material used to anoint the dead, indicated understanding of Christ's mortality (Origen, *Cels.* 1.60). Medieval theologians continued to give allegorical significance to the three gifts. However, the particular meanings they attributed to the donated items occasionally differed. For instance, the twelfth-century Cistercian abbot Aelred of Rievaulx associated the gold with true love, frankincense with prayer, and myrrh with mortification of the flesh (*Serm.* 4).¹⁵

the Nameless in the New Testament: A Study in the Growth of Christian Tradition," in *Kyriakon: Festschrift Johannes Quasten*, ed. Patrick Granfield and Josef Jungmann (Münster: Aschendorff, 1970), 1:79–99.

14. Richard Trexler, *The Journey of the Magi: Meanings in History of a Christian Story* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), esp. 9–43; and Bernhard Jussen, "The Religious Discourses of the Gift in the Middle Ages," in *Negotiating the Gift: Pre-modern Figurations of Exchange*, ed. Gadi Algazi, Valentin Groebner, and Bernhard Jussen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 181.

15. See Gaetano Raciti, ed., *Aelredus Rievallensis sermones I–XLVI*, CCCM 2A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1989), 45.

Meanwhile, for his Benedictine contemporary Godfrey of Admont, gold indicated the purity of heartfelt prayer, frankincense the sweetness of good deeds, and myrrh the incorruptible humility of the heart (*Hom. fest.* 14 [PL 174:682]). According to the *Golden Legend*, Saint Bernard of Clairvaux believed that the gifts also served practical purposes. The gold offered the holy family relief from their poverty. Frankincense provided an effective means of eliminating bad odors in the stable. Finally, the child was given myrrh to strengthen his limbs and ward off harmful worms.¹⁶ Although the allegorical significance of the gifts varied, they never lost their spiritual meaning. These donated items, after all, were touched by the divine.

In addition, these donated items literally came into contact with the divine. During the twelfth century, relics of the gold coins given to Christ at the adoration were housed in Reims Cathedral and elsewhere.¹⁷ In 1164, relics of the three kings were brought to Cologne, establishing the city as a major pilgrimage site.¹⁸ Nonetheless, no cults of Melchior, Balthazar, or Caspar were developed. Furthermore, no churches were built in their name. Rather than praying to the magi for intercession, the devout were encouraged to pray like them. For instance, in an Epiphany sermon, Saint Bonaventure advocated imitation of the wise men.¹⁹ Like the magi, who yearned to be in the presence of the Christ child, believers should seek the King of kings through prayer and meditation. The thirteenth-century saint asked his listeners to look internally with the three kingly powers of their souls (memory, intellect, and will), which rule over the flesh and have dominion over the senses.²⁰ In the inner recesses of the pious soul, they may discover the radiance of the Christ child. Not only does Bonaventure believe the devout should imitate the wise men in their heartfelt longing for Jesus, they should also bring forth spiritual gifts. As he puts it,

16. Da Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, 1:83.

17. Trexler, *The Journey of the Magi*, 72.

18. *Ibid.*, 78–85.

19. Saint Bonaventure, “The Fourth Feast: How the Son of God Is Sought and Adored Spiritually with the Magi, by the Devout Soul,” in *Bringing Forth Christ: Five Feasts of the Child Jesus*, trans. Eric Doyle (Oxford: SLG, 1984), 11–12.

20. David Summers, *The Judgment of Sense: Renaissance Naturalism and the Rise of Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), esp. 27, 260–61.

Do not be content to adore him, offer him gifts as well. Offer him the gold of ardent love, the frankincense of devout contemplation, the myrrh of bitter sorrow. Offer him the gold of love for the graces he has bestowed on you, the frankincense of devotion, for the joys that he has prepared for you and the myrrh of sorrow for the sins you have committed. Offer gold in honor of Christ's eternal godhead, frankincense in honor of the holiness of his soul and myrrh in honor of his bodily sufferings.²¹

For Bonaventure, to follow the example of the magi is to give of oneself. The devout are called to offer Christ the gift of love, which extends beyond mere adoration.

Without love, offerings can readily lose their meaning. Gifts made to God merely out of duty or routine were considered empty. In the words of Andrew of Saint Victor, God "does not accept your offering if you withhold your heart."²² Ultimately, the true gift is not something external to the self. On the contrary, it is discovered within our innermost being. As Saint Augustine states, it is "where I am whatever I am" (Augustine, *Conf.* 10.3). The quality of the magi's gifts was not determined on a financial basis but grounded on their purity of heart. They sought the presence of Christ because they wanted to worship him. The magi humbled themselves in love and adoration. Their wisdom was not characterized by learned prowess, by their ability to interpret the heavens. On the contrary, it was defined by their ardent desire to offer themselves to God. The magi loved beyond what they knew. Perhaps Thomas à Kempis had them somewhat in mind when he suggested, "A humble countryman who serves God is more pleasing to Him than a conceited intellectual who knows the course of the stars, but neglects his own soul" (*De imit.* 1.2).²³ For late medieval Christians, the magi were not motivated by idle curiosity. They traveled from distant lands because they longed for intimacy, to be in the presence of God.

The star of Bethlehem guided their voyage. As Raymond Brown has noted, in the ancient world it was not uncommon for heavenly signs to herald extraordinary events, including the birth and death of an aston-

21. Saint Bonaventure, "The Fourth Feast," 12.

22. Andreas de Sancto Victore, *Expositio hystorica in librum Regum*, ed. Franciscus van Liere, CCCM 53A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1996), 2:8.

23. See Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, trans. Leo Sherley-Price (New York: Penguin, 1952), 28.

ishing king.²⁴ In Virgil's *Aeneid*, a star shows the wandering protagonist where the city of Rome is to be established (*Aen.* 2.694). The ancient Roman biographer Suetonius reported that a celestial omen announced the imminent birth of Caesar Augustus (*Aug.* 94). In addition, Cicero noted that on the evening that the Temple of Diana at Ephesus burned down, stargazing priests predicted the impending death of Alexander the Great (*Div.* 1.23.47). For the ancient Romans, the stars may have been eternal, but they became brighter and faded away. The disappearance of a star was literally disastrous. It signaled an irrecoverable loss, that luck had run out. By contrast, new apparitions in the heavens were often linked with good fortune.

For medieval Christians, stars were created at the beginning of the world and had not moved since then. Yet the star of Bethlehem was different. Unlike its celestial counterparts, it was not fixed in time or space. This extraordinary star not only appeared and disappeared, it also miraculously traveled with the magi. It relocated as needed. Saint Augustine may have commemorated the Feast of the Epiphany, but he was quick to point out the dangers of astrology. The stars, according to Augustine, did not determine the timing and place of Christ's birth. On the contrary, Christ rules the heavens. He miraculously drew attention to the star of Bethlehem as a means to guide the traveling magi. The wandering wise men were not simply following a celestial anomaly. They were pilgrims being led by the grace of God (*Serm.* 199). For Augustine, the wondrous star that appeared to the magi only worked because it was a predestined gift from God. It could not serve as a heavenly sign without sacred intercession. If anything is written in the stars, it is there because the hand of God inscribed it.

Yet the wise men did not, of course, practice Christianity. They were pagan magicians who studied the heavens for sacred signs without knowing the name of its author. Not surprisingly, the ability to interpret celestial secrets was often associated with witchcraft and deception, malicious qualities potentially challenging the purity of the biblical magi. Jacobus da Voragine addresses this problem in the *Golden Legend* by offering three reasons why the three kings were called magi. In the first explanation, he suggests that they were called magi because they were deceivers. The men tricked Herod by not delivering on their promises to him. In the second,

24. Brown, *Birth of the Messiah*, 170.

they were sorcerers who later converted to the faith, thus negating their evil ways. Through their donation, the three men were forgiven. In the third explanation, Voragine claims that the word *magus* is a synonym for *sapiens* or wise man.²⁵ The wise men answered the call of God by following the star of Bethlehem.

Nonetheless, the celestial body does not appear in any of Geertgen's three panels.²⁶ Although it is difficult to imagine that Geertgen and his patrons would have denied the veracity of the star, it is omitted. Its absence may be partially explained by the artist's preoccupation with optical naturalism. With the exception of the sun, stars do not see the light of day. However, the desire to imitate appearances did not preclude Geertgen from including anomalies.²⁷ For instance, late medieval liturgical vessels could not have been presented at the adoration of the magi, yet Geertgen depicts them in all three panels. There may be another explanation. Perhaps the star is not absent after all. According to the *Golden Legend*, the star was both material and spiritual. It may have appeared to the magi in the evening sky, but it was also something that they saw in their innermost selves.²⁸ In other words, the star not only resided in the heavens, it was also housed within the hearts of the faithful. Geertgen may not have painted the materiality of the star. Nonetheless, as we shall see, it appears to remain present spiritually.

In addition, the star of Bethlehem could be associated with the Virgin Mary. She is, after all, the *Stella Maris*, the Star of the Sea. Although this role is often linked to the saintly protection of sailors and fishermen, it can also include the holy guidance and care of all those who travel from afar. As Saint Bernard put it,

Oh, if any of you recognizes that he is caught between storms and tempests, tossed about in the flood of this world, instead of walking on dry

25. Da Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, 1:79.

26. The star of Bethlehem, however, is depicted in the *Adoration of the Magi* (Winterthur, Oskar Reinhart Collection 'Am Römerholz') produced by one of Geertgen's close followers. For more on this painting, see Mariantonia Reinhard-Felice, ed., *Venite Adoremus: Geertgen tot Sint Jans and the Adoration of the Kings* (Munich: Hirmer, 2007).

27. For more on the relationship between optical naturalism and artistic fantasy, see Summers, *The Judgment of Sense*, 3–9.

28. Da Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, 1:82.

land, keep your eyes fixed on the glow of this star, unless you want to perish, overwhelmed by the tempest!

If the winds of temptations surge, if you run aground on the shoals of troubles, look to this star, call upon Mary!

If you are tossed by the winds of pride or ambition or detraction or jealousy, look to this star, call upon Mary!

If anger or greed or the allurements of the flesh dash against the boat of your mind, look to Mary!

And if you are troubled by the enormity of your sins, confused by the foulness of your conscience, terrified by the horror of the Judgment, so that you begin to be swallowed up by the pit of sadness, the abyss of despair, think of Mary!

In dangers, in straits, in perplexity, think of Mary, call upon Mary. Let her name be always in your mouth and in your heart, and, if you would ask for and obtain the help of her prayers, do not forget the example of how she lived.

If you follow her, you will not go astray. If you pray to her, you will not despair. If you think of her, you will not be lost. If you cling to her, you will not fall. If she protects you, you will not fear; if she is your guide, you will not tire; if she is favorable to you, you will reach your goal. (Bernard of Clairvaux, *Super miss.* 2.17 [PL 183:70–71])

The Virgin Mary, according to Bernard, can guide faithful travelers through the pilgrimage of life. She can help them avoid potential hazards and direct them to safety. Jacobus da Voragine reinforces the spiritual link between the Madonna and the star by citing the popular Vespers hymn *Ave maris stella*.²⁹ She prepares a secure passage for the devout to see Jesus and rejoice.

In Byzantine icons, the Madonna is frequently depicted as the *Virgin Hodegetria*, as she who points the way, the path to salvation.³⁰ Saint Luke reportedly was the first artist to paint this subject. Consequently, within Orthodoxy, it is considered to be a miraculous image. Iconographers closely copy Luke's prototype. In these works, the Madonna holds the Christ child with her left arm and gestures toward Christ with her right. The Virgin Mary guides the viewer to Jesus with her finger. By contrast, Geertgen's Madonnas do not literally point to Jesus. In his paintings, the

29. Da Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, 1:82.

30. For more on the Virgin Hodegetria, see Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 73–77.

Virgin Mary lifts Christ upright on her lap. She presents him, revealing the means of forgiveness and redemption. Like the star of Bethlehem, the Madonna draws attention to her infant son. She spiritually guides those seeking to praise him.

Of course, Christ is the star attraction of the adoration. Paradoxically, he can be identified as the star that directs the faithful to his whereabouts. In her revelation of the nativity, Saint Brigitta of Sweden claims that she “saw a star” but not the kind that shines in the sky, that she “saw a light, but not the kind that shines in this world” (*Rev.* 1.10.8).³¹ According to the *Golden Legend*, Saint Jerome advised believers, “Look upon the cradle of Christ and see heaven.”³² As the “light of the world” (*John* 8:12), Christ offers illumination that extends beyond all other sources. In Geertgen’s *Night Nativity* (London, National Gallery of Art), a burst of brilliant light mystically radiates from the child resting in the manger. It outshines everything in the vicinity, including the shepherd’s campfire and the luminosity of the announcing angel painted in the background.³³

Christ is also the Sun of Justice (*Mal* 4:2). According to the biblical verse, the righteous will arise and receive healing. As the Sun of Justice, Christ will mercifully provide the pardon of grace to those who adore him. The figure of Christ in all three of Geertgen’s adoration panels does not appear to offer an additional locus of natural light. Although no rays of light can be seen radiating from his body, in the hearts and minds of believers, he may have remained heavenly, if not stellar.

The magi’s journey was not merely something to be imitated in personal devotion; it also had communal significance. The magi’s sojourn was reenacted within the ritual of the Mass. During the sacrament, priests imitated the procession of the magi by offering bread and wine to be consecrated upon the altar. This event, called the *oblatio sacerdotalis*, effectively

31. Saint Brigitta of Sweden, *The Revelations of Brigitta of Sweden*, trans. Denis Searby (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 1:66.

32. Da Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, 1:83.

33. For more on this painting, see Lorne Campbell, *The Fifteenth-Century Netherlandish Schools* (London: National Gallery of Art, 1998), 232–39; Decker, *The Technology of Salvation*, 97–119; and Friso Lammertse and Jeroen Giltaij, eds., *Vroege Hollanders: Schilderkunst van de late Middeleeuwen* (Rotterdam: Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, 2008), 89–91.

reinforced the liturgical nexus between the adoration of the magi and the celebration of the Eucharist.³⁴

On the sixth of January, Christians who celebrated the Roman rite, including the citizens of Haarlem, commemorated the wise men's sojourn with a parade through city streets.³⁵ In addition, they regularly witnessed liturgical plays of the Epiphany (*Officium Stellae*). During these annual performances, three clerics dressed in exotic costumes would reenact the role of the magi, following a star suspended from the church ceiling. The actors knelt as they approached the altar, where Christ is perpetually re-presented in each celebration of the sacrament. On behalf of the people, they offered charitable donations to support the poor as well as the church, placing them on the table. Sometimes, a sculpture of the enthroned Madonna and Child would be placed on the altar. In some instances, the table would remain, like the manger, empty. An image of the Virgin holding Christ or live performers cast in the role would be placed off to the side. Within this scenario, the priestly actors would walk past the altar to adore the nearby King of kings. The audience might even follow the procession of the magi as their regal entourage.³⁶ Like the *oblatio sacerdotalis* and festive processions through city streets, these liturgical dramas encouraged the faithful to reimagine the Epiphany and reconsider how they might imitate the magi by bringing forth their gifts to Christ, who offers the greatest gift of all, salvation. These performances seem to have lessened the distance between the biblical past and the present. They effectively reinforced the notion that charity starts at home by apparently bringing the star of Bethlehem closer to earth and transporting the traveling magi into the here and now.

Geertgen's earliest version of *The Adoration of the Magi* (fig. 1) was produced around 1485.³⁷ The panel, which today is housed in the Rijks-

34. Maurice McNamee, *Vested Angels: Eucharistic Allusions in Early Netherlandish Paintings* (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 159–66.

35. In the Byzantine tradition, Theophany is celebrated on the sixth of January. This feast, unlike its Western counterpart, prioritizes the baptism of Christ over the adoration of the magi.

36. Ilene H. Forsyth, "Magi and Majesty: A Study of Romanesque Sculpture and Liturgical Drama," *Art Bulletin* 50 (1968): 215–22; and Ursula Nilgen, "The Epiphany and the Eucharist: On the Interpretation of Eucharistic Motifs in Medieval Epiphany Scenes," *Art Bulletin* 49 (1967): 311–16.

37. For more on this painting, see Albert Châtelet, *Early Dutch Painting: Painting in the Northern Netherlands in the Fifteenth Century*, trans. Christopher Brown and Anthony Turner (Secaucus, NJ: Wellfleet, 1980), 125–26; Gert Duwe, *Die Anbetung*

museum, has been slightly cropped but has suffered minimal damage. It measures approximately 1.0 m in height and 0.75 m in width. Unfortunately, it is impossible to determine whether it initially functioned as the central panel of an altarpiece or as a freestanding devotional painting. The oldest magus, representing Asia, which included the Holy Lands, is closest to the holy family. Nearly bald and beardless, the elderly king kneels on the ground and offers the Child a golden chalice laden with coins. Although he is adorned in exquisite garments, his exotic green headdress has been completely removed in respectful humility before the King of kings. The second magus bends slightly as he approaches Christ and his parents. He places his hand across his chest in admiration. The thick-bearded European king's crown has been pulled off his head and rests upon his shoulder. With the assistance of an anonymous blonde figure, he presents a golden jar of frankincense.³⁸ Behind him stands the third magus. The African king is farthest removed from the holy family. He stands upright, with his crown securely positioned on his head. In his right hand, the third magus holds a walking stick, reinforcing the length of his journey. He carries a crystalline container of myrrh in his left hand.

The third magus is extremely dark skinned. He has curly hair and wears an earring. Already in the eighth century, Pseudo-Bede had described one of the magi as being dark (*fuscus*), but it is difficult to discern whether the author was characterizing the wise man merely as swarthy or as black skinned.³⁹ Four hundred years later, the Benedictine nun Elizabeth of Schönau recounted two mystical visions of the adoration, but

der Heiligen Drei Könige in der niederländischen Malerei des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts (Frankfurt: Lang, 1994), 125–32; Henk van Os et al., *Netherlandish Art in the Rijksmuseum 1400–1600*, trans. Michael Hoyle (Zwolle: Waanders, 2000), 68–70; Stephan Kemperdinck and Jochen Sander, “The Winthethur Adoration of the Kings and Geertgen tot Sint Jans,” in Reinhard-Felice, *Venite Adoremus*, 36–38; and Lammertse and Giltaij, eds., *Vroege Hollanders*, 102–5. Châtelet alone believes that this painting is not by Geertgen's hand but is an imitation of the Prague painting produced by one of his followers. He attributes the Amsterdam panel to the Master of the Brunswick Diptych, whom he identifies as Jan Jansz.

38. These two figures are closely modeled after the second magus and assistant in the central panel of the Monforte Altarpiece produced by Hugo van der Goes (Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museum, ca. 1470).

39. Jacques-Paul Migne has misattributed this text to the Venerable Bede. See Pseudo-Bede, *Excerptiones Patrum* (PL 94:541). Cf. Kaplan, *The Rise of the Black Magus*, 26–30; and Joseph L. Koerner, “The Epiphany of the Black Magus circa 1500,”



Figure 1. Geertgen tot Sint Jans, *The Adoration of the Magi*, ca. 1485, 91.5 × 72 cm, oil on oak panel, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

in *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, ed. David Binman and Henry Louis Gates Jr. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 3.1:7–92.

said nothing about the wise men's physical appearance. Nonetheless, an anonymous prayer written by one of the nuns at Schönaun identifies King Balthazar as black (*niger*).⁴⁰ Unfortunately, this statement is also ambiguous. It may be a reference to the color of his hair or his skin. Popular texts such as *The Golden Legend* do not describe a black magus, nor is there sufficient evidence that he appeared in late medieval epiphany plays.⁴¹ Paul Kaplan persuasively argues that the black magus may derive from crusader tales of the legendary priestly king from Ethiopia named Prester John.⁴² The fabled monarch was believed to be a descendent of one of the magi. His legendary kingdom, it was thought, was located in Africa, south of Muslim-controlled territories. European crusaders hoped that one day they would discover Prester John and convince him to join them in the holy war against the Saracens. The fourteenth-century author John of Hildesheim was likely familiar with tales of Prester John. When he wrote the *History of the Three Kings* (*Historia Trium Regum*), sometime between 1364 and 1375, John of Hildesheim described Caspar as a black Ethiopian.⁴³ In the late fourteenth century, Bohemian and German painters also began to represent the third magus as a black man.⁴⁴ However, Dutch and Flemish artists did not adopt this practice until nearly one hundred years later. Geertgen tot Sint Jans was one of the first Netherlandish painters to depict the king as dark skinned.⁴⁵

In Geertgen's Amsterdam panel, the magi pay homage to the holy family. The doll-faced blonde Madonna wears a simple white dress, indicating her purity and chastity. Yet her garment is shrouded with a royal blue robe, affirming her royal title as the Queen of Heaven (*Regina Coeli*). Her majestic pose also reinforces her status as the Seat of Wisdom (*Sedes Sapientiae*), otherwise known as the Throne of Solomon. The Virgin Mary bears the Word of God incarnate. In addition, the white cloth beneath the Child is reminiscent of an altar cloth. She literally supports God in the

40. Friedrich Roth, *Die Visionen der hl. Elisabeth und die Schriften der Äbte Ekbert und Emecho von Schönaun* (Brno: Brünn, 1884), appendix 10, 176; Kehr, *Die Heiligen Drei Könige*, 2:223; and Kaplan, *The Rise of the Black Magus*, 29.

41. Kaplan, *The Rise of the Black Magus*, 19.

42. Ibid., 58–62.

43. John of Hildesheim, *The Three Kings of Cologne: An Early English Translation of the Historia Trium Regum* (New York: Kessinger, 2004).

44. Kaplan, *The Rise of the Black Magus*, 62–68.

45. The black Magus also appears in Hugo's Monforte Altarpiece.

flesh. As Christ's throne, the Madonna is the place where Jesus, who is the logos or word, dwells. She is the site where redemption occurs. Like the altar table, the paten, and the chalice, her lap holds the real presence of Christ.⁴⁶ The magi approach the Virgin and Child as if they were participating in the sacrament of the Mass.

The infant Jesus dips his hands into the chalice and fingers the coins that have been given to him. According to the liturgical calendar, the adoration occurred twelve days after his birth. However, the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew (16) offers another possibility, suggesting that the magi's visit occurred in the child's second year. If the latter option is true, this would help explain why Herod called for the slaughter of all Bethlehem's boys two years and younger (Matt 2:16). The figure of Jesus in the Amsterdam panel appears to be at an age somewhere in between these dates.

Although the Gospel of Matthew does not mention that Joseph was at the adoration, he stands humbly next to the Virgin in Geertgen's painting. Joseph is placed near the Madonna and Child, but he seems removed. His isolation is, of course, theologically important, for it reinforces the notion that he is not Christ's biological father. In Geertgen's painting, Joseph appears unexpectedly young. In most early Netherlandish paintings, he looks elderly, affirming the forfeiture of his virility. However, in Geertgen's panel, Joseph takes responsibility for his family. Like the early fifteenth-century mystical writings of Jean Gerson, the painting promotes Joseph as an ideal caregiver.⁴⁷ He stands by the Madonna and Child without any immediate benefits for himself. Joseph's arms are crossed in front of his torso to imply that he is not the recipient of the magi's donation. His walking stick reminds viewers of the arduous journey Joseph and Mary endured on the way to Bethlehem.

The foreground is barren with a sparse littering of architectural debris, effectively conveying the holy family's poverty. Geertgen imaginatively combines the ruins of a palace with the dilapidated stable. The fragmented arcade alludes to the once powerful house of David and the genealogy of Christ. It marks the rightful home for the King of kings. The single column behind the Madonna and Child seems to reinforce Saint Brigitta's mystical revelation of the nativity. Soon after the birth of the Messiah, Brigitta fore-

46. Carol Purtle, *The Marian Paintings of Jan van Eyck* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 3–15.

47. Jean Gerson, *Josephina*, ed. G. Matteo Roccati (Paris: LAMOP, 2001), CD-ROM.

sees the pillar of Christ's flagellation.⁴⁸ The column in Geertgen's painting may also allude to Christ's flagellation, an event deeply associated with his gift of self-sacrifice and atonement. Above the archway, two falcons build a nest amidst the architectural decay. These birds of prey are fierce hunters and deadly quick in their attacks. Falcons were readily compared to merciless pagans. Yet once tamed, the raptor's instincts, like those of Christian converts, are turned to good. The falcons atop the palace ruins are domesticated. They are in the midst of making a home, though they are surrounded by destruction. Like the magi, the birds give of themselves out of love. The Haarlem Hospitallers may have spiritually identified with the falcons as they considered their own conversion stories and the demands of monastic life.

Behind the stone architecture, fallen into disrepair is a simple wooden shed, the stable where Jesus was born. Inside the modest shelter, an ox and an ass eat hay from an elevated bin. Both animals ignore the proceedings. They remain unaware of the diplomatic visit. A solitary barn owl is perched in the rafters of the stable. The bird seems to loathe the daylight. Patiently waiting in the dark, the ruthless predator seems ready to prey upon the weak and vulnerable. Unlike the nesting falcons, the owl offers no adoration. The feathered creature of the night is only interested in taking advantage of defenseless others and has no love to share.

The foreground and background are separated by a pond or moat, surrounded by lush greenery and abundant waterfowl. Although it is filled with wildlife, the space seems extremely quiet and calm. The body of water effectively differentiates the sacred space of the holy family from the rest of the setting. On the other side of the pool, the three magi can be seen meeting at a crossroads. The parties do not encounter one another until they are close to the ruined palace, reinforcing Augustine's hypothesis that the magi traveled from three different directions. The position of the retinues seems to correspond to the location of the magi in the foreground. For instance, Melchior's entourage is placed directly behind him. Infrared reflectography reveals that the camel leading the procession was originally conceived as a horse.⁴⁹ This pictorial alteration reinforces the association between the eldest magus and Asia. It helps to differentiate the three continents from one another. As a narrative of conjoining forces, this encounter also elicits notions of Christian pilgrimage and crusade. After all, believers

48. *Liber caelestis* (Lübeck: Bartholomaeus Ghotan, 1492), 1.10.8

49. Van Os et al., *Netherlandish Art in the Rijksmuseum*, 68–70.

from a variety of locations can be seen gathering together as they reach the holiest of places. Although its precise function and initial placement remain unknown, Geertgen's Amsterdam panel would have likely given beholders opportunities to imitate the magi, to make spiritual journeys to a distant time and place in hopes of seeing manifestations of the divine.⁵⁰ Viewers are invited to look at the biblical past, reimagining themselves in the guise of the wise men. However, beholders are also encouraged to prepare for the future, to follow signs from God in anticipation of coming face to face with the sacred.

The panel may have been placed originally within the Haarlem commandery to foster empathetic identification with the magi among its members, encouraging them to give more of themselves in the name of Christ. Yet there is another possibility. Geertgen's painting may have been used as a gift. The Hospitallers may have offered the panel to another confraternity or to one of its wealthy donors in a diplomatic effort to strengthen social, political, and economic ties. If this is the case, the Haarlem knightly monks, unlike the biblical magi, likely expected a gift in return.⁵¹

Around 1490, Geertgen produced another version of the adoration, now housed in the National Gallery in Prague.⁵² The adoration served as the central panel of a triptych, measuring approximately 1.5 m in length

50. For more on late medieval notions of imaginative or spiritual pilgrimages, see Matthew Botvinick, "The Painting as Pilgrimage: Traces of a Subtext in the Work of Robert Campin and His Contemporaries," *Art History* 15 (1992): 1–18; Kathryn Rudy, *Virtual Pilgrimages in the Convent: Imagining Jerusalem in the Late Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011); and Henry Luttikhuisen, "Still Walking: Spiritual Pilgrimage, Early Netherlandish Painting and the Dynamics of Faith," in *Push Me, Pull You: Imaginative and Emotional Interaction in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art*, ed. Sarah Blick and Laura D. Gelfand (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 1:199–225.

51. For more on the problematic character of gifts, see Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. W. D. Hall (New York: Norton, 1990); Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Wills (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); and Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffery Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002).

52. James Snyder, "The Early Haarlem School of Painting: II. Geertgen tot Sint Jans," *Art Bulletin* 42 (1960): 121; Châtelet, *Early Dutch Painting*, 108–10; Olga Kotkovà, *Netherlandish Painting 1480–1600* (Prague: National Gallery, 1999), 70–71, illustrated summary catalog; Kemperdinck and Sander, "The Winthethur Adoration of the Kings," 37–41; Jaromír Šíp, *Meesterwerken uit Praag, 1450–1750: Drie Eeuwen*

when opened. Although all of the panels have received some cropping, both of the triptych's shutters have been severely truncated. Much of the top portion of these images has been lost. The exterior panels depict the annunciation in grisaille (fig. 2), a Netherlandish pictorial practice initiated by Robert Campin and Jan van Eyck. In Geertgen's painting, the Virgin Mary and the Archangel Gabriel appear in adjacent panels. They look like monumental stone sculptures. Painting highly illusionistic representations of sculpted forms has been interpreted in terms of *paragone*, competition between the arts.⁵³ Initially, exterior painted shutters were produced to protect more-expensive relief sculptures. They were secondary to sculpture. Nonetheless, the art of painting can trump the art of carving by representing *trompe l'oeil* sculptures. Paintings can be made superior to sculptures because they can readily mimic monochromatic sculptures, whereas sculptures cannot imitate polychromatic paintings with ease. The practice of painting sculptures on the exterior of triptychs may have promoted competition between the arts, but it also provided a complementary addition to church interiors that included stone sculptures.

As Lynn Jacobs notes, the triptych offers us two sides of a threshold. Because they could be opened and closed, early Netherlandish triptychs were typically described as paintings with doors (*dueren*).⁵⁴ While the exterior panels of a triptych might be in grisaille, interior panels were always polychromatic. This pictorial contrast has been interpreted in a variety of ways. Molly Teasdale Smith believed this difference was closely tied to the liturgical calendar.⁵⁵ During Lent, triptychs would remain closed. The gray somber tonality of the grisaille panels reinforced sentiments associated with the season. At the end of Lent, on Maundy Thursday, the triptych would be opened, revealing its interior in a celebration of color. Hans Belting and Christiane Kruse, by contrast, interpret the distinction between exterior and interior in terms of vision. To their understanding,

Vlaamse en Hollandse (Bruges: Groeningemuseum, 1974), 76–78, exhibition catalog; and Lammertse and Giltaij, eds., *Vroege Hollanders*, 106–9.

53. Rudolf Preimesberger, "Zu Jan van Eycks Diptychon der Sammlung Thyssen-Bornemisza," *ZKG* 54 (1991): 459–89.

54. Lynn Jacobs, *Opening Doors: The Early Netherlandish Triptych Reinterpreted* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), 3–10.

55. Molly Teasdale Smith, "The Use of Grisaille as a Lenten Observance," *Marsyas* 8 (1957–59): 43–54.



Figure 2. Geertgen tot Sint Jans, *The Adoration of the Magi Triptych* (exterior panels), ca. 1490; right panel: 70.8 × 38.8 cm; left panel: 71 × 38.7 cm; oil on oak panel, Národní Galerie, Prague. © Prague Castle Administration, Photo: Jan Gloc.

the exterior panels serve the outer eye.⁵⁶ By representing ecclesiastical sculpture, they offer a view of something tangible to corporeal sight. The interior, however, appeals to the inner eye. It provides a spiritual vision of that which is not immediately visible. In this regard, Geertgen's annunciation is an appropriate subject, for it represents the greatest threshold, the moment of the incarnation.

Christ's entry into this world provides access to the world to come. Jesus even defines himself as the way. In a confrontation with the Pharisees, Christ proclaims, "I am the door. By me, if any man enter in, he shall

56. Hans Belting and Christiane Kruse, *Die Erfindung des Gemäldes: Das erste Jahrhundert der niederländischen Malerei* (Munich: Hirmer, 1994), 60–62.

be saved" (John 10:9 DRA). Through him, believers will obtain eternal salvation. The Virgin Mary has also been compared to a door. Numerous medieval authors claimed that perpetual virginity was predicted in Ezekiel's Old Testament vision: "This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall pass through it: because the Lord the God of Israel hath entered in by it, and it shall be shut" (Ezek 44:2 DRA).⁵⁷ As the closed door (*porta clausa*), the Madonna's body is as impenetrable as the mystery of Christ's dual nature.

Yet the Virgin Mary was also the door to heaven (*porta coeli*). According to Bonaventure, "No one can enter heaven if he does not pass through Mary, who is the door of it." (*Comm. Luc.* 1.70 [translation mine]). Through the birth of her son, the Madonna offers grace, the means of redemption. She reopens the possibility of heaven that had been shut by the sin of Eve. Geertgen may not have read theological texts describing the Virgin Mary and Christ as doors, but he would have been familiar with these concepts through sermons, hymns, and liturgical prayers. In addition, the Netherlandish artist and his patrons believed that they were called to open the doors of their hearts in anticipation of meeting with God, who paradoxically, was always already there.⁵⁸

According to Marius Rimmele, the act of opening a triptych's exterior wings offers an epiphany by exposing the work's hidden interior.⁵⁹ In the revealed central panel, the adoration of the magi can be seen. As Klaus Lankheit suggests, triptychs are hierarchic in format. The exterior is secondary to the interior, and the side panels are subordinate to the central one.⁶⁰ In the case of the Prague triptych, the representations of Saint Bavo and Saint Adrian are lower in rank than that of the magi (fig. 3). The appearance of the donors in the side panels does not merely show their wealth and presumed piety; it also reveals their desire to participate in mystical visions. Though removed from the central panel, the couple looks

57. For example, Saint Ambrose, *Exh. virginit.* 8.52–53; and Augustine, *Sermon* 195. Cf. Anselm Salzer, *Die Sinnbilder und Beiworte Mariens in der deutschen Literatur und lateinischen Hymnpoesie des Mittelalters* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1980).

58. Larry Silver and Henry LuttikhuiZEN, "The Quality of Mercy: Representations of Charity in Early Netherlandish Art," *Studies in Iconography* 29 (2008): 216–48.

59. Marius Rimmele, *Das Triptychon als Metaphor, Körper und Ort: Semantisierungen eines Bildträgers* (Munich: Fink, 2010).

60. Klaus Lankheit, *Das Triptychon als Pathosformel* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1959).

at the adoration with the eyes of their heart, prompting them to remember the biblical story and discover its sacred meanings within themselves.⁶¹ In their meditation, the donors hope to experience God's love, the greatest gift offered at the adoration.



Figure 3. Geertgen tot Sint Jans, *The Adoration of the Magi Triptych* (interior panels), ca. 1490; central panel: 111.2 × 69.5 cm; right panel: 70.8 × 38.8 cm; left panel: 71 × 38.7 cm; oil on oak panel, Národní Galerie, Prague. © Prague Castle Administration, Photo: Jan Gloc.

Although this painting of the adoration shares numerous characteristics with Geertgen's Amsterdam panel, there are more significant though sometimes subtle differences. The stable is much more prominent in the Prague *Adoration of the Magi Triptych*. Little attention is given to

61. Craig Harbison, "Visions and Meditations in Early Flemish Painting," *Simiolus* 15 (1985): 87–118; Reindert Falkenburg, "The Household of the Soul: *Conformitas* in the Mérode Altarpiece," in *Early Netherlandish Painting at the Crossroads: A Critical Look at Current Methodologies*, ed. Maryan W. Ainsworth (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2001), 2–17; and Bret Rothstein, *Sight and Spirituality in Early Netherlandish Painting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

the ruined palace of David. Instead of being placed in a courtyard, the seated Virgin and Child reside within a simple shelter. Joseph is absent. However, he may have been present in the original composition but later cut from the panel when the triptych was mutilated. All three of the magi are located within the stable without walls. Melchior and the second king kneel in the center of the room, while the crownless black magus stands upright at the edge of the structure. He is positioned significantly farther away from the Madonna and Child than the elder two magi. Although the poverty of the holy family is heightened in this panel, the wise men are undeterred. They do not appear to feel deluded, disappointed in their discovery of the King of kings. There is no scandal. On the contrary, the three royals humble themselves. They act as if there is no difference between themselves and the modest shepherds who adore the child on another occasion. The incarnation is often described in terms of *kenosis*, for God has emptied himself in humility, taking the form of a servant (Phil 2:6–7). Furthermore, through an act of self-sacrifice, Christ will later accept death on behalf of humanity. The King of kings in Geertgen's panel has given up the riches and powers of heaven. In response, the magi defer to God, negating their own authority and denying their prestige as learned priests. As described in *The Golden Legend*, "The wise men gave up their wisdom in order to become wise."⁶² In this panel, unlike the Amsterdam painting, Melchior ceremonially kisses the infant's hand in a pledge of loyalty. He appears to give Christ a greater gift than gold. He offers his willingness to serve God as long as he lives.

Furthermore, the Prague *Adoration of the Magi Triptych* seems more militaristic. The display of weapons is much more explicit. A large scabbard prominently dangles from the waist of the second magus in the foreground. A small young traveler in the middle of the painting holds an elongated halberd across his shoulder. The retinues of the magi have already been gathering in the town of Bethlehem. In the background, the nearby city of Jerusalem is easily identified. The large rotunda structure is likely the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. During the late fifteenth century, it was the most important pilgrimage site under Hospitaller protection and care. The Prague panel, with its greater interest in the taking of vows and military defense, seems to strengthen the connection between the knightly monks and the biblical magi.

62. Da Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, 1:83.

Yet the male donor in the adjacent panel is not a member of the Haarlem confraternity. Albert Châtelet has attempted to identify the man as Adrian van Barkenesse, a wealthy citizen who married Margriet Peter Roepersdochter around 1467.⁶³ In his view Geertgen's triptych may have been produced to commemorate their marriage. His attribution and dating of the panels, however, are unpersuasive. Technical evidence strongly suggests that the panel was produced around 1490. If the donors, in fact, are Adrian and Margriet, then they likely would appear to be much older. The identity of the patrons was probably placed in the lost portion of the panels. Although the couple cannot be named with any precision, they were likely sympathetic allies of the Hospitallers.

In the left panel, the male donor kneels in front of Saint Bavo, the patron saint of the city of Haarlem. According to medieval hagiography, this seventh-century saint came from Frankish nobility. He was a soldier and had a wife and a daughter. His military career, however, was marked with brutality. As a warrior, Saint Bavo lacked self-discipline. He was only concerned with satisfying his own desires. Yet the soldier's life dramatically changed after the unexpected loss of his wife. Soon after her death, he attended a sermon given by Saint Amand, Bishop of Maastricht. Saint Amand's preaching persuaded Bavo to turn his life around. Upon his conversion, Saint Bavo gave up his quest for earthly rewards and joined Amand in spreading the gospel. Near the end of his life, the traveling missionary joined a monastery in Ghent, where he later died.⁶⁴ Centuries after his demise, however, Saint Bavo would return to serve Haarlem as a sacred apparition. According to legend, he helped defend the city from the Kenemers, attackers from western Frisia, in 1274.⁶⁵

Geertgen represents Bavo as a warrior saint. Wearing armor and wielding a large sword, he is ever ready to defend the faith. A tamed falcon

63. Châtelet, *Early Dutch Painting*, 219.

64. Alban Butler, *Lives of the Saints*, ed. Herbert Thurston and Donald Attwater (New York: Kennedy & Sons, 1956), 4:5–6.

65. This legendary event is commemorated in an anonymous painting dated 1673, roughly one hundred years after the Spanish siege of Haarlem. The picture is now housed in the Haarlem Cathedral of Saint Bavo, not to be confused with the current Grote Kerk, which fell into Protestant hands in 1578, less than twenty years after the Haarlem bishopric was established. See Mia Mochizuki, *The Netherlandish Image after Iconoclasm, 1566–1672: Material Religion in the Dutch Golden Age* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008); and Angela Vanhaelen, *The Wake of Iconoclasm: Painting the Church in the Dutch Republic* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012).

perches on the saint's left hand. The presence of the bird reinforces the Bavo's noble birth. Aristocrats often used these domesticated birds of prey in hunts. However, in this context, the falcon also marks Bavo's conversion. The saint also wears a peacock-feathered crown. Since antiquity, peacocks have been associated with paradise. The bird was linked to the promise of eternal life. After every winter, its colorful plumage returned, and its flesh was considered incorruptible. Not surprisingly, peacocks appear on numerous sarcophagi. These birds were also compared to the Queen of Heaven, who offers the means of resurrection. Furthermore, the peacock's tail is decorated with spotted patterns resembling eyes, suggesting divine omniscience. Consequently, Bavo's feathered crown not only reveals his heavenly immortality and his spiritual rebirth or conversion on earth, but it may also allude to his continual vigilance, his desire to watch over those who love God.

With his hands folded in prayer, the male donor and his patron saint look toward holy figures enclosed within a stable from the confines of King David's ruined palace. Like the magi, they long to adore the Virgin Mary and Christ child. In the background of the left panel, an ox and an ass can be seen in proximity to the empty manger. Neither animal is mentioned in New Testament accounts of the nativity. However, the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew (14.1) refers to the presence of the ox and the ass as the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy that "the ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel has not known me, and my people have not understood" (Isa 1:3 DR). In Geertgen's painting, the ass, looking for food, dips its head into the empty manger. Meanwhile, the ox gently lifts its head in search of the Messiah. Like the magi, the ox recognizes that which remains hidden to the Jews.

On the right interior panel of the triptych, a kneeling female donor looks at the adoration. Like her male counterpart, the woman is accompanied by a warrior saint dressed in armor. The figure of Saint Adrian stands behind her. According to *The Golden Legend*, Saint Adrian served as the commander of the Roman imperial guard.⁶⁶ As one of his duties, Adrian encountered imprisoned Christians who had been sentenced to death. He was so impressed by their willingness to accept torture and martyrdom over earthly reward that he converted. Proclaiming his faith, Adrian joined his former captives in jail. Upon hearing the news, his wife, Natalie,

66. Da Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, 2:160–64.

who was already a Christian, rejoiced. She frequently visited her imprisoned husband. Adrian was severely tortured, but he remained steadfast in his faith. In response, the pagan emperor, infuriated by his former commander's betrayal, decreed that an anvil should break Adrian's limbs. Throughout the ordeal, the saint stayed strong and brave. Finally, his tormentor cut off both of Adrian's feet as well as one of his hands. Soon after, he died from his injuries. In Geertgen's painting, Adrian holds an anvil, the instrument of his martyrdom. A lion rests at the saint's feet, indicating Adrian's leonine courage.

The adoration of the magi is reflected on his helmet and breastplate. Geertgen is not the only early Netherlandish artist to employ this artistic technique. There are numerous examples of images produced in Bruges. For instance, reflections in armor can also be seen in Hans Memling's *Last Judgment* (Gdansk, Muzeum Narodowe, ca. 1467–1471), Memling's Shrine of Saint Ursula (Bruges, Sint-Janshospitaal, 1489), and in Gerard David's *Justice of Cambyzes* (Bruges, Groeningemuseum, 1498). The first panel painter to employ this technique was Jan van Eyck. In his painting of *The Madonna and Child with Canon Joris van der Paele* (Bruges, Groeningemuseum, 1436), Jan van Eyck allows the sheen of light to play off the armor of Saint George, the donor's patron saint. Van Eyck's self-portrait is reflected in the reverse side of the warrior saint's shield. Robert Koch has suggested that Geertgen may have traveled to Bruges and trained as an apprentice there.⁶⁷ Unfortunately, there is insufficient evidence to prove that this is true. The Haarlem painter could have discovered this pictorial invention from an unknown third party.

In the Netherlands, the origin of panel painting is closely linked to the making of shields. The Middle Dutch word for painting *schilderij* derives from *schild* or "shield." Panel painting was thought to have developed from the decoration of shields. Geertgen's preoccupation with light gleaming from armor is not merely a display of artistic skill. On the contrary, it is deeply connected to his understanding of Christian devotion. The gleaming may have seemed fleeting to corporeal vision, but it also offered an appropriate image for spiritual reflection.

Throughout the Middle Ages, the term *mirror* appeared in devotional tracts from the anonymous *Speculum humanae salvationis* (*Mirror of Human Salvation*) to Hendrik Herp's *Spiegel der Volcomenheit* (*The Mirror*

67. Robert Koch, "Geertgen tot Sint Jans in Bruges," *Art Bulletin* 33 (1951): 259.

of *Perfection*).⁶⁸ Frequently, the word was employed to convey a clear picture or faithful copy of reality, in hope of encouraging sinners to seek redemption. To mirror was also to mimic or imitate. In this regard, the Virgin Mary was an ideal likeness, for she was the *speculum sine macula* (the mirror without stain). As stated in the Wisdom of Solomon, “She is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness” (7:26 RSV). Geertgen’s panel invites viewers to model their lives after the Virgin Mary by deferring to Christ, as the magi and Saint Adrian have done. They are called to give themselves up so that the presence of God can be revealed in their words and their actions. The saint’s armor in Geertgen’s panel is like a mirror inserted into a pilgrimage badge.⁶⁹ It seems to capture the aura of a sacred time and place, enabling a faraway moment from a distant land to enter the here and now. Just as Saint Adrian’s helmet and breastplate offer a reflection of the adoration, beholders are encouraged to represent the story of the magi within their minds and hearts.

The right panel of Geertgen’s painting also includes a *hortus conclusus* behind the female donor and her patron saint. Although the enclosed garden seems rather sparse, its apparent emptiness may offer positive connotations. It elicits notions of humility, purity, and cleanliness, virtues associated with the Virgin Mary. The garden is spotless, like a mirror. Within this sealed courtyard, a large pool of water can be seen. It appears to be crystal clear and smooth as glass, untroubled by waves or ripples (Rev 22:1). Although Rupert of Deutz and other medieval theologians referred to Mary as the *fons hortorum* described in Song 4:12, there is no fountain in Geertgen’s panel (*Comm. Cant.* 4.16).⁷⁰ Nonetheless, the depiction of a tranquil pool in the midst of the secluded garden may have reinforced the notion that the Virgin contained the waters of life.

The peacock perched on the garden wall seems to complement Saint Bavo’s feathered crown and likely alludes to the Queen of Heaven. Its

68. For a more extensive study of medieval references to mirrors, see Heinrich Schwarz, “The Mirror of the Artist and the Mirror of the Devout,” in *Studies in the History of Art Dedicated to William E. Suida on His Eightieth Birthday* (London: Phaidon, 1959), 90–105; and Herbert Kessler, “Speculum,” *Speculum* 86 (2011): 1–41.

69. For more on the use of mirrors in pilgrimage badges, see Brian Spencer, *Pilgrimage Souvenirs and Secular Badges* (London: Boydell & Brewer; Museum of London, 1998).

70. See Rupert of Deutz, *Commentaria in Cantica Cantorum*, ed. Hrabanus Haacke, CCCM 26 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1974), 92.

position on the ledge invites comparisons to the *sedes sapientiae* and the promise of paradise. The bird encourages us to oscillate between memories of the past and prophecies for the future.⁷¹ As mentioned previously, the triptych's donors can no longer be named. However, the size of the existing panels suggests that the work was commissioned to serve as an epitaph, paying homage to the dead. The peacock above the female donor may imply that she is now deceased. On the other hand, it may indicate that she is alive and well, striving to imitate the Virgin Mary as she anticipates a future adoration of the Christ child, who paradoxically is always already within her.

Geertgen's third painting of the adoration (fig. 4), measuring approximately 30 m × 20 cm, is considerably smaller than his other two versions.⁷² Unfortunately, the panel has been severely damaged. The figure of the black magus, for instance, no longer survives. If Geertgen represented the magi's entourage, this too has been lost. Despite its mutilation, or perhaps because of it, the panel provides a more intimate look at the adoration.

In this painting Geertgen approaches the holy family differently. The figure of Joseph is considerably older than in the Amsterdam panel. He also stands alone on the outside of the stable. Like the beholder, Joseph appears to be looking at the scene rather than participating in it. Yet Geertgen's composition makes the viewer feel closer to the event than Christ's adoptive father. By contrast, the Madonna seems closer to us. She is no longer enthroned as the *sedes sapientiae*. The Virgin Mary appears to sit on the ground in humility.⁷³ Her placement on the stable's dirt floor reinforces her poverty. Brought down to earth, the Queen of Heaven elicits a greater degree of tenderness and intimacy. Finally, the Christ child does not merely sit on a white cloth, a posture loaded with Eucharistic connotations; he appears to be wrapped in it. Although his enfoldment in swaddling clothes can evoke premonitions of his entombment, it simultaneously suggests the compassionate care of the Virgin.

The wise men in the Cleveland painting provide another significant departure. In the Amsterdam and Prague depictions of the second magus,

71. Cf. Alfred Acres, "The Columba Altarpiece and the Time of the World," *Art Bulletin* 80 (1998): 422–51.

72. Châtelet, *Early Dutch Painting*, 114–15; Kemperdinck and Sander, "The Winthethur Adoration of the Kings," 40–44; and Lammertse and Giltaij, eds., *Vroege Hollanders*, 98–101.

73. Cf. Millard Meiss, "The Madonna of Humility," *Art Bulletin* 18 (1936): 435–65.



Figure 4. Geertgen tot Sint Jans, *The Adoration of the Magi*, ca. 1490, 31 × 19.4 cm, oil on oak panel, Cleveland Museum of Art.

the man's headdress is already removed, resting on his shoulder. By contrast, in the Cleveland picture, he is in the process of removing his headdress. Although this difference may seem minimal, it marks a greater con-

cern for the representation of action. The figure of Melchior, the eldest of the magi, is even more telling. He does not offer a chalice of gold coins, nor does he kiss the Christ's hand in allegiance. On the contrary, Melchior gently bows his head and offers a heartfelt prayer. His gift seems less ritualistic, more personal.⁷⁴ The balding magus opens himself to the manifestation of God. He looks beyond the call of duty, seeking the divine with the eyes of his heart. Through an act of self-deference, putting the other first, Melchior prays that God, who is always already there, will enter and inhabit his heart, enabling him to give more. In the kenotic gesture of prayer, the eldest magus strives to abandon himself and make room for God. Although he is in physical proximity to the infant Jesus, the wise man longs to be nearer to him, to be more present to the divine than he already is.

The intimate Cleveland *The Adoration of the Magi* would have compelled knightly monks and their allies to identify with those who seek the presence of grace through self-sacrifice and prayerful dedication. Although it is impossible to determine who commissioned the panel or decide where it was originally located, we can establish why this picture of the adoration of the magi would have appealed to individuals affiliated with the Haarlem Brotherhood of Saint John. Like the Amsterdam panel and the Prague triptych, it offered opportunities for viewers to become wise men, to give and receive the infinite gift of love.

Yet the Haarlem brotherhood would not last. During the Spanish siege of Haarlem (1573), the commandery was partially destroyed. Geertgen's monumental altarpiece was severely damaged, and some of his other paintings were lost. Although the commandery survived, it would soon face additional challenges. In the late sixteenth century, Calvinists gained administrative control of the city. These Protestant magistrates quickly closed all of Haarlem's monasteries, with a single exception. Against their wishes, one cloister, the Commandery of Saint John, was allowed to remain open. City officials did not immediately confiscate Hospitaller property, because they lacked the legal right to do so. The commander of the knightly monastery possessed princely privilege and had legal sovereignty

74. For more on prayer, see Jean-Louis Chrétien, "The Wounded Word: The Phenomenology of Prayer," in *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn": The French Debate*, ed. Dominique Janicaud (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 147–75; and Bruce Ellis Benson and Norman Wirzba, eds., *The Phenomenology of Prayer* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005).

over all of its properties. Consequently, the local magistrates were forced to tolerate the confraternity's existence. Nonetheless, they ensured that no new members would be permitted to join the brotherhood. In 1625, at the death of its commander, the cloister was closed, and its properties were inherited by the city. Today, the Haarlem commandery has nearly disappeared. Only the confraternity's chapel remains. Although the building no longer serves as a house of worship, it functions as the archival center of North Holland, potentially offering curious historians marvelous glimpses of the past.

As George Kubler has noted, "Knowing the past is as astonishing as knowing the stars."⁷⁵ The history of art, like astronomy, is preoccupied with present appearances of past events. Our observations are always belated. Light offers the opportunity for stellar apparitions, but it takes time to reach viewers. Geertgen's paintings can currently be seen in museums, but they were originally located elsewhere.

Interpretation gives proximity to that which appears remote.⁷⁶ It makes the faraway seem nearby. In this regard, interpretation resembles travel, a spatial crossing of temporal differences. Yet time is not an easy phenomenon to describe. Everything happens in time, but temporality does not show itself. It remains invisible. Although time can be measured by distance, a passing from one place to another, it is ultimately, as Saint Augustine has suggested, something experienced within us. Time is revealed in our memories of the past, our awareness of the present, and our expectations for the future (*Conf.* 11.1–31, especially 21). Geertgen's panels offer epiphanies of time. Not only do his paintings re-present the biblical narrative of the adoration of magi and manifest the spiritual pilgrimages of his patrons, they also provide belated beholders astonishing opportunities to reimagine their own place in the world. In the words of the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset, "To be surprised, to wonder, is to begin to understand."⁷⁷ Perhaps that is the greatest gift of painting after all.

75. George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), 19.

76. Cf. Paul Ricoeur, *From Text to Action*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson, *Essays in Hermeneutics 2* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1991), esp. 75–88.

77. José Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses* (New York: Norton, 1957), 12.

“EXACTITUDE AND FIDELITY”?
PAINTINGS OF *CHRIST HEALING THE BLIND* BY
NICOLAS POUSSIN AND PHILIPPE DE CHAMPAIGNE*

James Clifton

In a lecture of January 7, 1668, to the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture, Philippe de Champaigne famously criticized Nicolas Poussin for his failure to adhere faithfully to sacred history in his painting of *Rebecca and Eliezer* of ca. 1648 (in the Louvre), specifically for not including the camels mentioned in the biblical text, which deserved to be shown, he said, in order to prove the exactitude and the fidelity of the painter in a true subject.¹ Champaigne might well have attended Sebastien Bourdon’s lecture on Poussin’s *Christ Healing the Blind* of 1650 (also in the Louvre; see fig. 1), held at the academy a month earlier, on December 3, 1667, at which an unnamed interlocutor levied a similar criticism, arguing that the artist had “not expressed [the subject] with all the grandeur and all the circumstances that it should entail,” because the miracle was performed in the presence of “an infinity of people” following Christ, but Poussin

* Versions of this paper were presented at the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies at The Ohio State University, Brigham Young University, and the annual meeting of the Renaissance Society of America. I am grateful to the participants on those occasions for their comments and suggestions.

1. Alain Mérot, ed., *Les Conférences de l’Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture au XVII^e siècle*, 2nd ed. (Paris: École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts, 2003), 130–39, esp. 136: “Ce qui méritait bien d’être marqué dans le tableau pour prouver l’exactitude et la fidélité du peintre dans un sujet véritable.” The substance of Champaigne’s lecture (*conférence*) is known only from Guillet de Saint-George’s summary, first published in 1682.

painted only three apostles, the two blind men, four other figures, and a woman who seems inappropriately indifferent to the action.²



Figure 1. Nicolas Poussin, *Christ Healing the Blind*, 1650. Oil on canvas, 119 cm × 175.5 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre, INV7281.

Another critic rationalized Poussin's choices by suggesting that the crowd is present but some steps away from Christ and hidden by the buildings; that a large number of figures would prevent a clear view of Christ and the blind men; and that Poussin, simply intending to represent Christ healing the two blind men, found it sufficient to omit "accessories of no importance." It was also suggested that no crowd was called for, because Poussin represented not the healing of the blind men at Jericho, in Judea (recounted in Matt 20:29–34, Mark 10:46–52, and Luke 18:35–43) but instead the healing of the blind men at Capernaum, on the Sea of Galilee (recounted in Matt 9:27–31).³ This suggestion led to a long discussion

2. Ibid., 120: "Il lui semblait ne l'avoir pas exprimé avec toute la grandeur et toutes les circonstances qui doivent l'accompagner." The *conférence* and pursuing discussion were reported by the academy secretary, André Félibien.

3. For the wordings of the biblical texts, see the appendix at the end of this essay. Anthony Blunt suggests that the Capernaum hypothesis may have been proposed by

about whether or not the miracle at Capernaum took place in or only at the home of Jairus, as well as how Capernaum and Jericho might be distinguished topographically.

Paintings can be readings or critiques of other paintings, and Poussin's painting was “corrected”—or at least some of its ambiguities were removed—by a younger painter, the little-known Étienne Villequin, in a small painting on copper (fig. 2). He was in Rome at the time Poussin executed his painting there but probably knew it and was responding to it following the *conférence* at the academy in Paris in 1667.⁴ Villequin more specifically illustrates Mark's account of the miracle, which names a single blind man and notes that he cast off his garment (hanging on the wall at left) before approaching Christ.⁵

Fundamental to the comments on these issues at Bourdon's lecture, regardless of whether they were critical or supportive of Poussin, is the assumption that both verisimilitude and fidelity to Scripture are desirable. As André Félibien summarized one interlocutor's remarks on Poussin's

Félibien himself (Anthony Blunt, *The Paintings of Nicolas Poussin: A Critical Catalogue* [London: Phaidon, 1966], 52–53 [cat. 74]). Arguments for a Galilean setting (either Capernaum or Tiberias) have been forcefully advanced by Elizabeth Cropper, “Toucher le regard: ‘Le Christ guérissant les aveugles’ et le discours de la peinture,” in *Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665)*, ed. Alain Mérot (Paris: Documentation Française, 1996), 2:611–14; and Elizabeth Cropper and Charles Dempsey, *Nicolas Poussin: Friendship and the Love of Painting* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 208–9. These arguments notwithstanding, the painting is still referred to as *Les Aveugles de Jéricho* at the Louvre, <http://tinyurl.com/SBL4819m1>. The inscription on the undated engraving after Poussin's painting, by Guillaume Chasteau (1635–1683), is specific: “Jesus sortant de Jericho toucha les yeux de deux aveugles, et aussy tost ilz virent.”

4. According to early sources (Félibien and Brienne), Poussin's painting was executed in 1650 in Rome, where the artist spent most of his career, for a merchant from Lyon, the silk dealer Bernardin Reynon. It was in the collection of the Duke of Richelieu by 1662, and was acquired by King Louis XIV in 1665, after which time it became one of Poussin's most celebrated pictures. See Gilles Chomer, “Un Poussin exemplaire: *Les aveugles de Jéricho*,” in *Autour de Poussin*, ed. G. Chomer and S. Laveissière, *Les dossiers du Musée du Louvre: Exposition-dossier du département des Peintures 45* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1994), 73–91.

5. *Ibid.*, 80, 91. While Chomer draws attention to Villequin's use of the account in Mark, which specifies that Jesus is coming out of Jericho, he seems to mistake the setting of that account for Capernaum, and the caption of the picture calls it “*Jésus guérissant l'aveugle de Capharnaüm, dit à tort Jésus guérissant les aveugles de Jéricho*.”



Figure 2. Étienne Villequin, *Christ Healing the Blind Man of Jericho*. Oil on copper, 31.7 × 42 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre, INV8447.

Christ Healing the Blind, there are some circumstances that the painter cannot change without risking criticism.

But especially in what concerns the mysteries of our religion and the miracles of Jesus Christ, he must retain all the fidelity possible and never diverge from what passes for established and what is already known by most of the world; because in this encounter, undertaking to teach with the strokes of his brush what an historian reports with his writings, he must neither add nor subtract anything from what the Scripture obliges us to believe, but rather to show, as much as he can, all the circumstances of his subject.⁶

6. Mérot, ed., *Conférences*, 122–23: “Mais que, quand il s’agit d’exposer une histoire aux yeux de tout le monde, il y a des circonstances qu’un peintre ne peut changer sans se mettre au hasard qu’on y trouve à redire, principalement dans celles où il doit paraître le fidèle historien de quelque événement qui s’est passé de nos jours ou dans le temps les plus éloignés. Mais surtout dans ce qui regarde les mystères de notre religion et les miracles de Jésus-Christ, il doit conserver toute la fidélité possible et jamais ne s’écarter de ce qui passe pour constant et qui est déjà connu de beaucoup de monde; car en cette rencontre, entreprenant d’enseigner par les traits de son pinceau ce qu’un

Understood too broadly, this statement is arrant nonsense. Scripture is laconic, and the artist has to add things to make his work visually and narratively coherent. He might also leave things out for the same reason. But what is really at issue here is “what the Scripture obliges us to believe,” which should offer painters a fairly wide latitude in illustrating—and therefore interpreting—Scripture.

Exegetes have exploited the same latitude. The various interpretations—literal, allegorical, tropological, anagogical, symbolic, and mystical—available to Catholics in the mid-seventeenth century are usefully gathered in the so-called Great Commentary of the Jesuit theologian, Cornelius a Lapide (1567–1637), Professor of Holy Scripture at Leuven and then Rome, who worked on it for decades, up until his death. His most extensive comments on Christ healing the blind in the Synoptic Gospels occur in response to Matt 20:29–34, first published posthumously in Antwerp in 1639. He describes several allegorical interpretations of the two blind men near Jericho. According to Origen (cited by Ambrose), the two men were Judah and Israel, “who before the coming of Christ were blind, because they saw not the true Word which was contained in the law and the prophets.”⁷ Hrabanus and Augustine, however, understood them to be the Jews and the Gentiles, “for they were both ignorant of the way of salvation.”⁸

Chrysostom understood them to be the gentiles only. Cornelius also describes a tropological interpretation: the two men can be understood as “the two-fold blindness of the affections and of the understanding. For the blind affections seize the intellect and blind it, so that it judges what is to be done by its desires, which is forbidden by charity.”⁹ To the allegorical and tropological interpretations, Lapide, quoting Gregory, adds the symbolic: “Blind is the human race ...; it endures the darkness of its damnation, not knowing the clarity of celestial light. Nevertheless it is illuminated by

historien rapporte dans ses écrits, il ne doit rien ajouter ni diminuer à ce que l'Écriture nous oblige de croire, mais plutôt marquer autant qu'il le peut toutes les circonstances de son sujet.”

7. Cornelius a Lapide, *The Holy Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, trans. Thomas W. Mossman, rev. and completed by Michael J. Miller (Fitzwilliam, NH: Loreto, 2008), 2:309. Lapide further comments on blindness in response to John 9: Cornelius a Lapide, *The Holy Gospel according to Saint John*, trans. Thomas W. Mossman, rev. and completed by Michael J. Miller (Fitzwilliam, NH: Loreto, 2008), 367–89.

8. Lapide, *The Holy Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 2:309.

9. Ibid., 2:310.

the presence of its Redeemer, so that it already sees by desire the joys of internal light and sets out on the path of good works along the way of life.”¹⁰ Lapide cites Gregory for a mystical interpretation of the great multitude, who attempted to quieten the blind men who were calling for Christ, as the desires and vices that drown the voice of the praying heart.¹¹

Augustine explained the perseverance of the blind men morally, as good Christians beginning to live well and despising the world, overcoming bad and lukewarm Christians.¹² Of the blind men’s expressed wish that their eyes be opened, Augustine (quoted by Lapide) says, “The whole object of life is the healing of the eyes of the heart so that we may behold God.”¹³ Jerome, mystically, identifies here the man asking to “see the delight of the Lord and, seeing, [that he] may visit His temple” (paraphrasing Ps 26:4). The man blinded by sin and concupiscence prays “to see the baseness of sin, the vileness of concupiscence, the worthlessness of pleasure, the fierceness of hell-fire,” on the one hand, and on the other, “the blessedness of paradise, the eternity of glory; so that I may despise all concupiscence, and aim at the practice of virtue.”¹⁴ It is a veritable groaning board of interpretations from which the reader—and viewer—might choose.

Most of the critical attention to Poussin’s painting from the seventeenth century to the present has focused less on its exegetical possibilities than on its formal qualities, especially Poussin’s use of light and color, with compelling comparisons now drawn with the diagram of colors in Athanasius Kircher’s *Ars magna Lvcis et Vmbrae* of 1646, and some modern scholars have also seen in it a thematization of the act of looking at a painting.¹⁵ Biblical exegetes and modern scholars of Poussin’s painting say surprisingly little about Christ’s touching the blind man’s eye, which one scholar

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid., 2:310–11.

12. Ibid., 2:311.

13. Ibid., 2:312.

14. Ibid., 2:313.

15. See, for example, Oskar Bätschmann, “Farbengenese und Primärfarbenentrias in Nicolas Poussins ‘die Heilung der Blinden,’” in *Von Farbe und Farben: Albert Knoepfli zum 70. Geburtstag* (Zurich: Manesse, 1980), 329–36; Martin Kemp, *The Science of Art: Optical Themes in Western Art from Brunelleschi to Seurat* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 280–81; Cropper, “Toucher le regard”; Cropper and Dempsey, *Nicolas Poussin*, 205–25; and Christopher Braider, *The Matter of Mind: Reason and Experience in the Age of Descartes* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 82–88.

has neatly described as "the wonderfully tender, healing gesture of Christ's hand, seeming to peel back the eyelid to admit the light of the world."¹⁶

Christ's touch was clearly important to the artist, as several composition drawings of the subject by or after Poussin (related to either the painting in the Louvre or a now-lost painting acquired by Ascanio Filomarino in 1627) attest.¹⁷ Two drawings in the Massimi album at Windsor show Christ in proximity to the kneeling blind man, blessing but not touching him.¹⁸ Another drawing at Windsor shows Christ with the same blessing gesture, but here he lays his left hand on the man's bowed head (fig. 3).¹⁹ In a drawing in Bayonne, Christ touches the blind man's now-upturned face with his right hand, thus coming closest in this regard to the painting in the Louvre (fig. 4).²⁰

16. Lee Johnson, "Delacroix's 'Christ Healing the Blind Man of Jericho': Poussin Reviewed," *Burlington Magazine* 128 (1986): 674. Cropper ("Toucher le regard," 2:615–16) comments briefly on Christ's touching the blind man but reflects it onto her theme of luminosity by metaphorizing the touch as the light of Christ falling on the man; see also Cropper and Dempsey, *Nicolas Poussin*, 210–11. Marc Fumaroli identifies Christ's touch with that of the painter, thus also turning it toward the concerns of art practice; see Marc Fumaroli, "'Muta eloquentia': La représentation de l'éloquence dans l'œuvre de Nicolas Poussin," *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de l'Art français* (1982): 43–44; and Marc Fumaroli, *L'École du silence: Le sentiment des images au XVII^e siècle* (Paris: Flammarion, 1998), 223–24. In commenting on Matt 9:29, Lapide says: "Christ heals them by the touch of His hand, to manifest the saving power of His hands" (Lapide, *The Holy Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 1:453).

17. For the lost painting, see Loredana Lorrizzo, "Cardinal Ascanio Filomarino's Purchases of Works of Art in Rome: Poussin, Caravaggio, Vouet and Valentin," *The Burlington Magazine* 143 (2001): 405–7.

18. Pierre Rosenberg and Louis-Antoine Prat, *Nicolas Poussin 1594–1665: Catalogue raisonné des dessins*, 2 vols. (Milan: Leonardo, 1994), 1:124–25 (cat. 69; as autograph), 2:1126–27 (R 1304; as a copy). Martin Clayton believes them both to be copies after Poussin (Clayton, *Poussin: Works on Paper; Drawings from the Collection of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II* [Houston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1995], 184 [C11, C12] [exhibition catalog]).

19. Rosenberg and Prat, *Nicolas Poussin*, 1:158–59 (cat. 87); Clayton, *Poussin: Works on Paper*, 184–88 (cat. 63).

20. Rosenberg and Prat, *Nicolas Poussin*, 1:670–71 (cat. 345). Clayton (*Poussin: Works on Paper*, 184) notes that "the surviving drawings demonstrate that Poussin did not work inexorably towards the final design, steadily refining elements of the composition, but instead tried out a range of possible alternatives: whether to have Christ facing to left or right, whether to arrange the disciples as a dramatic huddle or



Figure 3. Nicolas Poussin, *Christ Healing the Blind*, ca. 1650. Graphite underdrawing, pen and brown ink, 151 × 220 mm. Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2015.



Figure 4. Nicolas Poussin, *Christ Healing the Blind*. Pen and brown ink, 110 x 196 mm. Bayonne, Musée Bonnat, INV1678.

Christ's gesture in the painting may have strongly resonated with a comparable gesture of a different sort of healing precisely at that time, whether Poussin intended it to or not: the French and English tradition of the “royal touch.” For centuries, the kings had touched sufferers of scrofula, the “King's Evil,” which manifests itself as a growth on the neck, several times a year, thousands at a time.²¹ The French kings, unlike their English counterparts but like Poussin's Christ, stood as they administered the touch, evident in a late sixteenth-century etching of Henri IV by Pierre Firens (fig. 5).²² Henri, like Poussin's Christ, places his healing hand on the sufferer's forehead. The efficacy of the touch issued from sacred kingship; the kings, who took communion in two kinds before the touch, were conduits of God's power, evident in the fixed formula recited by the king: “The king touches thee, and God heals thee.” When in Paris, Louis XIV, who practiced the royal touch throughout his lengthy reign, usually offered it in the Grande Galerie of the Palais du Louvre, that is, in the same palace in which Poussin's painting of *Christ Healing the Blind* could be seen from 1665 on.²³ The practice died with the Ancien Régime at the end of the eighteenth century,²⁴ but the fundamental gesture is still put to use by, among others, faith healers.

a dignified assembly, whether to have the second blind man standing or kneeling,” but he does not mention the significant variations in Christ's healing gesture.

21. On the royal touch, see, above all, Marc Bloch, *The Royal Touch: Sacred Monarchy and Scrofula in England and France*, trans. J. E. Anderson (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul; Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1973), esp. 177–228 for the early modern period.

22. On Firens's etching, see *ibid.*, 194–95, 257.

23. For the proclamation of Louis XIV's “royal touch” at the Louvre, set for 10:00 a.m., Easter Sunday, 1657, see Bloch, *The Royal Touch*, 201–4 and pl. 5. Nicholas Mirzoeff (*Bodyscape: Art, Modernity and the Ideal Figure* [London: Routledge, 1995], 39) manages to combine in passing Christ healing the blind, the king's touch, and artistic practice: “This literal reading of the painting [Bourdon's of Poussin's picture] belied what now seem to be the obvious metaphorical connotations of the painting, connecting the blindness of the figures to the light being spread by Christ. Just as the king could heal by his touch, one might argue, so could artists bring vision into being by their brush strokes. In this view, the royal artists of the Academy could then claim connection to the sacred person of the king and imbibe something of his divine essence from his aura.”

24. Notwithstanding its brief revival in 1825 under Charles X (Bloch, *The Royal Touch*, 226–28).



Figure 5. Pierre Fiens, *King Henri IV of France Touching for Scrofula*, late sixteenth century. Etching. Musée national du château de Pau, inv. P. 907.

The gesture may resonate in other ways. While looking at the painting in the Louvre several years ago, I was approached by a Dutch ophthalmologist, who expounded at great length his theory that what Poussin had depicted was a cataract operation—couching—performed digitally by Christ. For demonstration purposes, he repeatedly stuck his thumb in his eye. Couching (or reclination), which was practiced in antiquity and early modern Europe,²⁵ consists of pushing the “suffusion” (cataractous lens)

25. On cataracts in early modern Europe, see Stuart Clark, *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 40–41. For primary sources, see Georg Bartisch von Königsbrück, *[Ophthalmodou-*

down and away from the pupil of the eye. The reading of the painting as an illustration of a premodern—or low-tech—ophthalmological procedure is probably not correct in a historical sense; it is not clear that Poussin would have known about digital couching, since the operation was performed with needles in Europe at the time, although there may be instances of digital couching of which I am unaware.²⁶

In commenting on the story of Christ healing the blind man in John 9, Lapidé rejected a mundane medical interpretation of that story, positing that the congenital, incurable nature of his blindness allowed for a demonstration of God’s power:

For those who become blind, whose eyes are obscured by humors, or by scales that grow on them, are cured naturally by physicians and surgeons when those humors are dispersed, or when the scale is removed with a needle. But that a man who is blind from his birth should be cured “is not a matter of skill,” says S. Ambrose, “but of power. The Lord gave him soundness, but not by the practice of the medical art. The Lord healed those whom none could cure.”²⁷

Nonetheless, Christ’s gesture in Poussin’s painting may legitimately provoke a consideration of ophthalmological aspects overlooked (to my knowledge) by art historians, and it is a further reminder that paintings are as open to interpretation as biblical texts and that artists may guide interpretations of their paintings but cannot control them.

We do not know precisely what Champaigne thought of Poussin’s *Christ Healing the Blind*, though he may have been one of the unnamed participants in the discussion in the Academy, and we may reasonably extrapolate

leia]: *Das ist Augendienst* (Hannover: Schäfer, 1983; orig. Dresden, 1583), 59 obv.–68 rev.; Jacques Guillemeau, *Traité des maladies de l’œil, qui sont en nombre de cent treize, auxquelles il est suiet* (Paris: Charles Massé, 1585), 78–85; and André du Laurens, *Discours de la conservation de la veue: Des maladies melancholiques, des catarrhes, & de la vieillesse* (Rouen: Claude le Villain, 1615), 54–55.

26. For illustrations of the procedure and the needles used, see the woodcuts in Bartisch, *Ophthalmodouleia*, 62 rev., 63 rev., 65 obv.

27. Lapidé, *The Holy Gospel according to Saint John*, 368–69; I have emended the translation by substituting “needle” (*acu*) for “scalpel.”

from his comments on the *Rebecca and Eliezer*. It is also possible to read his own painting of the subject, executed probably toward 1660 and now in San Diego (fig. 6),²⁸ as a critique of Poussin's, although with certain caveats: Champaigne may not have known Poussin's painting until after he had executed his own painting;²⁹ and the two paintings may, in fact, depict different subjects, in that the setting (Jericho vs. Capernaum) and therefore the precise subjects of each painting are controverted, those of Poussin's painting already in the seventeenth century. Given his comments on Poussin's *Rebecca and Eliezer*, however, we might expect that Champaigne's own illustrations of sacred history would, in any case, exhibit "the exactitude and fidelity of the painter in a true subject."

Preceded by his apostles and followed by a multitude, Christ makes his way up to Jerusalem from Jericho, which Champaigne shows in the background of a deep and rugged landscape. Though not far, the journey "from Jericho to Jerusalem ... is mountainous, steep and ... difficult," and Saint Jerome noted that "there were many pits, crags, and steep places" around Jericho.³⁰ Two blind men emerge from the darkness of a lean-to along the mountainside. They cry out to Christ, calling him "Lord, thou son of David," and ask for mercy; the crowd rebukes them; they call out again. Christ stands a few meters from them and calls to them and says: "What will ye that I do to you? They say to him: Lord, that our eyes be opened. And Jesus having compassion on them, touched their eyes. And immediately they saw, and followed him."

Champaigne includes a pair of Jericho's famous palm trees at the center of the composition, as well as the multitude following Christ named in the Matthean account.³¹ He thus avoids the ambiguity—and specific criticisms—

28. The circumstances of the painting's execution are unknown, and it remained in the artist's possession at his death in 1674. See Bernard Dorival, *Philippe de Champaigne, 1602–1674: La vie, l'œuvre, et le catalogue raisonné de l'œuvre*, 2 vols. (Paris: Léonce Laget, 1976), 2:128 (no. 230), who suggests that Champaigne was not influenced by Poussin's painting, "sans doute parce qu'il s'écartait trop, à son gré, de la Bible"; Marcel Roethlisberger in Alain Tapié and Nicolas Sainte Fare Garnot, eds., *Philippe de Champaigne (1602–1674): Entre politique et dévotion* (Lille: Palais des Beaux-Arts; Geneva: Musée Rath, 2007), 258–59 [exhibition catalog].

29. Chomer sees Poussin's composition in several of Bourdon's paintings of 1650–1655, suggesting the work's accessibility before its acquisition by Richelieu or Louis (Chomer, "Un Poussin exemplaire," 79).

30. Lapidé, *The Holy Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 2:308, 311.

31. Most writers identify the city in Champaigne's painting as Jericho, which seems



Figure 6. Philippe de Champaigne, *Christ Healing the Blind*, ca. 1660 [?]. Oil on canvas, 104 × 142 cm. San Diego, The Putnam Foundation, Timken Museum of Art, inv. 1967:004.

of Poussin's painting. Champaigne's adherence to Scripture still leaves room for invention—the painting is neither topographically nor architecturally accurate—but, more important, it leaves room for interpretation: both his of the biblical source and ours of his picture. There are several obvious differences between Champaigne's painting and Poussin's—indeed, between Champaigne's painting and most earlier depictions of Christ healing the blind. Two, in particular, I would like to address: the distance between Christ and the blind men, and the depiction of the blind men as hermits.

Christ's physical relationship to the blind men was as important to Champaigne, when he came to paint his version of the subject (fig. 7), as it was to Poussin. Champaigne's painting is unusual in setting Christ at such a great distance from the blind men—postponing, for the time being, the curative contact. He depicted the moment just prior to the healing rather

highly probable to me, but Lorenzo Pericolo suggests Capernaum (Pericolo, *Philippe de Champaigne: "Philippe, homme sage et vertueux." Essai sur l'art et l'oeuvre de Philippe de Champaigne [1602–1674]* [Tournai: La Renaissance du Livre, 2002], 223–25).

than the healing itself, when the blind men call out to him as he and his followers pass by, and Christ stops, calls them, and questions them. Christ stretches forth his right hand in a relaxed but nonetheless powerful gesture. The gesture has a long genealogy, of which Caravaggio's painting of Christ's calling the tax collector Matthew to follow him may serve as a salient example. Whereas Christ's gesture of solicitation in Caravaggio's painting is met with stupefaction, in Champaigne's painting it is mirrored with arms reaching out to him.



Figure 7. Philippe de Champaigne, *Christ Healing the Blind*, ca. 1660 [?]. Oil on canvas, 104 × 142 cm. San Diego, The Putnam Foundation, Timken Museum of Art, inv. 1967:004 (detail).

Matthew 20:32 says that Jesus stood still before calling the blind men and asking what they want of him. Champaigne shows Christ in a comfortable, stationary contrapposto pose, pausing amidst the flow of companions and followers who continue to pass by him. In this pause, he prompts them to express their desire. As Lapide put it, “By arousing in them a strong desire and a request to be made whole, He renders them *capable* and *worthy* of such a great and miraculous favor.”³² In effect, Christ makes

32. Lapide, *The Holy Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 2:312, emphases mine.

them participate—worthily—in their own healing, their own salvation. Their faith makes them whole. The biblical text describes them simply as sitting (*sedentes* in the Vulgate), but Champaigne has activated them, putting them on their knees before the approaching Christ. He imagines their multiply meaningful gestures. The blind man on the left raises his arms in both petition and praise. The desire of the blind man on the right is bodied forth in his gesture of reaching, in which a subtle transformation in the metaphor of blindness is enacted, manifesting simultaneously blindness in its groping and hope in its reaching.

Christ's gesture in Champaigne's painting evokes another of Caravaggio's paintings: Christ calling Lazarus from the dead. One might say that there is a significant difference in that the miracle at work in Caravaggio's painting inheres in the calling itself, whereas in Champaigne's painting the calling is a prelude to the miracle. But I would argue that Christ's miraculous healing of the blind—the curing of their *spiritual* blindness—is enacted precisely at this moment. Derrida notes that *skepsis* has to do with the eyes and that there is a difference between believing and seeing.³³ In this sense, the one who sees is skeptical (consider the peering man at the center of Poussin's composition), but the one who is blind believes, and in the Christian calculus, the believer is the blessed one.³⁴ Christ acknowledged that Thomas believed because he had seen, but, as Christ asserts in John 20:29, “Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed.” Such are the blind men in Champaigne's painting. Saint Gregory interpreted the two blind men outside Jericho as “the human race ... illuminated by the presence of its Redeemer, so that it [that is, the human race] *already*

33. Jacques Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 1. On blindness, faith, and skepticism, see Matthew Ancell, “Credo Ergo Sum: Faith, Blindness, and Pictorial Logic in Derrida's *Memoirs of the Blind*,” *Oxford Art Journal* 37 (2014): 193–210.

34. There is, of course, also a long Western tradition of the blind seer—a metaphor in opposition to the blind fool—which is occasionally implicit in Lapide's text, especially in reference to Didymus, called “the Seer” by Jerome; in commenting on Matt 9:27, Lapide quotes Antonius: “Let it not offend you, O Didymus, if you are deprived of your fleshly eyes. The eyes that are gone are the kind that mice and flies and lizards have. Rejoice, rather, that you have the kind of eyes that angels have, with which God can be seen, and through which the great light of learning is lit for you” (Lapide, *The Holy Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 1:452).

sees by desire the joys of internal light.”³⁵ Thus, the blind men, through their desire for wholeness, both physical and spiritual, *already see*, even in contradistinction to the crowd following Christ and to his apostles, who have passed by these blind men. We can perhaps even apply here the term “baptism of desire” (*baptismus fluminis*), albeit unorthodoxly.

Furthermore, the blind men can be said to have been a cause of their own cure. In a homily on the passage, Saint John Chrysostom said that

Christ suffered them [that is, the blind men] to be rebuked, that their earnestness might the more appear, and that thou mightest learn [he tells his audience] that *worthily* they enjoy the benefits of their cure.... [T]heir cry, and their coming unto Him, sufficed to make their faith manifest. Hence learn, O beloved, that though we be very vile and out-cast, but yet approach God with earnestness, *even by ourselves we shall be able to effect whatsoever we ask*.³⁶

For Champaigne, this moment is of greater importance than that when Christ touches their eyes and cures their physical blindness.

It is not surprising that Champaigne has cast these (in)sightful blind men as hermits—in their dress, their shelter, and their ex-urban location. They are rebuked by the multitude, which Gregory took “as a symbol for the crowds of carnal desires and the tumults of vices, which before Jesus comes to our heart, dissipate our meditation by their temptations, and drown the voice of the heart when it prays.”³⁷ They are living in a hut, withdrawn from the city of Jericho, which Hrabanus said “denotes the infirmity of our mutability and mortality,” and Origen interpreted, equally negatively, as the world into which Christ descended.³⁸

Champaigne’s *Christ Healing the Blind* recalls the cycle of four huge paintings of hermits in landscapes that he made around the same time (1656) for the apartments of the pious French Queen Mother, Anne of Austria, at the Parisian Convent of Val-de-Grâce (fig. 8).³⁹ Each composition

35. Ibid., 2:310, emphases mine.

36. John Chrysostom, *The Homilies of S. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Gospel of St. Matthew, Translated, with Notes and Indices; Part III. Hom. LIX–XC* (Oxford: John Henry Parker; London: Rivington, 1851), 889–90, emphases mine (homily 66).

37. Lapidé, *The Holy Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 2:310–11.

38. Ibid., 2:308–9.

39. On the Val-de-Grâce hermit cycle, see Dorival, *Philippe de Champaigne*,

consists of a very deep background, partially screened by trees and land formations, exaggerating the distance between the things of the world and the retreat of the penitents. Champaigne assimilated the blind men to conventions of eremetical imagery just as Aquinas, paraphrasing Augustine, assimilated them by inference to conventions of eremetical behavior pursued in order to overcome carnal appetites: “It was fitting that they should cry out so loud as to overpower the din of the multitude that withstood them; that is, by fortifying their minds by perseverance and prayer, and mortifying continually the habits of fleshly lusts (which as a crowd ever beset one that is endeavoring to come to the sight of eternal Truth), and by the strongest possible resolve to get the better of the multitude of carnal men who hinder spiritual aspirations.”⁴⁰



Figure 8. Philippe de Champaigne, *Saint Thais Freed from Her Cell by Paphnutius*, 1656. Oil on canvas, 230 × 356 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre, INV1150.

128–30; Lisa Anne Rotmil, “The Artistic Patronage of Anne of Austria (1601–1666): Image-Making at the French Court” (PhD diss., Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, 2000), 267–69; and Pericolo, *Philippe de Champaigne*, 213–21. The San Diego painting is associated with Champaigne’s hermit pictures, in that they share a “frontière entre le ‘monde’ et la retraite,” by Louis Marin, *Philippe de Champaigne ou la présence cachée* (Paris: Hazan, 1995), 31, 49–50.

40. Quoted by Lapide, *The Holy Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 2:311.

Champaigne's pictures of hermits are part of the by-then long and still very vital tradition of images of solitaires in landscapes, given further impetus by the publication in 1647 of *The Lives of the Holy Fathers of the Deserts* by the Jansenist Robert Arnauld d'Andilly, who spoke of the solitaires as saints who received the light and the revelations of the future, like the ancient prophets.⁴¹ Stories of the hermits—in both image and text—were popular with both the lay and the religious. They offered exempla for meditation and devotion, but for most seventeenth-century votaries, the eremetical retreat was only metaphorical, and its spiritual significance is implied in Champaigne's adaptation of this iconography to the story of Christ's healing the blind. When the blind men could once again see, as Mark's version of the story says, they followed Christ "in the way" (*in via*). That way, in Origen's reading, is mystical rather than literal or historical: those who followed him "despised the world and all worldly things, that with Christ in the lead they might go up to the heavenly Jerusalem."⁴² Thus, an ascetic life of prayer is the difficult path along which one gains spiritual sight and a place with Christ in the heavenly kingdom.

Jennifer Montagu has referred to some early modern pictures as "painted enigmas," which were meant to challenge the viewer to discover their complex and even hidden meaning.⁴³ Likewise, Milan Stanic has identified in the work of Poussin what he calls an "enigmatic mode," which can even be called, in his view, Poussin's "*pensée de l'art*."⁴⁴ What qualifies as an enigma depends on the viewer's knowledge and perceptiveness as much as on the painter's intention, to be sure, but I have no doubt that Poussin's paintings—and Champaigne's as well—are not grasped readily. They operate

41. I have used a later edition: Robert Arnauld d'Andilly, trans., *Les vies des Saint Pères des déserts, et de quelques saintes, écrites par des pères de l'église & autres anciens auteurs ecclésiastiques* (Brussels: Eugene Henry Fricx, 1694), 6.

42. Quoted by Lapide, *The Holy Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 2:308–9.

43. Jennifer Montagu, "The Painted Enigma and French Seventeenth-Century Art," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 31 (1968): 307–35.

44. Milovan Stanic, "Le mode énigmatique dans l'art de Poussin," in *Poussin et Rome: Actes du colloque à l'Académie de France à Rome et à la Bibliotheca Hertziana, 16–18 novembre 1994*, ed. Olivier Bonfait et al. (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux; Rome: Accademia di Francia and Bibliotheca Hertziana, 1996), 93.

on several levels and point in several directions as a node in a nexus of associative meanings.

There was obviously disagreement within the Academy on the interpretation of various paintings, including when those interpretations touched on theological issues and not just factual questions of setting, narrative, and so on. The (adverse) reaction to Charles Le Brun's lecture on Poussin's *Ecstasy of Saint Paul* is evidence enough of that.⁴⁵ In fact, the lectures were structured to engender discussion so that, according to André Félibien, each of those attending would "have the liberty to speak his sentiments, and even so that the different opinions that one could encounter would serve to discover many of the things that would form precepts and maxims."⁴⁶ Conclusions and resolutions were sought but not unanimously achieved. Indeed, such conclusions, or a unitary and unequivocal reading of a painting, are not possible or even desirable. In this regard, the paintings are like the biblical sources on which they are based. Patristic and medieval commentary on the Matthean narrative of Christ healing the blind, usefully gathered by Lapidé, makes it abundantly clear that the biblical text was subject to diverse interpretations. They are sometimes conflicting, but that does not make them mutually exclusive, because the source is rich and adaptable to a variety of contexts and audiences. These paintings resemble their biblical source in that they are subject to diverse viable interpretations, and at the same time they act as exegetical instruments, interpreting the texts they illustrate. The "exactitude and fidelity" that Champaigne called for in depicting subjects from Scripture allowed him, and us, plenty of room for interpretation, and our interpretations

45. See Charles Dempsey, "Poussin's *Ecstasy of Saint Paul*: Charles Le Brun's 'Over-Interpretation,'" in *Commemorating Poussin: Reception and Interpretation of the Artist*, ed. Katie Scott and Genevieve Warwick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 114–33.

46. Mérot, *Conférences*, 47: "Que pour bien instruire la jeunesse dans l'art de peindre, il serait donc nécessaire de leur exposer les ouvrages des plus savants peintres, et dans des conférences publiques, faire connaître ce qui contribue le plus à la beauté et à la perfection des tableaux. Que chacun ayant la liberté de dire son sentiment, l'on ferait un examen de tout ce qui entre dans la composition d'un sujet, et même que les avis différents qui se pourraient rencontrer serviraient à découvrir beaucoup de choses qui feraient autant de préceptes et de maximes." Colbert charged the academy in 1667 with establishing a series of *conférences* in which a professor would "explicate one of the best paintings" in the king's collection ("expliquer un des meilleurs tableaux du cabinet du roi").

may depend on whether we are artists, art historians, theologians, ophthalmologists, or sufferers of scrofula (or all the above).

An analogy has been drawn between the group of apostles witnessing Christ's miracle *in* Poussin's painting and the academicians in Paris enjoying a private viewing *of* Poussin's painting.⁴⁷ As much today as in the Parisian Academy in the seventeenth century, interesting pictures give up meanings slowly, inexhaustibly, delightfully, and sometimes incoherently, acting as prompts for conversation, speculation, and imagination. One of the words used for the phantom images that beset cataract sufferers was *imaginatio*; good paintings invite us to conjure phantasms of the imagination and see what the blind see.

APPENDIX

Matthew 9:27–31 (Douay-Rheims): ²⁷And as Jesus passed from thence [the home of Jairus], there followed him two blind men crying out and saying, have mercy on us, O Son of David. ²⁸And when he was come to the house, the blind men came to him. And Jesus saith to them, Do you believe, that I can do this unto you? They say to him, Yea, Lord. ²⁹Then he touched their eyes, saying, According to your faith, be it done unto you. ³⁰And their eyes were opened, and Jesus strictly charged them, saying, See that no man know this. ³¹But they going out, spread his fame abroad in all that country.

Matthew 20:29–34 (Douay-Rheims): ²⁹And when they went out from Jericho, a great multitude followed him. ³⁰And behold two blind men sitting by the way side, heard that Jesus passed by, and they cried out, saying: O Lord, thou son of David, have mercy on us. ³¹And the multitude rebuked them that they should hold their peace. But they cried out the more, saying: O Lord, thou son of David, have mercy on us. ³²And Jesus stood, and called them, and said: What will ye that I do to you? ³³They say to him: Lord, that our eyes be opened. ³⁴And Jesus having compassion on them, touched their eyes. And immediately they saw, and followed him.

Mark 10:46–52 (Douay-Rheims): ⁴⁶And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho, with his disciples, and a very great multitude, Bartimeus the blind man, the son of Timeus, sat by the way side begging.

47. Cropper, "Toucher le regard," 615; and Cropper and Dempsey, *Nicolas Poussin*, 210.

⁴⁷Who when he had heard, that it was Jesus of Nazareth, began to cry out, and to say: Jesus son of David, have mercy on me. ⁴⁸And many rebuked him, that he might hold his peace; but he cried a great deal the more: Son of David, have mercy on me. ⁴⁹And Jesus, standing still, commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying to him: Be of better comfort: arise, he calleth thee. ⁵⁰Who casting off his garment leaped up, and came to him. ⁵¹And Jesus answering, said to him: What wilt thou that I should do to thee? And the blind man said to him: Rabboni, that I may see. ⁵²And Jesus saith to him: Go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he saw, and followed him in the way.

Luke 18:35–43 (Douay-Rheims): ³⁵Now it came to pass, when he drew nigh to Jericho, that a certain blind man sat by the way side, begging. ³⁶And when he heard the multitude passing by, he asked what this meant. ³⁷And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. ³⁸And he cried out, saying: Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me. ³⁹And they that went before, rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried out much more: Son of David, have mercy on me. ⁴⁰And Jesus standing, commanded him to be brought unto him. And when he was come near, he asked him, ⁴¹Saying: What wilt thou that I do to thee? But he said: Lord, that I may see. ⁴²And Jesus said to him: Receive thy sight: thy faith hath made thee whole. ⁴³And immediately he saw, and followed him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

John 9:1–7 (Douay-Rheims): ¹And Jesus passing by, saw a man, who was blind from his birth: ²And his disciples asked him: Rabbi, who hath sinned, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind? ³Jesus answered: Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. ⁴I must work the works of him that sent me, whilst it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. ⁵As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. ⁶When he had said these things, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and spread the clay upon his eyes, ⁷And said to him: Go, wash in the pool of Siloe, which is interpreted, Sent. He went therefore, and washed, and he came seeing.

TOPOS VERSUS TOPIA:
HERRI MET DE BLES'S VISUAL EXEGESIS OF THE
PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Michel Weemans

The emergence and development of landscape painting in Flanders during the sixteenth century, far from coinciding with a secularization of art and the rise of a purely aesthetic appreciation of nature—according to a late modern conception of landscape that has long been applied to these early works—actively participated in the “visual piety” that characterizes the early modern period.¹ “The pleasure of contemplating landscape paintings is as great as that experienced in the contemplation of nature itself,” stated Cardinal Borromeo, patron and friend of Jan Brueghel and Paul Bril and himself a famous collector of Flemish landscapes. He added: “The panels enclose on a reduced surface the earth and the sky [allowing us to make] spiritual peregrinations while staying quietly in our room.”² How do these landscapes build and organize the space so as to serve as a support for an exegetical trajectory? I will rely here on the example of Herri met de Bles’s *Landscape with the Parable of the Good Samaritan*, and I will focus on the two main topographical or, rather, topological characteristics that define Bles’s landscape: on the one hand, its compositional structure marked by an upward diagonal; on the other, its reliance on the use of recurrent motifs.

1. On this topic, see D. Ribouillault and M. Weemans, *Le Paysage sacré: Le paysage comme exégèse dans l'Europe de la première modernité / Sacred Landscape: Landscape as Exegesis in Early Modern Europe* (Florence: Olschki, 2011), ix–xxi.

2. Federico Borromeo, *Pro suis studiis* (1628), fols. 252 rev.–253 rev., quoted in P. M. Jones, “Federico Borromeo as a Patron of Landscapes and Still Lives: Christian Optimism in Italy ca. 1600,” *The Art Bulletin* 70 (1988): 298.

Many studies have focused on Bles's typical and complex practice of repeating certain motifs (probably based on the use of tracing paper). The repetition of motifs involves human figures but also topographical elements, such as architectural and natural motifs.³ The first studies dedicated to Bles's landscapes developed a narrow interpretation of their basis in the practice of drawing "after the life" (*naer het leven*), seeing his landscapes as a reflection of the topography of his native region and trying to establish a close correspondence between their topographical motifs and various local sites: the mouth of a river, a famously picturesque rock, the profile of Dinant or Bouvignes, his native city.

More recently, Luc Serck has established a list of recurring topographic motifs in Bles's landscapes—the alignment of two rocky peaks, a castle, a village, a natural rock arch, a water mill, a big oak with a split trunk, a cone-shaped city—which he designates by referring to the ancient notion of *topia*, used to describe representations of landscapes and gardens.⁴ The term *topia* appears in Latin literature to describe either nature itself or its representation.⁵ Bles would have known this natural and representational category through Vitruvius's *De Architectura* (published in Antwerp by Pieter Coecke van Aelst), which discusses the "wanderings of Ulysses through the '*topia*' created by nature" (7.5.2).⁶ The term also appears to

3. On Bles's practice of copies and reuse of motifs, see in particular N. E. Muller, D. J. Rosasco, and J. H. Marrow, eds., *Herri met de Bles: Studies and Explorations of the World Landscape Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton Art Museum and Princeton University Press; Turnhout: Brepols, 1998); H. Bevers, "The Antwerp Sketchbook of the Bles Workshop in the Berlin Kupferstichkabinett," in Muller, Rosasco, and Marrow, *Herri met de Bles*, 39–50; L. Serck, "Les '*topia*' chez Bles," in *Autour de Henri Bles*, ed. J. Toussaint (Namur: Musée des arts anciens du Namurois, 2000), 139–42, exhibition catalog; L. Serck, "L'*Album Errera* et le *Recueil d'esquisses* de Berlin dans leurs relations réciproques et leurs rapports avec Henri Bles," in Toussaint, *Autour de Henri Bles*, 95–118; C. Gillet, "Une curieuse inscription 'hébraïque' dans un tableau attribué à Henri Bles," in Toussaint, *Autour de Henri Bles*, 291–94; C. Gillet and F. Darchambeau, "Motifs naturalistes et similitudes entre les tableaux de Henri Bles," in Toussaint, *Autour de Henri Bles*, 119–40; and M. Pietrogiovanna, "Le charme des rochers habités: Observations sur un motif récurrent de Patinier à Bles and Co," in Toussaint, *Autour de Henri Bles*, 85–94.

4. Serck, "Les '*topia*,'" 139–41.

5. See in particular P. Grimal, *Les Jardins romains* (Paris: Arthaud, 1981).

6. Quoted by Grimal, *Les Jardins*, 95–96. Herri met de Bles, as a collaborator of Pieter Coecke van Aelst painted a landscape with the episode of the preaching of John the Baptist in the background of Coecke van Aelst's *Baptism of Christ* (Santarem, Hotel

describe the landscapes painted on walls, decorated with various kinds of representative topia: “harbors, promontories, shores, springs, canals, shrines, sacred groves, mountains, flocks, shepherds” (7.5.2).⁷ When Vitruvius mentions the topia, the term refers to landscapes “based on assemblies of typical motifs: ‘rock masses, shores overloaded with huge cliffs, all kinds of interchangeable motifs used by painters in various paintings regardless of the subject.’”⁸

This definition is largely confirmed by the testimonies of surviving painted landscapes, which tirelessly repeat, with some variations, the elements listed by Vitruvius. This is why Serck drew a parallel between the ancient landscapes using topia and Bles’s landscapes and claimed that “it would be possible, given their degree of perfection, to assemble these topia into a particular arrangement, and thus to bring forth a new composition imitating the master.”⁹ Walter Gibson, for his part, described Bles’s workshop as “an almost mechanical manufacture responding to a growing demand for this popular new pictorial genre.”¹⁰ The expression “Bles and company” that he proposed was the starting point of repeated assertions in the scholarly literature that apply the idea of serial production to

de ville). See L. Serck, “Henri Bles et la peinture de paysage dans les Pays-Bas méridionaux avant Bruegel” (PhD diss., Université catholique de Louvain, 1990), 519–28.

7. According to K. Woermann, the term *topography* (or *topiography*) was used first to designate landscape painting (*Die Landschaft in der Kunst der alten Völker: Eine Geschichte der Vorstufen und Anfänge der Landschaftsmalerei* [Munich: Ackermann, 1876], 221). The first known topographer, the painter Demetrios, came to Rome three-quarters of a century before the appearance of gardens and well before Ludius, to whom Plinius attributes the invention of landscape painting (see 219–20). Grimal indicates the widespread use of the expression topia to designate the gardens themselves, their representation, or the representation of nature. On the phenomenon of independent landscape and the appearance of terms (*paysage, paese, landschaft, landtschap*) used to refer to both the natural object and its representation, see in particular Woermann, *Die Landschaft in der Kunst der alten Völker*; J. Müller-Hofstede, “Zur Interpretation von Bruegels Landschaft: Ästhetischer Landschaftsbegriff und stoische Weltbetrachtung,” in *Pieter Bruegel und seine Welt*, ed. O. von Simpson and M. Winner (Berlin: Mann, 1979), 73–142; and C. Franceschi, “Du mot paysage et de ses équivalents dans cinq langues européennes,” in *Les Enjeux du paysage*, ed. M. Collot (Brussels: Oussia, 1997), 77–83.

8. Grimal, *Les Jardins*, 97.

9. Serck, “Henri Bles,” 139–46.

10. W. S. Gibson, *Mirror of the Earth: The World Landscape in Sixteenth-Century Flemish Painting* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 33.

most of Bles's landscapes.¹¹ However, Bles's pictorial practice of repeated motifs is a very complex phenomenon, irreducible to merely economical and technical issues. In order better to define the various kinds of repeated motifs corresponding to various functions, we must distinguish the broad category of *topia* from a set of recurrent motifs that best suits the notion of *topos*.

The term *topos* covers no less than a dozen meanings in the late sixteenth century, contrary to the devalued meaning of triviality, banality, or platitude that would prevail later. "To acquire a treasure of *res* and *verba*, to constitute a valuable reserve of arguments that may be submitted to a process of absorption and creative reproduction": such is the meaning of *topos* according to Erasmus, Agricola, Melancthon, and many authors who adopted this notion from Cicero and Quintilian.¹² Sixteenth-century authors added two new meanings to the traditional values of *auctoritas* ("authority") and *amplificatio* ("amplification") associated with the *topos*. First, the idea of *capituli*: by metonymy, the *topoi* referred to books organized into chapters and indexed under very general headings, according to a method defined at the beginning of the century.¹³ Second, the major

11. See, for instance, D. Allart, "Henri Bles: Un paysagiste à redécouvrir," in Tousseint, *Autour de Henri Bles*, 26–27: "De toute évidence, le travail de conception des œuvres consistait souvent à combiner des stéréotypes de différentes manières. Concrètement, cela signifie que l'atelier de Bles diversifiait sa production à peu de frais, en exploitant des 'sets' de motifs pouvant se prêter à de multiples agencements et se greffer sur des schémas compositionnels préétablis.... Le tout constituait des stocks d'images susceptibles d'être utilisés par Bles lui-même et/ou par d'éventuels collaborateurs."

12. On *topos* from antiquity to the seventeenth century, see in particular, F. Goyet, *Le sublime du "lieu commun": L'invention rhétorique dans l'Antiquité et à la Renaissance* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1996); and A. Moss, *Les Recueils de lieux communs: Méthode pour apprendre à penser à la Renaissance* (Geneva: Droz, 2002).

13. "The *topoi* are very general chapter headings," writes Lodovico Carbone, "which include all that handles an art or a science. For example, in theology, God, the Angels, the people, the virtues, the vices, and other subjects which this science considers in its generality" (quoted in Goyet, *Le sublime*, 410). Under the influence of Rodolphe Agricola's *De formando studio* and Erasmus's *De Copia*, numerous methods of learning developed in the schools of the north. The pupils learned to transpose extracts of the classics and collections of aphorisms in their notebooks, to organize them in columns, and to relate them to quotations of the Bible. It was then a question of learning and reproducing them in compositions (see Moss, *Les Recueils*, 133–48, 177–99).

change introduced by the authors of that period was the moral orientation of the collections of topoi. The edifying comparison of quotations from classical authors with passages from Scripture was for some authors the main task of these collections.¹⁴

The question of place—*topos*—became crucial in the sixteenth century, because the ordering principle that guarantees the proper use of the treasurehouse of topics also underwrites the humanist search for *copia* (formal and semantic variation) by reference to place; the movement from *topos* to *topos* facilitates the process of semiotic transmutation.¹⁵ The various practices implicit in the term *topos*—the collection, reuse, and repetition of component elements, the ascription of moral values, the conviction that meaning depends on location and, as such, is transmutable and variable—exceed in complexity the category of *topia*; topical richness and complexity coincide with a specific community of recurrent motifs in Bles's landscapes.

Bles's recurrent motifs, which correspond less to the idea of *topia* than to the idea of *topos*, consist of a set of elements that can be clearly distinguished: the radiant halo of a heavenly vision, the citadel crowning a rocky peak, the mill, the rock and the source, the green tree opposed to the dead tree, the rocky archway, the paths traveled by pilgrims or a blind man, the hollow trees or rocks in which lurks the emblematic owl of the painter. These motifs—all present in the *Landscape with the Parable of the Good Samaritan* (fig. 1)—reappear in most of his landscapes. Several general observations may apply to this set of recurrent motifs. First, none of them is determined by a specific biblical episode, which means that their recurrence refers more broadly to a system of representation of nature, the general landscape model developed by Bles. Second, although these motifs are sometimes present to a greater or lesser extent, Bles uses almost all of them in many of his landscapes: *The Sleeping Peddler Robbed by Apes*

14. Their use in the service of a moral argument indicates a link to exegesis. Erasmus used the method of topoi in his exegetical texts: his commentaries on the Psalms and paraphrases of the gospels combined the effects of the *copia*, *amplificatio*, *moralitas*, and *auctoritas* of the topoi, with typological correspondences and interpretations with allegorical and tropological meaning (Moss, *Les Recueils*, 152).

15. In the ceaselessly repeated *topos* of the worker bee, the reservoirs of quotations serving to engender and ornament speech are compared with separate cells or compartments where various kinds of nectar are stored; each person, by applying the talents peculiar to him, transmutes this nectar into honey. On the metaphor of the bee, see in particular Moss, *Les Recueils*, 97–100, 184–85, 351–52, 384–85.



Figure 1. Herri met de Bles, *Landscape with the Parable of the Good Samaritan*. Oil on wood, 84.1 × 113.4 cm. Namur, Musée des arts anciens du Namurois.

(Dresden), *Landscape with Penitent Saint Jerome* (Namur), *The Way to Calvary* (Princeton), *Landscape with The Parable of the Good Samaritan* (Namur), *The Preaching of Saint John the Baptist* (versions in Brussels, Barcelona, Dresden, and Dortmund). Interpreting these recurrent motifs not so much in terms of topos as in terms of topos is a way to question the participation of the landscape in the exegetical process.

Bles's use of this set of motifs corresponds to specific motivations, to semiotic or exegetical processes, to various associations among the biblical personas, such as relations of mutual amplification (as in the case of the juxtaposition of the rocky arch, celestial radiance, heavenly citadel, and the pilgrim) or relations of antithetical polarity (for example, between celestial radiance and the blind man, the owl and the fowler, the dead tree and the green tree).¹⁶ The organization of topoi parallels the clustering of recurrent motifs in Bles's landscapes, starting with the principle of contin-

16. See R. L. Falkenburg, *Joachim Patinir: Landscape as an Image of the Pilgrimage of Life* (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1988), 30, 83–84.

uous rearrangement into new meaningful configurations that define the topos. Many of Bles's principal motifs—the rock and the spring, the heavenly citadel, the green tree opposed to the dead tree, the mill—come from the pictorial tradition that accompanied the development of landscape painting between the end of the fifteenth century and the middle of the sixteenth century. Some of these motifs and others specifically developed by Bles are clearly defined by a common theme: the vision of God (*visio Dei*). Whether they take the form of divine radiance, the heavenly citadel, the camouflaged owl, the Pharisees or the blind man opposed to biblical and visionary protagonists, they all derive from and refer to a strongly ocular-centric Christian culture.

Particular attention should be given to one of Bles's recurring motifs closely related to the overall compositional structure of his *Weltlandschaften* ("world landscapes"): the celestial citadel that invariably crowns his exegetical landscapes (fig. 2). This motif, already associated with the heavenly Jerusalem in fifteenth-century Flemish paintings, holds a prominent place in the history of visual exegesis. The city of Jerusalem, as Anna Esmeijer has shown, is one of the main themes of medieval quadripartite visual exegesis.¹⁷ In the historical sense, Jerusalem is the city of the Jews; in the allegorical sense, it is the church of Christ; in the tropological sense, it is the soul of man; in the anagogical sense, it is the heavenly city of God. In fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Flemish art, the duality of the earthly Jerusalem and the heavenly Jerusalem and the link with the themes of the ascent of the soul, the *visio ultima*, and other anagogical meanings

17. The majority of exegetical representations of Jerusalem focus on the themes of hope for redemption and the ascent of the soul from the earthly Jerusalem to the heavenly Jerusalem, following a gradual path culminating in the *visio beatis* of eschatological time. See A. Esmeijer, *Divina Quaternitas: A Preliminary Study in the Method and Application of Visual Exegesis* (Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1978), 73–96. Closer to Bles, pl. 145 of Branteghem's *Jesu Christi vita* showing "Jesus on the Mount of Olives predicts the end time" explicitly reveals the typological and eschatological dimension of this motif. The image combines with perfect symmetry, on the right, Christ on the Mount of Olives, who dominates a circle of listeners, and on the left, the heavenly Jerusalem on a mountain, which dominates a similar audience. The visual analogy reflects the typological relationship between two stages of salvation history: the mystery of the incarnation and the future promise of the heavenly Jerusalem. See W. van Branteghem, *Dat leven ons heeren Christi Jesu / Jesu Christi vita, juxta quatuor evangelistarum narrationes, artificio graphices perquam eleganter picta* (Antwerp: Cromme, 1537), 254.

resulted in the iconographic motif of the heavenly Jerusalem dominating a landscape. Reindert Falkenburg has shown its importance in Patinir's landscapes and its many echoes in contemporary devotional literature describing the pilgrimage of man with reference to Christ's parable of the narrow and difficult path leading to the heavenly Jerusalem.¹⁸ In Bles's landscapes its explicit link with the underlying metaphor of the pilgrimage of life takes on new meanings. Even more than Patinir, Bles developed the idea of the mountain as the place where the terrestrial and the celestial are conjoined, as the site of theophany, or as sacred locus associated with the prophecy of the New Jerusalem.



Figure 2. Herri met de Bles, *Landscape with the Parable of the Good Samaritan* (Namur), detail of the heavenly citadel.

Bles sometimes associates the heavenly Jerusalem with the *visio Dei*: in his *Landscape with Saint John on Patmos*, for instance, the vision of the heavenly virgin and the dragon of Jerusalem appears at the top of the ascendant diagonal dominating the seascape. In many cases, the heavenly Jerusalem dominating the upward diagonal is associated with a second recurring motif, the haloed divine apparition, such as in the *Landscape*

18. Falkenburg, *Joachim Patinir*.

with the *Sacrifice of Abraham* (where it is associated with the scene of the burning bush), in the *Landscape with Penitent Saint Jerome*, and in several versions of the *Preaching of Saint John the Baptist*. In the *Landscape with Penitent Saint Jerome* (fig. 3) and in the *Preaching of Saint John the Baptist* (Brussels), both strongly marked by the metaphor of the pilgrimage, the antithetical relationship between the divine apparition and the blind man clearly refers to the underlying and corollary metaphor of the *visio Dei*.¹⁹



Figure 3. Herri met de Bles, *Landscape with Penitent Saint Jerome*. Oil on wood, 75.7 × 105.8 cm. Namur, Musée des arts anciens du Namurois.

Before considering how the recurring motifs I called *topoi* participate actively in the process of visual exegesis in Bles's *Landscape with the Parable of the Good Samaritan*, we must first recall some characteristics of the parabolic text. The parable of the good Samaritan, like many biblical parables, simulates within the evangelical text a process that depicts Jesus

19. See M. Weemans, "Le paysage comme pérégrination spirituelle et exégèse visuelle," in *Fables du paysage flamand: Bosch, Bles, Brueghel, Bril*, ed. A. Tapié and M. Weemans (Lille: Palais des Beaux-Arts de Lille; Somogy, 2012), 76–83, exhibition catalog.

and a group of listeners. For that reason, it is important to quote the entire pericope (Luke 10:25–37 NIV):

²⁵On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

²⁶“What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

²⁷He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

²⁸“You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

²⁹But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

³⁰In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³²So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’”

³⁶“Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

³⁷The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

The structure of the parable itself implies the conditions of a hermeneutic. The parable provokes a narrative rupture in the story and constitutes a secondary story embedded in the primary narrative, yet separated by its contextualization (constituent parts, such as the new characters, who occur without apparent relation to those of the primary narrative); the parable is an autonomous text, closed on itself, but still related to the context by means of repetition, similarity, opposition, and comparison. The reason for these ties is to ensure that the parable retains the power to recontextualize, and it is to this end that it takes the form of a riddle, a fictional structure that involves a solution and solicits from the listeners the action of hermeneutical ordering. Such is the meaning of the final reply of Jesus to the Levite: he openly exhorts him to *interpret* (in the performative sense)

the parable, to put into practice the model proposed by the parable: "Go and do likewise."²⁰

Always attentive to the tropological consequences of the text, Erasmus in his *Paraphrase on Luke* indicates the reversal of meaning in the use of the word *neighbor* before and after the parable.²¹ What is stressed here is the passage from mere cognition to actual practice and also the relational paradigm enacted in the parable. This difference between the two moments of the story is also a form of conversion—the passing from the old law to the new law. The legal expert's answer to the initial question posed by Christ relates to the second commandment of the new law: "You shall love your neighbor as you love yourself." The second time this commandment is invoked, Jesus calls for active engagement: "Go and do likewise." The passage is thus from a quotation of the Law to an exhortation to do and thereby to become more like Christ in exercising mercy.²² While confirming the christological identification, the Erasmian exegesis thus suggests an additional tension due to the effect of the recontextualization of the word *neighbor*, with an inversion of its meaning. What this textual process signifies (a process that operates both symmetrically and asymmetrically inside the story-parable in the relationship between the two levels of text and paratext) is the process of conversion itself. In other words—and this is the important thing—the dawning comprehension of the man who asked "And who is my neighbor?" indicates that the parable models the conversion of vision and attitude in the recipient of Scripture.

We must recall that the exegetical tradition of the parable of the good Samaritan was particularly attentive to the theme of vision present in the

20. The commentators were prompt to point out the key role of this phrase in the open structure of the parable as well as the ambivalent way it addresses both the recipient of the primary narrative and the gospel text reader.

21. D. Erasmus, *Les Paraphrases d'Érasme: Nouvellement traduites de latin en françois*, 2 vols. (Basel: Froben, 1563), 323.

22. It is no accident that, just as Christ is likened to the Samaritan, the speaker is not the usual figure of a Pharisee but a doctor of the law, who is more easily assimilated to the commandment of love than the priest and the Levite. Erasmus does not fail to point out here the transition from bad to good guardian based on etymology: "The Lord ... has sometimes been called Samaritan as an insult by Jews, but the ignominy of the word has no effect on the community of nations of the world as they experience the saving reality that is the name. Indeed, in Syriac 'Samaritan' means 'guardian.' It was he, of course, the true shepherd, who left none of his parish sick, brought down, or misled but wanted all to participate in eternal safety" (ibid., 323, translation mine).

text. The parable is clearly structured by an antithetical polarity: to a given situation (marked by a dramatic background situation and by chance) correspond two opposing attitudes defined in terms of vision. The exegetical tradition identifies the traveler fallen to the mercy of robbers with Adam blinded by the fall, and the two representatives of the law, with fallen man, who has lost the power of discernment. The opposition between moral blindness and spiritual discernment is at the heart of the first known interpretation of the parable of the good Samaritan, that of Origen, who paved the way for the long exegetical tradition that reads the parable allegorically, assigning to every detail of the story a spiritual meaning related to the history of salvation:

The man who went down is Adam, Jerusalem is the paradise, Jericho the world, the thieves the powerful enemies, the priest is the Law, the Levite is the prophets, and the Samaritan is Christ ... open to anyone who wants to enter into the inn which symbolizes the Church. The two latter represent Father and Son, the hotelkeeper is the head of the Church responsible for administering, concerning the promise made by the Samaritan to return, it means the second coming of the Savior. (Origen, *Hom. Luc.* 34.3 [Lienhard])

Most exegetes agreed on the allegorical meaning of each of the principal points as expressed by Origen, but they emphasized different aspects.²³ They called attention to the centrality of the change in attitude from blind adherence to the letter of the law, to evangelical action expressive of the Spirit. It is on this point that exegesis of the parable of the good Samaritan in the sixteenth century turned.²⁴ The relationship between

23. For Origen, the wounded man is Adam, and the descent from Jerusalem to Jericho enacts the original fall; the bandits are the enemy powers or the devil, the priest and Levite are the prophets or the old law, the Samaritan is Christ, the inn is the church, and, finally the promise to return indicates the second coming of the Savior. The meanings of the other features of the narrative diverge in nuanced ways: for example, the oil indicates the hope for grace; the wine corresponds to suffering or stands proxy for the exhortation to act ardently in spirit; the horseback evokes the themes of embodiment and sacrifice; the innkeeper represents the head of the church or the Apostle Paul; and the coinage stands for the Father and the Son, or the Old and New Testaments (Origen, *Homilies on Luke*, trans. J. T. Lienhard [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1996], 138–41).

24. On the largely tropological, christological, and ecclesiological exegesis of the parable of the good Samaritan in the sixteenth century, see in particular H. G. Klemm,

the two narrative levels proved crucial in that the exegesis of the parable coincided (in a context of institutional critique and affirmation of individual piety) with a strong moral or tropological tendency. This is the case with Erasmus who, like most of his contemporaries, emphasized the christological dimension—suggesting, for example, that the descent from Jerusalem to Jericho stands for the descent of the divine incarnate in Jesus, the lowering of the heavenly to the earthly—and focused on his favorite theme of *pharisaism* or moral blindness.²⁵

How does Bles's landscape visualize the parable? Not in a way that represents the primary and secondary narrative story, but in the way it interprets, by means of specifically pictorial effects, the fundamental aspects of the parable we have just recalled. Bles has elaborated a particularly complex scheme that articulates a horizontal axis and a vertical axis. This meaningful bipolarity constitutes the structure of tension along which the painter displays his visual exegesis of the biblical parable. The narrative development of the three moments of the parable—the representatives of the old law ignoring the injured, the latter rescued by the Samaritan, and then the wounded man carried to the inn—follows the horizontal direction of the painting according to the usual direction of reading from left to right. The vertical axis focuses on the central figure of the Samaritan nursing the wounded man (fig. 4). The christological visual exegesis consists of the association of christological symbols with the good Samaritan: just above, at left, the allegorical motif of the unicorn (linked with Christ in Bles's *Earthly Paradise* [Amsterdam] or in his *Preaching of Saint John the Baptist* [Dresden]), echoes the most common and most explicit Christian motif in his landscape—the mill—which he often places at the very center of his landscapes. To the left of the Samaritan, close by his horse, a spring flows from the rocky ground.²⁶ In a context strongly determined by the Christian notions of vision and conversion, the motifs of thresholds, paths, and passages play a decisive role; the upward path is itself clearly

“Der barmherziger Samariter: Grundzüge der Auslegung im 16./17. Jahrhundert,” *BWANT* 103 (1973): 118–63.

25. Erasmus, *Les Paraphrases*, 322–23.

26. On this allegorical motif of Christ in Netherlandish art from that period, see A. P. de Mirimonde, “Le symbolisme de la source et du rocher chez Joos Van Cleve, Dirck Bouts, Memling, Patinir, C. Van den Broeck, Sustris et Bril,” *Jaarboek van het koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen* (1974): 73–100.

marked by a series of rock arches, natural passages leading to the heavenly citadel (fig. 2).



Figure 4. Herri met de Bles, *Landscape with the Parable of the Good Samaritan* (Namur), detail of the good Samaritan.

According to a schema present in many of Bles's landscapes, the *Landscape with the Parable of the Good Samaritan* weaves a horizontal axis corresponding to the narrative and an ascending line that comprises various allegorical and anagogical analogies: between the Christ-figure of the good Samaritan (associated with the allegorical motifs of the unicorn and the mill) and the eschatological motif of the celestial fortress dominating the landscape. This dynamic exegetical tension is further amplified by several antithetical motifs. As in many of Bles's landscapes, the interpretation of the image relies on a composition corresponding to an opposition between the right and the left and to a relationship between the central and the peripheral figures. Placed front and center in the image, the good Samaritan embodies the discerning gaze of the Spirit, as opposed to the

blind eyes of the priest and the Levite, who remain attached to the letter rather than the spirit of Scripture (fig. 5).



Figure 5. Herri met de Bles, *Landscape with the Parable of the Good Samaritan* (Namur), detail of the left part with the dead tree.

Whereas the attachment of the priest to the law is suggested by the gospel text, his act of reading is not.²⁷ Thus, the pictorial invention of the figures represented in the act of reading is a visual response to the question posed by the parable about the passage from mere cognition to active engagement. Bles distinguishes between different modes of reading: a reading that is too close, strictly literal, which kills the spirit and is blind;

27. See P. Berdini, *The Religious Art of Jacopo Bassano: Painting as Visual Exegesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1.

in contrast to the Samaritan's charity, which aligns with the spirit of the gospel. This distinction results from the inclusion in the visualization of the parable of a circumstance that exceeds the narrative and that gives the viewer a metaphor to be parsed on its own terms.

Bles's *Landscape with the Parable of the Good Samaritan* involves, as we have said, the whole spectrum of his preferred motifs. It remains to consider how their layout follows the upward diagonal and how the motifs enter into precise relations with the biblical figures. One of Bles's recurring motifs, the dead tree opposed to the green tree, ostensibly framing the landscape, plays a major role here (figs. 5–6). The iconography of the dead and green tree is based on the description of the two trees of paradise in the second chapter of Genesis. The Christian tradition has opposed and connected them as two stages of the divine economy of salvation: on the one hand, the tree of life, the eating of whose fruit grants eternal life; on the other, the tree of knowledge combined with the serpent and the forbidden fruit, which cause death and provoke the expulsion from paradise.²⁸ This double motif dominates the *Allegory of the Law and the Gospel* by Lucas Gassel (a variant of Cranach's famous version), in the condensed form of a single tree: the dried left half echoes the tree of knowledge (at the foot of which the original drama takes place), and the green right half echoes Christ on the cross, the new tree of life. The soul of man sitting at the foot of the tree, between the world of the old law and that of the gospel, is urged to choose between the letter that kills and the Spirit that gives life. The same duality is at stake in the opposition of the dead tree and green tree framing Bles's landscape. This opposition is amplified by a whole zone of the landscape: the forest, on the left, negatively connotes putrefaction (the crow, the ravaged ground, the dead tree), danger (the presence of two disturbing characters, perhaps the bandits of the biblical narrative), and darkness (which obscures the priest and the Levite; see fig. 5).²⁹

28. On the Christian symbolism of the tree of life and the tree of death, see in particular Stephen J. Reno, *The Sacred Tree as an Early Christian Literary Symbol: A Phenomenological Study* (Saarbrücken: Homo et Religio, 1978); and G. Dufour-Kowalska, *L'Arbre de vie et la Croix: Essai sur l'imagination visionnaire* (Geneva: Tricorne, 1985).

29. On the forest as a place of destruction and danger from Altdorfer to the Dutch landscape painters, see C. Wood, *Albrecht Altdorfer and the Origins of Landscape* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1993; and S. Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (London: HarperCollins, 1995), 81–100.

By a sort of “expanded anthropomorphism,” the physical corruption of the vegetation in the dark forest seems to reflect the moral corruption of the two figures of *siendeblinden* (“the seeing blind”), while on the right, the green seedling is like an externalized expression of the inner spiritual beauty of the good Samaritan and the promise contained in his gesture (fig. 6).



Figure 6. Herri met de Bles, *Landscape with the Parable of the Good Samaritan* (Namur), detail of the right part with the green tree.

The opposition of the two trees is amplified by a visual polarity involving another of Bles's recurrent motifs: the blind man and his guide crossing a bridge (fig. 7).³⁰ As Karen Hellerstedt has shown, this character is

30. The recurring motif of the blind man and his guide appears in about fifteen paintings by Bles: in most of his landscapes with the *Preaching of Saint John the Baptist* (versions in Vienna, Turin, Brussels, Barcelona, and De Jonkheere Gallery), in the *Way to Calvary* (Princeton), the *Sleeping Peddler Robbed by Apes* (Dresden), *Landscape with Diana* (Strasbourg), *Landscape with the Parable of the Good Samaritan* (Namur), the *Flight into Egypt* (De Jonkheere Gallery), *Landscape with Mining Scenes* (Florence), *Landscape with Penitent Saint Jerome* (Namur), and the *Pilgrims on the Road to Emmaus* (Antwerp). The common point justifying the presence of this motif is its antithetical value in relation to the sacred protagonist. On this motif in Netherlandish art and literature, see K. J. Hellerstedt, “The Blind Man and His Guide in Netherlandish Painting,” *Simiolus* 13 (1983): 163–81.

also the hero of numerous morality plays from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, which describe pilgrims in search of the location of a saint's relics or the tomb of Christ, sacred places where blindness is miraculously healed. Like many of Bles's landscapes, these plays build on the two related Christian themes of the pilgrimage of life and the vision of God.³¹ The blind man and his guide appear in no less than fifteen of Bles's landscapes, always as an antithetical counterpoint to the visionary protagonists associated with the light of the gospel: Saint Jerome the penitent, Saint John the Baptist, Christ, or the good Samaritan.

In Bles's *Landscape with the Parable of the Good Samaritan*, the association of the Samaritan with the green tree suggests allegorically that the Samaritan who takes the injured man to the inn imitates Christ, who leads



Figure 7. Herri met de Bles, *Landscape with the Parable of the Good Samaritan* (Namur), detail of the blind man and his guide.

31. On the blind man and his guide in religious theater, see G. Cohen, "La scène de l'aveugle et de son valet," *Romania* 41 (1912): 346–47; E. Kraemer, *Le type du faux mendiant dans les littératures romanes depuis le Moyen Age jusqu'au XVIIe siècle*, *Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum* 13.6 (Helsingfors: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1944); and J. Dufournet, ed., *Le garçon et l'Aveugle* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1982).

Christians to the church: the tree embodies the gospel, as opposed to the old law. It is also important to note that the path taken by the blind man opposes that taken by the Samaritan: the former moves leftward, like the paths of the priest and the Levite, representatives of the old law, who sink into the darkness of the forest, obscurely visible through the symbolic arch of the dead tree.³² These visual effects reflect the antithetical composition, which in turn corresponds to the contrast between the old law and the new, between the horizontal or downward way and the upward path punctuated by motifs that refer to the history of salvation (the unicorn, the deer, the rock and the spring, the mill, the rock arch, the heavenly citadel). Bles's exegetical landscape challenges the traditional opposition between figure and ground, as it does the assumption that the figures alone are meaningful, the ground neutral. The semiotic, hermeneutic process operates through the ground, the landscape, and the figures.

The motif of the dead tree is further amplified by the striking gangrenous morphology of the whole left foreground, with its appearance of ruin, reminiscent of the process of decomposition epitomized by crows pecking bones (fig. 5). It contributes to the allegorical exegesis suggested in this story by the opposition between the moral blindness of ruinously fallen humanity and the hope of salvific renewal in and through the spirit of Christ.

A final motif participates in the thematization of vision and in the visual exegesis: the figurative signature of the painter, the hidden owl (fig. 8). It is here associated with a cryptogram, a hidden date, which itself echoes a second cryptogram (fig. 9).³³ On the turban of the good Samaritan, one can indeed read a second encrypted signature of the painter: the letters VYL (in Dutch, "the owl").³⁴ The link between these encrypted motifs (the

32. In Bles's *Preaching of Saint John the Baptist* (Brussels, Royal Museums of Fine Arts), the child guiding the blind man is replaced by a woman, the *leijtswijf*. In Adrien Jacopz's morality play, *The Predestined Blind* (*De ghepredestineerde blind*), performed in Brielle in 1552, this female character is a personification of *Oude Gewoonte*, the old law. See Hellerstedt, "The Blind Man," 175.

33. The difficulty in reading the third number has resulted in many readings: 1511 (according to A. Bequet, J. Helbig, and L. Larsen), 1531 (Friedländer, Dasnoy, Courtoy), 1541 (Hoogewerff), and 1551 (van Puyvelde). The recent dendrochronological analysis tends to confirm the latest date. On this point, see Serck, "Henri Bles," 250–55; Serck, "Les 'topia,'" 182–83; and Gillet, "Une curieuse," 292.

34. According to Claude Gillet, the letter F stands for *fecit*, followed by five lines indicating the fifth decade of the sixteenth century: the letter Z is the inverted version

owl, the date, and the inscription on the turban), far from being fortuitous, is instead part of the same overall visual exegesis that aims to challenge the gaze of the beholder and calls for the exercise of discernment. The recurrent and strongly visual motifs of Bles's world landscape point toward a common referent: the *visio Dei*. The constant and explicit references to vision in Bles's landscapes give observers a direction, if not a directive, of interpretation that enables them to unify the discrete elements. Therefore, Bles's biblical landscape, like the biblical narratives themselves, are interdependent and must be studied as such.



Figure 8. Herri met de Bles, *Landscape with the Parable of the Good Samaritan* (Namur), detail of the owl.



Figure 9. Herri met de Bles, *Landscape with the Parable of the Good Samaritan* (Namur), detail of the good Samaritan's turban.

This is what is suggested here by the notion of *model*, understood as a “heuristic instrument of redescription,”³⁵ which engineers a “break [with] a previous inadequate description” and delineates a “new and revealing

of the N for *nomine*, followed by a monogram composed of two intersecting VV followed by L. These letters probably correspond to the emblematic monogram of Bles, described in an old anecdote by A. Virloys, who states that the mark of this painter “is the figure of an owl, the letters VVL or VVLK, which in Flemish means owl” (C. F. Roland le Virloys, *Dictionnaire d'architecture civile, militaire et navale* [Paris: Libraires Associés, 1770], 1:202 [translation mine]; quoted by Philippe Bragard, “Bouvignes au XVI^e siècle: Le visage architectural de la ville comme source d'inspiration chez Henri Bles,” in *Autour de Henri Bles*, ed. J. Toussaint, Actes du colloque (Namur: Société Archéologique, 2002), 191–210; and Gillet, “Une curieuse,” 291–93.

35. See I. Ramsey, *Models and Mystery* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 62.

way [forward].”³⁶ I borrow here the idea of model adduced by Ian Ramsay, Paul Beauchamp, and Paul Ricoeur, who consider it in conjunction with the term *qualifier* (designating a directive that determines the interpretation) and who argue that different models or types of biblical story conjoin when they share an orientation toward a common telos (the eschatological dimension of the various texts in the Bible). First, the notion of model concerns the concrete dimension of the painted landscape, which consists of a condensed miniature of the real landscape, implying a selection of features and a configuration that reproduces the original in its structure. If Bles’s landscapes develop and favor a typical compositional structure based on a diagonal, it is because the diagonal evokes the upward symbolism of the qualifier *visio Dei*. We can also better define the network of motifs that structures Bles’s landscapes if we refer to a form of model that Max Black has called an *archetype* (an organization of metaphors that work as a network). For instance, the symbolic motifs of distant or elevated views in Bles’s world landscapes—the high trees, the birds in the sky, the rocky overhangs and mountains, the headlands crowned with towers and fortresses—are never isolated, and on the contrary, echo and amplify each other; and this first network correlates with a second which brings together metaphors referring to Christ as a fortress, a source of living water, a rock, a tree of life, or identify him with such animals as the deer, the unicorn, or the owl.

With reference to the notion of a model as a heuristic fiction and an instrument of redescription, we can say, on the one hand, that the *Weltlandschaft* does not so much imitate nature as proceed qua model to a selection and meaningful organization of that which the model contains.³⁷ On the other hand, the model constitutes a heuristic instrument that leads to an experience of revelation (under the influence of the qualifier, says I. Ramsey, the model says something more).³⁸ If we define Bles’s world landscapes as visual models, the logical structure “model and qualifier” implies an exegetical trajectory understood as a two-way process of conversion,

36. P. Ricoeur, *L'Herméneutique biblique* (Paris: Cerf, 2001), 145–50.

37. On this definition of *model*, see N. Goodman, *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1968), 102.

38. Ricoeur widens the conception of *qualifier*, as Ramsey notes: for him, the qualifier is not only the crowning point in the causal explanation of the model; it also indicates the power of redescription in its application to the model (see Ricoeur, *L'Herméneutique*, 202).

which transforms the work received as well as its receptor: the conversion of the viewer corresponds to the conversion of meaning. It means that the devotee (who from the start is assumed to be fully Christian) is strengthened in his virtues and transformed by them, according to the correspondences established by the exegetical tradition between the three spiritual senses and the three theological virtues (allegory corresponding to faith, tropology to charity, and anagogy to hope). The spiritual peregrination through the miniature models of nature to be seen in Bles's landscapes is the meditative and exegetical journey of the pilgrim looking toward the *visio Dei*. This journey refers less to the idea of topography, the description of a sequence of specific places, than to the idea of topology, in the exegetical and rhetorical sense of the use of "common places" that produce effects of meaningful and determined action.³⁹

39. See F. Cousinié, *Images et méditation au XVIIe siècle* (Rennes: PUR, 2007), 104.

SIGNA RESURRECTIONIS:
VISION, IMAGE, AND PICTORIAL PROOF IN
PIETER BRUEGEL'S *RESURRECTION OF CIRCA 1562–1563*

Walter S. Melion

Engraved by Philips Galle after Pieter Bruegel, the *Resurrection* of ca. 1562–1563 explores a problem central to the exegetical tradition—namely, that this great mystery of faith as set forth in the gospels and epistles was witnessed by no one and must thus be known solely by means of the prophecies it fulfilled and the evidentiary signs left in its wake (fig. 1).¹ Published by Hieronymus Cock, who perhaps also commissioned the drawing in pen, brown ink, and wash and almost surely retained possession of the large copperplate, the *Resurrection*, as Manfred Sellink has recently observed, emulates the huge print of the *Resurrection* that was etched and engraved by Joannes and Lucas van Doetecum after Frans Floris and was issued by Cock about five years earlier, in 1557 (figs. 2–3).² It was he, more than likely, who orchestrated this

1. See appendix below.

2. Manfred Sellink, “Philips Galle, after Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *The Resurrection of Christ*, 1562–63,” in *Hieronymus Cock: The Renaissance in Print*, ed. Joris van Grieken, Ger Luijten, and Jan van der Stock (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 262, exhibition catalog. On the drawing, executed in pen and brown ink, brush and gray ink, gray-blue wash, and green body color, 431 × 306 mm, see Hans Mielke, *Pieter Bruegel: Die Zeichnungen* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1996), 62–63, no. 56; and Peter van der Coelen, “Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen Entry Catalogus: Netherlands Drawings of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries, Pieter Bruegel (c. 1562), *The Resurrection of Christ*,” <http://collectie.boijmans.nl/en/object/90655>. Van der Coelen points out that Bruegel, though he combines two events, the resurrection proper and the holy women's visit to the tomb, as recorded in Matt 28:1–7, Mark 16:1–7, Luke 24:1–7, and John 20:1–9, departs from pictorial tradition in showing Christ unseen by the soldiers. Incised for transfer, the drawing was pasted onto an oak panel, prob-



Figure 1. Philips Galle after Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *Resurrection*, ca. 1562–1563, engraving, 451 x 330 mm. The Trustees of the British Museum, London.

ably in the late sixteenth century. On the *Resurrection* etched and engraved by the Van Doetecums after Floris, see Edward Wouk, “Joannes and Lucas van Doetecum, after Frans Floris, *The Resurrection of Christ*, 1557,” in van Grieken, Luijten, and van der Stock, *Hieronymus Cock*, 156–57, no. 33, exhibition catalog. Also see Lydia De Pauw-De Veen, *Hieronymus Cock: Prentenuitgever en graveur, 1507(?)–1570* (Brussels: Koninklijke Bibliotheek Albert I, 1970), 20, no. 51, exhibition catalog; Carl van de Velde, *Frans Floris (1519/20–1570): Leven en werken*, 2 vols. (Brussels: Koninklijke Academie van Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten, 1975), 1:403, no. P36; Timothy A. Riggs, *Hieronymus Cock: Printmaker and Publisher* (New York: Garland, 1977), no. 87; Henk Nalis, Ger Luijten, and Christian Schuckman, eds., *The New Hollstein: Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings, and Woodcuts, 1450–1700—The Van Doetecum Family (1554–1606)*, 4 vols. (Rotterdam: Sound & Vision, 1998), 1:no. 51; and Edward Wouk and Ger Luijten, eds., *The New Hollstein: Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings, and Woodcuts, 1450–1700—Frans Floris*, 2 vols. (Rotterdam: Sound & Vision, 2011), 1:lxv–lxxi, no. 45.



Figure 2. Joannes and Lucas van Doetecum after Frans Floris, *Resurrection*, 1557, etching and engraving, 640 x 454 mm. The Art Institute of Chicago.

emulative exercise involving two of the best-known masters in the Low Countries, who epitomized two modes of picturing: the one Latinate and Italianate largely based on the antique, the other demotic based on the local pictorial tradition—more specifically, on Burgundian masters such as Rogier van der Weyden.

Bruegel must have designed his version to be seen in tandem with Floris's: the composition, as reversed by Galle, closely corresponds to that in the print by the Van Doetecums (figs. 1–2).³ The pathway from Jerusa-

3. On Floris's print as one of Bruegel's chief points of reference, see Jürgen Müller, "Von Korbträgern und Vogeldieben: Die Zeichnung *Die Imker* Pieter Bruegels d. Ä. als Allegorie der Gottessuche," in *Pieter Bruegel d. Ä. und das Theater der Welt*, ed. Ingrid Mössinger and Jürgen Müller (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2014), 38–40, exhibition catalog.



Figure 3. Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *Resurrection*, circa 1562, pen and brown ink, brush and gray ink, gray-blue wash, and green bodycolor, 431 x 306 mm. Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam. Loan Museum: Boijmans Van Beuningen Foundation (former Collection Koenigs) / Credit-line photographer: Studio Tromp, Rotterdam.

lem, at right, down which the holy women approach in the dawning light, leads to a declivity that provides access to the tomb precinct and rock-cut mortuary chamber. Christ hovers at the top of the vertical space, beams of light emanating from his glorified body, sharply lit folds of drapery rippling and eddying around him. In both images, he gestures commandingly, signaling that he himself is the divine source who authorizes the mystery that renews and transforms his once perishable, now imperishable body. There are nine guards in each print, their poses roughly similar: a prominent figure at right raises his arm to shield his eyes; beside him, a sleeping figure, helmeted in one case and hatted in the other, appears in

profile; another guard crouches just beyond, sound asleep, his head pillowed by a rock. Both versions include an armed soldier who anchors the lower left corner, his legs seen from the side, his torso in a three-quarter view from behind. Nearby, another armed figure slumps in fitful sleep, his arms crossed on his thighs, his back to the sepulchre.

Other parallels complement these figural likenesses: for example, both artists call attention to the antithesis of light and darkness, of raking sunlight and penumbral shadow, of divine illumination that pierces and roils evanescent cloudbanks and sepulchral obscurity that enshrouds the burial chamber and rocky outcropping. Whereas light and shadow are strongly contrasted, the distinctions among the elements are elided to indicate how startling, indeed earth-shaking is the resurrection's effect upon the normative order of nature. In Floris's *Resurrection*, the sheer wall of rough-hewn stone at left seems to liquefy, coiling sinuously in the manner of the nearby clouds, rippling and cascading like drapery. Indeed, the distinction between rock and vapor becomes all but indiscernible. In Bruegel's *Resurrection*, escarpment and cloudbanks appear to merge and grotesque faces to emerge inchoately from the craggy rocks. Many of the stones littering the ground resemble death's heads, carved from living rock, as if by nature.

However, the differences between Floris's and Bruegel's conceptions of this great mystery are equally pronounced. Both have set the event, quite appropriately, at Eastertide, but whereas Bruegel's still wintry scene implies a date in March, Floris's grassy knoll suggests a date in April. Floris's Savior, whose face and pose recall those of Christ in Marcantonio Raimondi's *Christ in Glory with Four Intercessory Saints (the Virgin, John the Baptist, Paul, and Catherine)* after Raphael, extends his arms in the sign of the cross to affirm the connection between sacrificial death and glorious resurrection (fig. 4).⁴ Bruegel's Savior looks down at the tomb, its dark opening aligned with the stem of his banner, and points at the rising sun in a benedictory gesture that signifies how the light of salvation arises from the shadow of mortality. His gesture and gaze are echoed by the angel, who looks down and addresses the five holy women, announcing that the tomb is empty, its occupant already risen. As Jesus points toward the rising sun, so the angel summons the women to mark the signs of the Lord's rising; as Jesus grasps the banner signifying his resurrection, so the angel ges-

4. On the *Christ in Glory*, ca. 1520–1525, engraving, 290 × 422 mm, see Innis Shoemaker and Elizabeth Broun, *The Engravings of Marcantonio Raimondi* (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1981), no. 60, exhibition catalog.



Figure 4. Marcantonio Raimondi after Raphael, *Christ in Glory with Four Intercessory Saints (the Virgin, John the Baptist, Paul, and Catherine)*, ca. 1520–1525, engraving, 290 x 422 mm. The Art Institute of Chicago.

tures with his right hand toward the seal and empty sepulchre, vestiges of the resurrection. More importantly, Floris's *Resurrection* closely attaches to the pictorial tradition, unlike Bruegel's, which incorporates novel features taken from canonical patristic exegeses of Matt 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, and John 20, as codified in the *Glossa ordinaria et interlinearis* (hereafter *Glossa*) and the *Postillae* of Nicholas of Lyra and then paraphrased in Erasmus of Rotterdam's immensely popular *Paraphrases* on the four gospels, written during 1522 and 1523 and issued by Froben Press both singly and in revised editions comprising all the *Paraphrases* (1524, 1534, and 1535).⁵

5. On the *Glossa*, see Lesley Smith, *The 'Glossa Ordinaria': The Making of a Modern Bible Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2009); and Karlfried Froehlich, "Makers and Takers: The Shaping of the Biblical *Glossa ordinaria*" and "Walafrid Strabo and the *Glossa ordinaria*: The Making of a Myth," in *Biblical Interpretation from the Church Fathers to the Reformation* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), 1–19, 192–96. On early modern printed editions of the *Glossa*, see Froehlich, "The Printed Gloss," in *Biblia Latina cum Glossa ordinaria: Facsimile Reprint of the Editio Princeps Adolph Rusch of Strassburg 1480–81* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1992), 1:xii–xxvi; and Froehlich, "An Extraordinary Achievement: The *Glossa ordinaria* in Print" and "The Fate of the *Glossa ordinaria* in the Sixteenth Century," in *Biblical Interpretation*, 15–21, and 19–47. On Erasmus's *Paraphrases*, see Jacques Chomarat, "Grammar and Rhetoric in the *Paraphrases* of the

The Van Doetecum print includes a hexastich that encapsulates the meaning of the resurrection in doctrinal rather than descriptive terms, thereby cleaving closely to the gospels, which dwell not on the event per se, unseen as it was by human eyes, but on its aftermath, the various *apparitiones Christi* by which the truth of the resurrection was made known to the apostles and disciples: “By the abolishment of death, triumphs the victor who lives again; grace, life, salvation—brought forth, they are restored to pitiable humankind. Rising victorious, Christ, you expiate the penalty, releasing [us] from death, giving life to the world and a new law. You who hung from the cross and suffered bitter death, have risen from the tumult; alive you direct your course heavenward.”⁶

The pictorial image, on the other hand, diverges from this abridgement: for one thing, it conflates the events chronicled in Matt 28:2–4—the arrival of an angel descended from heaven, who rolls back the stone, and whose flashing countenance and brilliant raiment so overwhelm the guards that, struck with terror, they become “as dead men”—with the resurrection proper, making it seem as if Jesus is raised up by angels, rather than by the power of God, inherent in Christ himself. In a glaring anachronism, what Matthew described as occurring after the fact, is instead seen as coincident with the mystery that came before. The soldier thrown off balance by this wondrous sight, who tries to shield his eyes from the blinding refulgence of the risen Christ, makes it seem as if, by the simple expedient of shifting his raised arm, he could witness the coming forth of *Christus redivivus*, in contravention of the gospel account. The three holy women visible in the middle distance at right, presumably Mary Magdalene, Mary the

Gospels by Erasmus,” *Erasmus of Rotterdam Society Yearbook* 1 (1981): 46–68; John B. Payne, Albert Rabil Jr., and Warren S. Smith Jr., “The *Paraphrases* of Erasmus: Origin and Character,” in *New Testament Scholarship: Paraphrases on Romans and Galatians*, vol. 42 of *Collected Works of Erasmus*, ed. Robert D. Sider (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), xi–xix; and Roger A. B. Mynors, “The Publication of the Latin *Paraphrases*,” in Sidler, *New Testament Scholarship*, xx–xxix. On Erasmus’s efforts to align his reading of Scripture with the exegetical tradition, see Erika Rummel, *Erasmus’ Annotations on the New Testament: From Philologist to Theologian* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 52–74.

6. “Abolita victor redivivus morte triumphat / Parta redit miseris, gratia, vita, salus / Morte luis poenam, victor sed Christe resurgens / Das vitam mundo, iustitiamque novam / Qui cruce sustinuit mortem suspensus acerbam / Surrexit tumulo, vivus et astra petit” (all English versions of Latin quotations, except for Scripture, are my translations unless otherwise noted).



Figure 5. Cherubino Alberti after Cornelis Cort, *Resurrection after Giulio Clovio*, ca. 1580, 440 x 310 mm. The Trustees of the British Museum, London.

mother of James, and [Mary] Salome (Mark 16:1), who arrived according to Matthew after the resurrection, at or just after the appearance of the angel whose *apparitio* stunned the guards, implicitly identify the event taking place in the foreground as earlier—the very moment of resurrection, which actually took place before their arrival.

In fact, the liberties taken by Floris are exceptions that prove the rule, as becomes evident from other prints of the *Resurrection*, all conventional, produced shortly afterward. The much copied version of 1569 by Cornelis Cort after Giulio Clovio, for instance, shows the soldiers reacting violently to the presence of Christ, whose sudden appearance causes them to start back and seize their weapons (fig. 5).⁷ If the prominent soldier shielding his eyes, like his counterpart in the Van Doetecum print, suggests ambiguo-

7. On Cort's *Resurrection* after Giulio Clovio, illustrated here in a copy attributed to Cherubino Alberti, 440 × 310 mm, see Manfred Sellink and Huigen Leeftang, eds., *The New Hollstein: Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings, and Woodcuts, 1450–1700—Cornelis Cort*, 3 vols. (Rotterdam: Sound & Vision, 2000), 1:no. 74.



Figure 6. Hendrick Goltzius after Anthonie Blocklandt, *Resurrection*, ca. 1577, engraving, 262 x 200 mm. The Trustees of the British Museum, London.

ously that the resurrection is at one and the same time seen and yet not seen, the other soldiers (the seated one looking up at right and the startled one at left, recoiling and yet transfixed) invite us to infer that they are eyewitnesses. Four other versions, all published by Philips Galle, likewise imply that the resurrection was witnessed.

The *Resurrection* of ca. 1577, engraved by Hendrick Goltzius after Anthonie Blocklandt van Montfoort, portrays Christ displaying himself to us and looking into our eyes; his gesture of address urges us to read the resurrection as the fulfillment of the mystical prophecy inscribed below (fig. 6): “But thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; nor wilt thou give thy holy one to see corruption.”⁸ The guards, who react with fear and trembling to

8. “Quoniam non derelinques animam meam in inferno nec dabis sanctum videre corruptionem.” The inscription quotes Ps 15:10 (*Biblia Sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*; ET: *Holy Bible Translated from the Latin Vulgate*). Unless otherwise noted, biblical citations in English are taken from the DRA, which cleaves closely to the Latin Vulgate. The print measures 262 x 200 mm.



Figure 7. Anonymous (published by Philips Galle), *Nativity, Crucifixion, and Resurrection*, engraving, 190 x 298 mm. The Trustees of the British Museum, London.

an event that should, on the contrary, gladden its beneficiaries, are juxtaposed to true Christians such as ourselves, who construe the resurrection not as terrifying but as consolatory. The print alludes to the last judgment, when the saved will rejoice in the second coming of Christ, even as the damned deplore it.

Another engraving, dated 1578, combines the resurrection with two other *manifestationes mysteriorum Christi*: he is shown to the shepherds at the nativity, displayed to Mary, John, the Magdalene, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem at the crucifixion, and, it would seem, revealed to the guards at the resurrection (fig. 7).⁹ One of them, seated at right, looks directly at Christ as he rises and steps forward from the tomb. It is as if the guards were certifying at first hand the mystery prophesied in the two scriptural pericopes quoted below, one from the Old Testament, the other from the New (John 2:19 and Ps 15:10).

The oblong *Resurrection* after Jan van der Straet—inscribed, “When the third day dawned, newly risen the victor returned to life in solemn

9. Although it is not described in *The New Hollstein—Philips Galle*, the *Nativity, Crucifixion, and Resurrection* (190 × 298 mm) was certainly published by Galle, as the signature “Philippus Galleus excudebat” indicates.

triumph, death having been laid low, the innocent victim by his slaughter having appeased the Father”—intimates that Christ returned to life before the very eyes of the guards, whom his conquest over death laid low (fig. 8).¹⁰ This print forms parts of the series *Passio, mors et resurrectio Domini nostri Jesu Christi*, produced ca. 1580, which purports to illustrate the life of Christ as recounted in the gospels. Like the other versions cited above, Van der Straet superimposes onto the resurrection the event described in John 18:6: when Christ, in the Garden of Gethsemane, reveals to the soldiers and servants of the chief priests and the Pharisees that he is Jesus of Nazareth, they are thrown backward and fall to the ground.



Figure 8. Anonymous after Jan van der Straet (published by Philips Galle), *Resurrection*, engraving, 195 x 264 mm. The Trustees of the British Museum, London.

10. “Tertius ut caelo post tristia sabbata coepit / Irradiare dies. Reijt redivivus in oras / Prostrata Victor solenni morte triumpho: / Immeritaque Patrem placavit Victima caede.” On this *Resurrection*, designed by Johannes Stradanus (Jan van der Straet) and published by Philips Galle (195 × 264 mm), see Marjolein Leesberg and Huigen Leeftang, eds., *The New Hollstein: Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings, and Woodcuts, 1450–1700—Johannes Stradanus*, 3 vols. (Oudekerk aan den IJssel: Sound & Vision, 2008), 2:no. 88.

Bruegel eschews these liberties taken with the scriptural reports of the events that were corollary to the resurrection and by which it has come to be promulgated (fig. 1). He cleaves closely throughout to Scripture: the group of five women, to start with, are a harmonization of Mark 16:1, which, as previously noted, identifies Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and [Mary] Salome as present, and Luke 24:10: "And it was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary of James, and the other women that were with them." He relies on Matt 28:1–10 for the main details of the scene: the angel sitting on the stone he has rolled back, his countenance like lightning, his raiment white as snow, who admonishes the women, "Fear not you." One of them has caught sight of the angel and responds accordingly, her hands folded in prayer. Her companion, as yet unaware of the angel, gestures in surprise, enacting Mark 16:4: "And looking, they saw the stone rolled back."

In the far distance, Bruegel inserts the figures of Cleophas and his companion, en route to Emmaus, the fortified town (*castellum*) visible at left. One of them gesticulates with his raised right arm, indicating that they are "talk[ing] together of all these things which had happened" (Luke 24:14). They walk away from the light of the sun because, Jesus having yet to appear, the significance of these events remains obscure and undiscovered. Bruegel has divided the image into two episodes (to the right and left of the vertical axis defined by the angel), which correspond to (1) the arrival of the women and their exchange with the angel (Matt 28:5–7), and (2) the reaction of the soldiers after their initial shock has subsided (28:11), respectively. According to Matthew, some of them eventually departed to tell "the chief priests all things that had been done," which is to say that they closely observed and remembered what had transpired.

Bruegel takes great care to show them responding to the traces of the angel: one kneels to inspect the massive stone, conferring with the guardsman beside him. Two others peer down into the rock-cut tomb, and one of them extends an open hand to signal that the chamber is empty. Crucially, no one responds straightway to the risen Christ, who floats high above the women and the soldiers, his glorious presence occluded by enveloping clouds. To emphasize that Christ, present and yet unseen, is knowable only by means of mediating *indicia* ("probative signs"), Bruegel has him point toward the rising sun, in a rhetorical gesture that impels us to recognize it as a visual analogue to the resurrection.¹¹

11. On *indicia* and their relation to *signa* and *symptomata*, see Ian Maclean, *Logic*,

The guardsman seated on sheaves of straw at the lower right, who stares in the direction of the women and the dawning light, his arm raised to shield his eyes, differs from his counterpart in Floris's *Resurrection*, for he beholds not the resplendent Savior but, rather, his solar proxy. He may also be reacting to the light of the angel, whose brightness was seen by the soldiers, according to Matt 28:4. The viewer's vantage point exactly correlates to another *indicium* or, better, *argumentum* ("evidentiary proof or token")—the unbroken seal, situated at mid-height, whence one can either look down with the soldiers or up with the woman, following their lines of sight as they scan for *evidentiae Resurrectionis*, the corroborating marks by which the resurrection may be discerned. The angel signals to the women with his left hand, calling attention to the seal with his right. This is the seal affixed by the chief priests and the Pharisees to prevent Christ's followers from stealing away his body and falsely claiming that his prophecy, "After three days I will rise again," has come true (Matt 27:63–66). It serves oppositely, and ironically, to license the truth of the mystery fulfilled.

Moreover, Bruegel, or perhaps more precisely, Galle and the Van Doetecums, also comment meta-pictorially on his ability to offer a visual warrant for the resurrection: the print is a picture of a framed picture and, as such, this image qua image aligns with other patently visual signs of the mystery that must be known at second hand, by faith in the veridical signs left in its wake.¹²

The *Resurrection*, in these and other ways, emphasizes that vision and image are divinely licensed instruments of faith. In what follows, I propose to explore how Bruegel's image, in the arguments it puts forth about the *evidentiae Resurrectionis*, breaks with pictorial convention in order to engage directly with the exegetical tradition. Like his contemporary grisaille *Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery* of 1565, Bruegel's *Resurrection* constitutes the visual exegesis of a scriptural crux that was closely examined in the Glossa and other exegetical compendia and, as such, was undoubtedly familiar to biblically literate associates of Bruegel (not least

Signs, and Nature in the Renaissance: The Case of Learned Medicine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 148–205, 276–332.

12. The frame has been cut away from most copies of the print; the sole surviving exemplar of the full frame, housed in the Museum of Western Art, Tokyo, displays a richly profiled border and cast shadows above and at right. On the frame, see Van der Coelen, <http://collectie.boijmans.nl/en/object/90655>.

to Cock, Galle, and Abraham Ortelius, among others): how are such mysteries as the resurrection made discernible to human minds and hearts as matters of belief?¹³ Bruegel's print consistently adheres to the arguments of these textual comparanda. The comparanda derive, for the most part, from the fathers, whose authoritative readings came to be supplemented, in sixteenth-century editions of the *Glossa*, with other patristic citations taken from handy compilations, such as Thomas of Aquinas's *Catena aurea*.¹⁴

The *Glossa* provides a warrant for the convergence of the *Resurrection*'s primary axes—vertical, horizontal, and diagonal—not on Christ but on the angelic messenger who announces to the women that the Lord “is not here, for he is risen” (Matt 28:6). According to Hieronymus, the angel promulgates *ostentus* and *indicia* of the resurrection: he comes not to facilitate the event itself but, rather, to serve as the Lord's messenger after he has already risen at a time of his own choosing, a time known to no man (*quod nulli mortalium cognita est*).¹⁵ As Hieronymus puts it: “[The angel] disclosed (*indicasse*) what had transpired; by rolling back the stone, he showed (*ostendisse*) the sepulchre to be empty and revealed his own presence.”¹⁶ This argument accords with that of Bede, who summarizes the meaning of the *indiciu*m broadcast by the angel: “The angel rolled back the stone, not to throw open the door for the Lord's going forth, but in order

13. On this grisaille, one of three painted by Bruegel, and its exegetical form and function, see Walter S. Melion, “Introduction: Visual Exegesis and Pieter Bruegel's *Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery*,” in *Imago Exegetica: Visual Images as Exegetical Instruments, 1400–1700*, ed. Walter S. Melion, James Clifton, and Michel Weemans (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 1–41. With respect to Bruegel's *Resurrection* drawing, I use the term *grisaille* as a matter of convenience, since the modello, as Müller aptly observes, is not technically a grisaille but, rather, a wash drawing (Jürgen Müller, “Von Korbträgern und Vogeldieben: Die Zeichnung *Die Imker* Pieter Bruegels d. Ä. als Allegorie der Gottessuche,” in *Pieter Bruegel d. Ä. und das Theater der Welt*, ed. Ingrid Mössinger et al. [Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2014], 38, exhibition catalog).

14. On the *catena biblica* as an exegetical device, see Carl F. G. Heinrici, “Catenaë,” in *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, ed. Samuel M. Jackson et al. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1908), 2:451–53; Alberto Vaccari, “Catene Bibliche,” in *Enciclopedia Cattolica*, ed. Celestino Testore, S.J., et al. (Florence: Sansoni, 1948–1954), 3:1131–35; and Thomas C. O'Connor Sloane, “Catenaë, Biblical,” in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, ed. William J. MacDonald et al. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), 3:244–46.

15. *Gloss. ord.* 5:467.

16. “*Indicasse quod factum est: Et sepulchrum vacuum revolutione lapidis, & sui ostendisse praesentiam*” (*Gloss. ord.* 5:467).

to give proof of it to humankind (*hominibus praestet indicium*). For he who emerged into the world from the fastness of a virgin womb could depart out of the world by rising immortal from a closed sepulchre.”¹⁷ With reference to the angel’s command “Come and see the place where the Lord was laid,” the interlinear gloss gives a further justification for his apparition, which is seen to ratify the truth of an event that words alone may fail to convey (*et si verbis non creditis*).¹⁸ Conversely, *indicia* generate a process of attestation that must needs continue at second and third hand: “Nor are we allowed in our hearts to keep this joy secret, but we must likewise reveal it to [fellow] lovers [of Christ].”¹⁹

The emphasis on visible signs of the resurrection pervades the Glossa’s exegesis of Matt 28. Nicholas points out that the evangelist parses the mystery into three parts having to do with the dissemination of evidence visually and aurally (*ad evidentiam*): first, the women’s attentiveness to Christ, as expressed by their pious desire to visit his entombed body (*mulierum devotio*); second, the angelic apparition (*Angeli apparitio*); third, the angel’s words, which are a third register of *manifestatio* (*resurrectionis manifestatio, ibi: “Scio enim”*).²⁰

The logic of manifestation requires us to be as vigilant as the women in examining the circumstances under which the signs were propagated. For example, when and how did they first become visible? The answer entails visualizing what Matthew’s prefatory words signify, “And in the end of the sabbath, when it began to dawn towards the first day of the week....” The women, the Glossa surmises, set out at night, having prepared unguents after sunset on the Sabbath, the day of rest, and they arrived at daybreak, just as the sun was dawning. They thereby anchor the analogy of rising light (*lucescere mane*) to the glory of the risen Christ (*lucescere pro gloria resurrectionis*).

Although night is usually attached to the day it follows, here, in recognition of the dawning light of salvation, the night when Christ rose is

17. “Angelus revolvit lapidem, non ut egressuro Domino ianuam pandat, sed ut egressus eius iam facti, hominibus praestet indicium. Qui enim mortalis clauso virginis utero potuit nascendo ingredi mundum, ipse factus immortalis clauso sepulchro potuit resurgendo exire de mundo” (Gloss. ord. 5:467).

18. Gloss. ord. 5:467–68.

19. “Nec concessum est nobis, hoc gaudium occulto cordis tenere, sed similiter amantibus pandere” (Gloss. ord. 5:467–68).

20. Gloss. ord. 5:465.

attached to the day when evidence of his resurrection first became visible. Matthew's usage is very particular, even idiosyncratic, for the term *vespere* usually implies that the end of day is shading into night (*vespere solet tenebrescere*). Here, however, it means just the opposite, for *vespere*, as Matthew construes it, stands for the transition from the darkness of night to the light of day: "Now the order mutates, and the night in which he rose up is subjoined to the day in which he showed himself.... *Vespere*, that is, the time when night was growing light, or again, when night was drawing to a close, for the dawn [of the women's arrival] is the last, not the first part of night."²¹ The changing order of eventide's relation to night-fall and daybreak, as set out in the Glossa, surely underwrites Bruegel's very precise description of auroral effects. The light of the sun brightly edges the figures; as it rakes across the women, the soldiers, and the tomb site, sunlight also sharply silhouettes them. In addition, it casts penumbral, semitransparent shadows. These fugitive phenomena, as recorded by Bruegel, accord even more fully with the explanation of Mark 16:1, "The sun being now risen, ..." which describes how the light of dawn was intermixed with night's receding shadows. Christ's gesture of pointing, as mentioned above, licenses the comparison of these early morning effects to the *gloria resurrectionis*, for whose spiritual light they may be thought to function as potent *indicia*.

Bruegel scrutinizes the behavior of the women and the soldiers, who react variously to these indicators of the resurrection. Among the women, the responses are graduated: one of the two in front looks at the angel, the other at the stone he has dislodged; behind and between them, another watches the woman who spies the tombstone, presumably soon to follow her lead. Two others, their eyes downcast, have yet to descry anything. They dejectedly bring up the rear, unaware of the miracle and inattentive to the evidence left by Christ.

Four of the soldiers puzzle over the relics of the resurrection; another, just awoken, is dazzled by the light of the rising sun; three others are fast asleep, while a fourth, his view blocked by the shallow ridge against which he reclines as well as by the brim of his hat, entirely fails to see anything of note. Bruegel, in other words, emphasizes that the *indicia resurrectionis*, though potentially discernible, are anything but apparent to these putative

21. "Nunc ordo mutat, & nox qua resurrexit, diei quo se ostendit adiuncta est.... *Vespere*, id est, nocte quae lucescit, id est, quae terminatur luce, quod on prima pars noctis est, sed extrema pars noctis est diluculum quo venerunt" (Gloss. ord. 5:465).

onlookers. Although his drawing and the print after it appear distinctive in this respect, even idiosyncratic, they correspond to exegetical convention, which asserts, following Chrysostom, that “among the signs of Christ[’s resurrection], you might suppose that the ones pertinent to the whole world were obscure [to it] (*tenebrae*).”²² Chrysostom also helps to explain why Bruegel pays such close attention to the baffled soldiers’ efforts to observe, if not to comprehend, the vestigial remains of the resurrection: “And the ones directed at the guardsmen for the purpose of astonishing them, such as the miraculous angelic apparition and the earthquake, resulted in their bearing witness to the truth. For the truth, having befallen its enemies, shines more brightly when acknowledged by them.”²³

Chrysostom, like Bruegel, is alluding to the report delivered by a subset of guardsmen to the chief priests, on the basis of their experience as eyewitnesses (Matt 28:11). The Greek father’s assessment of the legibility of God-given *signa* (*signorum quaedam*) forms part of his argument in the *Hom. Matt.* 91, that the resurrection must be ascertained by recourse to the many evidentiary traces that represent it to human sense:

How could the disciples, poor and untutored men, hardly daring to be seen in public, have purloined [the corpse of Christ]? Could they have broken through the door of the sepulchre? Was a seal not placed upon it? ... But what of the *sudaria* that Peter saw lying [in the tomb] (Luke 24:12). For even if they had wanted to abscond with the body, they could not have stolen it nude, for they wished neither to injure it nor to be delayed by stripping it, thus giving the soldiers cause to detain them.²⁴

These and other markers, as Chrysostom asseverates, testify to the truth of the resurrection, which must be elicited from them at second hand.

22. “Signorum quae circa Christum apparuerunt, quaedam fuerunt orbi terrarum communia, puta tenebrae” (Gloss. ord. 5:469).

23. “Quaedam propria militibus custodientibus, sicut mira Angeli apparitio, & terrae motus, quae propter milites facta sunt, ut stupefierent, ut ab ipsis fiat testimonium veritatis. Veritas enim a contrariis divulgata, magis refulget, quod & contigit” (Gloss. ord. 5:469).

24. “Qualiter furati sunt discipuli homines pauperes, & idiotae, & neque apparere audentes? Nunquid ostium sepulchri poterant evertere? Nunquid non erat sigillum superpositum? ... Quid autem sibi volunt haec sudaria, quae Petrus vidit iacentia? Si enim vellent furari, non possent nudum corpus furari, non solum ne iniuriarentur, sed ne etiam in exuendo tardarent, & tribuerent militibus se detinendi facultatem” (Gloss. ord. 5:470).

This is why, infers the Glossa with reference to Matt 28:16 (“And the eleven disciples went into Galilee, unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them”), Christ did not instantly reveal himself at the moment of his rising. Instead, he “preceded” his disciples (*praecessit*, from *praecedere*, “to remove onself by going in advance”), whom the glossator designates the “firstfruit of the sleepers”—that is, of those not yet awakened to belief in the resurrection.²⁵ The removal of Christ in Bruegel’s *Resurrection*, his position high above and apart from the women and the soldiers, answers to the Glossa’s portrayal of him as situated beyond the realm of human apprehension, whence his presence may be deduced from indexical relics of the resurrection.

The comments on Mark 16 largely dwell on the question of signs and why Christ relied on them to impart the resurrection. The women were highly sensitive to *indicia*, implies the glossator, on the basis of Mark 15:47, “And Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of Joseph, beheld where he was laid,” because wishing to pay homage to the Lord’s body, they were predisposed “to observe accurately,” as Victor Antiochenus states, the location and circumstances his entombment.²⁶ Indeed, as Bede avers, they were “humble souls who diligently devoted themselves to the relics of his Passion, burning more fervently with love of the Savior as their awareness of his human frailty grew apace.”²⁷ The “pious curiosity” (*pia curiositate*) that animates their desire to imitate Christ, as evinced in Matt 15, provides the backdrop for their privilege of learning from the *vestigia resurrectionis* in Matt 16, even though, as commentators such as Severianus and Theophylactus have noted, they lacked faith in the resurrection and initially failed to recognize the “magnitude and dignity of Christ’s divinity.”²⁸ Deficient faith, as the tropological gloss to a later episode in Mark 16 (the appearance of Christ to two pilgrims journeying through the countryside) declares, is the primary reason why Christ chose to reveal the

25. “Praecessit Christus primitiae dormientium sequuntur alij in suo ordine” (Gloss. ord. 5:470).

26. “Mulieres assident, & accurate, ubi dominus ponatur, observant” (Gloss. ord. 5:654).

27. “Cum animae humiles & quo maioris sibi consciae fragilitatis, eo maiore salvatoris amore ferventes, passionis eius vestigiis in hoc saeculo (quo praeparanda requies futura) diligenter obsequuntur” (Gloss. ord. 5:654).

28. “Non enim magnitudinem atque dignitatem divinitatis Christi sapiunt” (Gloss. ord. 5:653).

resurrection to his disciples indirectly, not openly (*veritas non revelatur aperte*).²⁹ Overcome by the fear of death, as an interlinear gloss opines, the women were incapable of discerning this life-affirming fact, if not by way of the image of the resurrection (*formam resurrectionis*) embodied by the bright angel they encountered within the tomb.³⁰ The etymology of the term tomb (*monumentum*), as Nicholas specifies, contains an allusion to the mediating function of all such signs, which are divinely designed “to move the mind and heart” (*movens mentem = monumentum*), compelling them to believe what must otherwise appear impossible or implausible.³¹ Like the “glory of the opened sepulchre” (*patefacti sepulchri gloriam*), they are dispensed as prompts, preliminaries to a fuller opening of eyes and hearts that would otherwise remain spiritually shuttered (*obscuratum erat vestrum pectus, oculi clausi*).³²

Elsewhere in the comments on Mark 16, the Glossa formulates a general defense of *argumenta* as *prima facie* evidence of the resurrection. First, they prove useful because of their adaptability to contingencies of every kind. Christ utilizes them to accommodate various human capabilities. The women, for instance, are given to see a radiant youth because this “image” (*visionem*) conforms to their “feebleness and simplicity” of faith (*exilitati & simplicitati plane conformem*): “For they were such, fit to see neither the Savior, nor the angel ablaze like lightning (Matt 28:3), or the two angels sitting within the tomb (John 20:12), or the two men standing at hand, as Luke narrates (Luke 24:4).”³³ On this account, signs are divinely adapted to human psychology and, as such, abide by the rhetorical rule of decorum. Bruegel’s effort to show a wide range of reaction to the *argumenta resurrectionis* speaks to this notion of semiotic malleability.

Second, the signs that give evidence of the resurrection are to be construed as a subset of the many kinds and degrees of divinely sanctioned images by which we glimpse God in this life, while awaiting the beatific vision securely to be granted *facie ad faciem* in the life to come. They are

29. Gloss. ord. 5:660.

30. Gloss. ord. 5:655–56.

31. “Dicitur autem monumentum quasi movens mentem” (Gloss. ord. 5:656).

32. Gloss. ord. 5:655. This observation comes from the glossator.

33. “Et quia tales erant, neque quae salvatorem viderent, neque Angelum instar fulguris fulgentem, aut duos Angelos in monumento sedentes, aut duos viros iuxta, ut Lucas narrat, astantes conspicerent dignae visae sunt” (Gloss. ord. 5:658).

like specular images that adumbrate and stand proxy for the fuller vision of God that shall one day follow. The glossator's image theory, which turns on the dual analogy of *argumenta* to images, and of the vision of God to the resurrection, constitutes a reading of Mark 16:12, "And after that he appeared in another form (*in alia effigie*) to two of them walking, as they were going into the countryside."³⁴ The phrase *in alia effigie* ("in another form, shape, image") is interpreted as a warrant for all the image-based *argumenta* that served to transmit knowledge of the resurrection to human eyes, hearts, and minds: "Here an eager faith enacts the active life, there by contemplative vision a secure faith reigns. Here we see a mirrored image (*per speculum contuemur imaginem*), there we shall see the truth face to face. Wherefore he showed himself in another form to those two who were walking afterwards in the countryside."³⁵ The *argumenta* are like the image used by Christ to defer true knowledge of himself until these two disciples, their doubtful faith shored up, had shown themselves worthy of recognizing him more directly. This image is a species of the *imagines* that shall continue to encode and defer the vision of God until we are beatified and able to see with spiritual eyes.

As Nicholas trenchantly remarks, the *argumenta* are therefore evidentiary in a double sense: they animadvert not only to the risen Christ but also to the condition of the human hearts in which he dwells only partially, faith in the resurrection having still not arisen:

And because they were doubtful in faith, ... Christ for this reason appeared to them in another form, thereby to signify in what sort he dwelt within their heart [*talis erat apud eos in mente*]. But some say that this was done through some sort of change in the face of Christ, just as at the Transfiguration.... Others say that the change took place only in the eyes of the beholders, and this view accords with what is said about that apparition in Luke 24:16, "But their eyes were held, that they should not know him." Howsoever, there was no falsehood in what was done, for just as something can be fashioned in words and so too in deeds,

34. Throughout this section of my article, biblical citations are taken from the Latin text of the Vulgate and embedded within the framing columnar glosses.

35. "Fides hic laborat agens activam vitam, illic contemplativa secunda visione regnat. Hic per speculum contuemur imaginem, illic facie ad faciem videbimus veritatem. Unde post hoc duobus ex eis etc. ambulantibus, idest laborantibus ostensus est in alia effigie" (Gloss. ord. 5:659). The glossator identifies Jerome as the source of this paraphrase.

but the former without falsehood, as becomes evident in the parables of the New and Old Testaments, wherein something suitable to signifying some truth is fashioned in words, so also in the same manner Christ here effected to appear in an image.³⁶

The *argumenta* are likened to the *effigies* put forth by Christ, and again, to his parabolic images that represent truths as incontrovertibly as the deeds these images analogize. As *parabola* are rendered *in verbis*, so *argumenta* are rendered *in effigiebus* that harken back to the *facta* and *doctrina* embodied by Christ. Bruegel adverts to the relation between *factum* and *signum* by depicting the angel, in pose, gesture, and facial expression, as an epigone or, better, emanation of Christ. Even the angel's robe is likened to the billowing drapery of Christ. That the angel sits rather than floating upward and his robe hangs down rather than fluttering in midair indicate that signs, even when they cleave closely to the divine truths they represent, operate within the mimetic constraints of the terrestrial sphere. The same can be said of the angel's aureole that emits a lesser, more circumscribed light than the far-more-expansive refulgence of Christ. The status of the *argumenta resurrectionis* as veridical images is underscored by the Van Doetecum print's elaborate frame, which insists on the pictorial standing of the *Resurrection*, thus stressing that the arguments it adduces are bound up with a discourse of images.

Bruegel's conception of the *Resurrection* can be seen to correspond to a Mosaic type for the mode of the mystery's transmission, as advanced by the glossator in his reading of Mark 16:12, specifically of the phrase *ostensus est in alia effigie*. Just as Moses complains in Exod 33:12–16 that the Lord has thus far concealed his glory, allowing neither his minister nor his chosen people to know him directly, so the two travelers who lament the death of Christ are prevented by him from discerning the glory of his risen

36. "Et quia erant dubii in fide ... ideo Christus apparuit eis in alia effigie, ut per hoc designaret quod talis erat apud eos in mente. Dicunt autem aliqui quod hoc factum est per aliquam mutationem factam in facie Christi, sicut in transfiguratione.... Alii vero dicunt, quod ista mutatio fuit tantum in oculis videntium, et huic dicto concordat quod dicitur de ista apparitione. Luc. 24.c. 'Oculi autem eorum tenebantur, ne eum agnoscerent.' Qualitercunque tamen factum sit non fuit ibi aliqua falsitas. Cuius ratio est quia sicut aliquid potest fingi verbis, ita & factis, primum autem fit sine falsitate, ut patet in para. novi ac vet. Testamenti, quibus aliquid fingitur verbis ad veritatem aliquam convenientius designandam. Et eodem modo hic Christus facto apparuit in effigie" (Gloss. ord. 5:659).

body. Moses asks God to grant the favor of showing his face: "If therefore I have found favor in thy sight, shew me thy face, that I may know thee, and may find grace before thy eyes: look upon thy people this nation.... For how shall we be able to know, I and thy people, that we have found grace in thy sight, unless thou walk with us, that we may be glorified by all people that dwell upon the earth?" In response, God promises that his "face shall go before thee" and also that he shall walk with his people, "shew[ing] them all good." But he withholds the splendor of his face: "Thou canst not see my face: for man shall not see me and live.... And I will take away my hand, and thou shalt see my back parts, but my face thou canst not see." The Glossa draws a parallel between this exchange and the appearance of Christ to his disciples *ex argumentis*. Likewise implicit is an analogy of place: the rock-cut sepulchre recalls the "hole of the rock" where God set Moses, shielding him with his right hand, until his glory had passed (Exod 33:21–22). Bruegel's radiant Christ, passing above the rock-cut tomb—his arm extended in a benedictory gesture evocative of God's shielding hand, his face, indeed his whole person, imperceptible to the people below—functions as a veritable antitype to the Mosaic type invoked by the glossator. It is as if Bruegel composed his scene with the type in mind, correlating the *Resurrection* to its primary elements in order to invoke a precedent for the risen Christ's strategy of forestalling his self-revelatory *apparitiones*. Like God the Father, he "shew[s] all good," disseminating signs of his presence, even while concealing himself.

Third, in answer to the question why does Jesus do this, the Glossa argues, citing Bede, that he wishes less to expose the infirm faith of the disciples than to make firm the faith of succeeding generations, through the many *argumenta* that proliferated as an antidote to the disciples' disbelief (*per multa argumenta monstrata est*). It is incumbent upon them, and us, to give credence to these God-given signs, as the Glossa insists by praising the gentiles, who saw nothing of the resurrection itself and believed nonetheless in the signs and eyewitness reports conveyed to them at second and third hand (*quae non viderunt crediturae essent*). Bruegel, by focusing intently on the form, function, and meaning of the *indicia* and *argumenta resurrectionis*, calls upon us to consider how they were used to secure faith in the resurrection and asks that we reflect on the promulgation of this great mystery and our relation to it. He also invites us to interpret his pictorial image as one such *argumentum*, licensed in its purpose of proclaiming the resurrection, by the image-making activity of Christ himself, source of the evidentiary *effigies* described in the gospels.

The Glossa, in its reading of Luke 24, especially verses 13–33 on the journey to Emmaus, provides an elaborate justification of divinely sanctioned *signa*, *argumenta*, and *documenta* (“documentary proofs”). The terms are used almost interchangeably to drive home the point that such signs are invaluable as verifying instruments. In a very specific sense, they function like scriptural *typi* (“figural types”) that require exegetical unveiling or, more precisely, decoding, if they are properly to be understood. The glossator makes this clear by comparing the stone rolled back from the sepulchre (Luke 24:1) to the veil of the letter of the law that covered over the sacred mysteries of Christ (*sacr[a] Christi*) under the old dispensation. The opening of the sepulchre signifies the revelation of these mysteries by Christ, whose resurrection—initially withheld from human eyes, then confirmed *gradatim* by representational signs, and at last disclosed incontrovertibly through the bodily and spiritual agency of Christ himself in his *apparationes*—licenses, in the way it comes to be known, the translation of referential types into fully discernible antitypes, of partial into full-fledged images, the coming forth of which enact the *revelationem sacrorum Christi*: “The rolling back of the stone signifies the revelation of the sacred mysteries of Christ that were covered over by the veil of the letter. The Law was written in stone: upon removal of the [Law’s] integument, the Lord’s dead body was nowhere to be found, but instead his living body was preached evangelically, for even though we knew Christ according to the flesh, we now know him no longer in this way.”³⁷ We instead know him according to the glorified body he finally showed to his disciples, having prepared them to receive it by way of various mediating images that proved beneficial not only to them but to the whole church: “That the disciples were slow to believe [in the resurrection], speaks not so much to their infirmity as to our future firmness [of faith], for the resurrection was revealed to those doubters by virtue of many evidentiary proofs (*multis argumentis*), through which, provided that we read and understand them, we are as if fortified by their doubt.”³⁸

37. “Revolutio lapidis significat reserationem sacrorum Christi, quae velo literae tegebantur. Lex in lapide scripta est cuius ablato tegmine domini corpus mortuum non invenitur, sed vivum evangelizatur, quia etsi cognovimus Christum secundum carnem, sed iam non novimus” (Gloss. ord. 5:997).

38. “Quod discipuli tarde credunt, non tam illorum infirmitas quam nostra futura firmitas fuit, nam illis dubitantibus resurrectio multis argumentis monstratur,

The fundamental analogy between reading *signa* and reading Scripture, between discerning signs and exegetical unfolding, derives from the content of Luke 24:27–31, in which exposition of the Scriptures concerning Christ predisposes Cleophas and his companion (often identified as Luke) finally to recognize him at table when he breaks, blesses, and distributes bread. The opening of their eyes (Luke 24:31: *aperti sunt oculi eorum et cognoverunt eum*) completes the process initiated by exhaustive exegesis of the prophecies foretelling him. Taking his cue from this sequence, the glossator applies the term *legente* (“reading”) to the signs propounded as traces of the resurrection and as an earnest of what shall retrospectively be believed and understood about it.³⁹

Following from the glosses on Matt 28 and Mark 16, the glossator, along with Nicholas, here contends that the *signa* at issue are in fact *effigies* (“images”). He does this in several ways. First, he frequently states that the signs of the resurrection, even when accompanied by words, were primarily visual in form and function. For example, he says about the two men who suddenly appeared in shining apparel (Luke 24:4) that, in announcing the glory of Christ triumphant, they impressed as much if not more by their radiant garments as by their words (*qui non solum verbo, sed etiam fulgenti habitu gloriam annunciant triumphantis*).⁴⁰

Second, the *signa resurrectionis* are occasionally treated as themselves a subset of the *apparitiones Christi*. Nicholas, to cite one instance, when he parses how the resurrection was described by stages to Christ’s followers, refers to the two men’s appearance and announcement as the “apparition of Christ delivered to the women” (*Christi apparitio facta mulieribus*), thus eliding *apparitio* into *descriptio*.⁴¹ The effect is to stress the visual nature of the signs conveyed as images of the resurrection and as anticipatory to the *apparitiones Christi*, soon to follow.

Third, even when Christ reveals, actually not virtually, his glorious and divinized body, as when he is at last seen and known by Cleophas and his companion just before vanishing, the glossator emphasizes that the *apparitio* consists of an image (*species*)—more specifically, of a theatricalized

quae dum legentes agnoscimus, quid aliud quam de eorum dubitatione solidamur?” (Gloss. ord. 5:999).

39. See n. 36 above: the resurrection is adduced by *argumenta* that we come to know through a process akin to reading (*quae dum legentes agnoscimus*).

40. Gloss. ord. 5:997.

41. Gloss. ord. 5:997.

image. It is by withdrawing the “image of human mortality” (*species infirmitatis*) from their eyes, showing and then not showing his visible body, that Christ makes his glorious resurrection apparent to their hearts and minds: “The image of infirmity was subtracted from their carnal eyes in order that the glory of the resurrection might begin to appear within their hearts/minds.”⁴² Nicholas argues even more explicitly that what Christ showed to the disciples at Emmaus, when their eyes were opened, was an image of himself in a form recognizable to them: “For he voluntarily showed himself to them in the form of an image (*in effigie*), by which he became recognizable to them, and through which they came to know him in the breaking of the bread.”⁴³

These visible signs of the resurrection are presented as fully consistent with the apparition of Christ bodily and spiritually to the eleven fearful disciples gathered in Jerusalem (Luke 24:36–45). The glossator situates this event within the sequence of prior *documenta* that have given evidence of the resurrection: “He persuades by many demonstrable proofs of the resurrection, showing himself as visible to the eyes, as palpable to the hands, and in disclosing that his bones and flesh may be touched, he signifies the nature of our resurrection [to come], when our bodies shall be subtle by the effect of spiritual potency and simultaneously palpable according to the truth of nature.”⁴⁴ This *documentum*, the glossator implies, differs in degree, not kind, from its predecessors, for Christ exhibits himself to be seen by the eyes and, as a further proof, touched by the hands, thus showing that he has risen palpably, both in body and in spirit. He is merely adding another layer of proof to the many *signa*, *indicia*, and *argumenta* already dispensed.

To mark this point, the glossator, in a close reading of Luke 24:40, “And when he had said this, he shewed them his hands and feet,” dwells at length on his visible wounds, treating them like a felt image of suffering undergone and overcome, the effects of which are both potent and mul-

42. “Subtrahitur carnalibus oculis specie infirmitatis, ut mentibus incipiat apparere gloria resurrectionis” (Gloss. ord. 5:1002).

43. “Quia voluntarie se eis ostendit in effigie qua erat cognoscibilis ab eis, & cum hoc cognoverunt eum per modum fractionis panis” (Gloss. ord. 5:1002).

44. “Multis documentis persuadet resurrectionem praeibendo se, & oculis videntum, & manibus contrectandum, qui dum palpando ossa carnemque monstrat, statum suae vel nostrae resurrectionis signat in qua corpus nostrum, & subtile erit per effectum spiritualis potentiae, & palpabile per veritatem naturae” (Gloss. ord. 5:1004).

tifarious: they build faith in the resurrection (*fidem resurrectionis instruenda*); secure the mercy of God by showing (*ostendat*) what manner of death he patiently endured; expose to view, as visible signs (*indiciis*), the mercy bestowed by his death on all who would be saved; and justify the damnation of sinners whose sins are revealed as the cause of these stripes.⁴⁵ The wounded body of Christ is scanned, its telling scars scrutinized as if it were a visual image, a surface comprising the many signs, marks, tokens, and proofs of his redemptive labor, now gloriously confirmed by the mystery of the resurrection. In turn, this bodily image is conjoined once again to an exegetical exercise, as the glossator observes: “After sight, after contact, after recollection of the Law, he opened sense (*aperuit sensum*), giving them to understand what they saw and read.”⁴⁶

The notion that the *signa resurrectionis Christi* are like effigies (*effigies*) and images (*species*) that must be read in the manner of scriptural types and prophecies correlates with Bruegel’s emphasis on *signa* and the reactions they elicit from variously responsive (and unresponsive) witnesses, in his unconventional but scripturally sound rendition of the resurrection. The angel who gestures toward the seal, stone, and empty tomb with one hand, urging the women to take note, and imitates the gesture of the invisibly risen Christ with the other, showing himself to be his visible emanation, bodies forth the glossator’s argument that *signa* are a species of *apparitio* continuous with the presence of Christ or, more precisely, with his action of making himself present to human sense.

The axially central position of the seal, still affixed to the stone, brightly conspicuous against the tomb’s shadowy interior, brings to mind the trope of the stone removed that analogizes the meaning of the resurrection to the uncovering of the integument of the law. Like the glossator, Bruegel seems to have formulated an elaborate defense of divinely sanctioned *signa*, *argumenta*, and *documenta*, showing how they substitute for an event—the resurrection—not witnessed, and for a sight—the risen Christ—as yet unseen. He thereby implicitly justifies his own picture, its status as image made doubly apparent in the print by the internal frame.

The Glossa’s comments on John 20 agree with those on the equivalent chapters of the Synoptic Gospels, but they explain more explicitly why the disciples relied so heavily on *signa* when learning about the resurrec-

45. Gloss. ord. 5:1004–5.

46. “Post visum, post contactum, post commemoratam legem aperuit sensum, ut quod vident & legunt, intelligant” (Gloss. ord. 5:1005).

tion. Nicholas, in his reading of John 20:8, “Then that other disciple [John] also went in, who came first to the sepulchre: and he saw, and believed,” avouches that the nexus of seeing and believing applies also to Peter and the other apostles. They “came to believe,” he states, “that the resurrection had [indeed] transpired, not from Scripture, but from visible signs (*ex signis visis*).”⁴⁷ In his paraphrase of John 20:3–10, Nicholas emphasizes how reliant John and Peter were on visual evidence: when they ran to visit the empty tomb, they did so “to see what had been done” (*ut viderent factum*), driven by the “desire to see” with their own eyes (*ex desiderio videndi*). When John stooped down (*se inclinasset*), he wished to look into the sepulchre (*ad videndum*); what he beheld (*vidit*) was the shroud neatly folded (*posita lintheamina*). The grave clothes left “in good order and folded” (*bene disposita et plicata*) showed him that the body was no longer there and that Jesus must truly have risen (*hoc factum est ad ostendum resurrectionem factam*).⁴⁸

The gerundive phrase *ad ostendum* insists on this ostensive function, emphasizing that the relics of the resurrection were set out to be seen, their evidentiary function foregrounded. So too, the verbal phrase “by this it became visible to him that Jesus had indeed arisen” (*per hoc apparebat quod sic vere surrexerat*), signifies that he has begun to discern the miracle through a process of induction, starting from its indices.⁴⁹ Nicholas rehearses this stepwise process: the body, having been anointed, would have adhered to the grave clothes; and so the shroud could never have been left as it was, had the body merely been purloined.

When Peter entered the burial chamber, continues Nicholas, he saw the shroud and also the face cloth “set aside and folded” (*separatim involutum*), but he did so “confusedly and indiscriminately.”⁵⁰ By this Nicholas means that he was still unable to acknowledge the resurrection: at best, he was ready now to assent to the Magdalene, who had reported the mere absence of Christ’s body. Even John, whose faith seemed prompter, may finally have believed no more than this, as Nicholas hypothesizes: “[John] supposed that it was true, namely, that the body of Christ had been taken away, and [he and Peter] were unaware of the resurrection, and for this

47. “Et ideo non ex scriptura, sed ex signis visis credebant resurrectionem Christiam factam” (Gloss. ord. 5:1322).

48. Gloss. ord. 5:1321.

49. Gloss. ord. 5:1321.

50. “Et sudarium. scilicet confuse & indistincte” (Gloss. ord. 5:1321).

reason there follows the line, 'For as yet they knew not the Scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.'" Apparently, more signs are required.⁵¹

Indeed, many more signs were bestowed, not only at this stage of the story but from now until the ascension, as the glossator observes on the basis of John 20:30, "Many other signs also did Jesus in the sight of his disciples, which are not written in this book." Theophylactus's reading of this verse is cited: "What are the signs of which the evangelist speaks? Not the ones from before the crucifixion, but the ones produced after the resurrection in the presence of the disciples ... during the time when he occupied himself in showing these signs of the resurrection only to them for forty days [before the ascension]."⁵² These signs, as Nicholas avers, are the risen Christ's chief method of instruction, even when he appears to them in the flesh. For instance, the closed doors through which he miraculously appears to the disciples in John 20:19, prove to be nearly as important as the *apparitio* itself, for they demonstrate that the body before them is divinely glorified and not the mortal body they had previously known (*ostenderet se habere corpus gloriosum*).⁵³ If, as Nicholas notes, the importance of the *signa resurrectionis* remains undiminished, even in the presence of Christ, why is this the case?

The Glossa offers several answers. First, so far beyond the limitations of human cognition are divine mysteries (*sacramenta divinitatis incomprehensibilia nostrae infirmitatis cognitione remota*) that there is no other way for us to cognize them than by means of *signa*.⁵⁴ The glossator adduces the *sudarium* as a case in point: more than a vestige of the resurrection, it also exemplifies the relation between *signa* and *sacramenta*, for folded in upon itself, the face cloth shows neither where it begins nor where it ends, just as these mysteries, being uncircumscribable, have no beginning and yet will never cease to be. (*In involuto, nec finis nec initium aspicitur. Sic celsitudo divinitatis nec coepit esse, nec desinit*).⁵⁵ The *sudarium*, even as it

51. "Et credidit. esse verum scilicet quod corpus Christi esset sublatum de monumento, et non cogitaverunt de Christi resurrectione, & ideo subdit. *Nondum enim. Alio modo*" (Gloss. ord. 5:1321–22).

52. "De quibus signis hic dicit evangelista? Nam de his quae ante crucem? Non sed de his quae fecit post resurrectionem, fecit coram discipulis suis.... cum solis enim discipulis versabatur quadraginta diebus signa ostendere resurrectionis" (Gloss. ord. 5:1330).

53. Gloss. ord. 5:1325.

54. Gloss. ord. 5:1322.

55. Gloss. ord. 5:1322.

bears witness to the mystery of the resurrection, therefore stands for the nature of all *sacramenta*, which can be apprehended only by way of visual and material analogies.

Second, the *signa* dispensed by the risen Christ are viewed as consistent with the use of parabolic images as his preferred method of instruction. These images are, of course, epitomes of analogical usage. Moreover, the disciples, surmises the glossator, were so wedded to parabolic imagery that, even had Christ announced the resurrection openly, they would not have understood him. The glossator is putting forward an analogical defense of analogy: the reliance on evidentiary tokens is seen to accord with the reliance on visual analogy as an instrument of spiritual discernment: "Which is to say that they [were so ignorant of Scripture] that even if the Lord himself had spoken forthrightly, they would not have understood, on account of their habit of giving ear to his parables."⁵⁶

Third, *signa*, in that they require decoding, are suited to persons engaged in the active life, who make up the majority of humankind. Contemplatives, on the other hand, though more attuned to the knowledge of divine things, must often yield pride of place to their less advantaged but more diligent and assiduous fellows. This argument comes once again from Theophylactus, who comments on the fact that John arrived at the tomb before Peter and yet entered it after him:

Learn to know Peter, fervid and practical, and John, contemplative and suited for inquiring into divine matters. And so it is: often the contemplative excels in knowledge and natural ability, whereas the practical man is hamstrung, and yet by zeal and exertion he triumphs over the alacrity of the contemplative and bears witness before him to some divine mystery. And does this not likewise occur in the disciplines? Take two boys, one of them by nature more acute, the other coarser; and yet the latter by his diligence forestalls [as it were] the natural velocity of the former. And again, in spiritual matters, the practical fellow, rough in speech, discerns something more sublimely than is perceived by the contemplative.⁵⁷

56. "Scilicet, usque adeo, ut cum ab ipso domino aperte diceretur propter consuetudinem ab eo audiendi parabolas, non intelligerent" (Gloss. ord. 5:1322).

57. "Tu disce hic Petrum fervidum & practicum, Ioannem autem contemplativum, & ad divinatorum cognitionem idoneum. Saepe igitur contemplativus cognitione & ingenio praevenit practicus, autem detrimentum habet, attamen fervore ac studio illius vincit alacritatem, & videt prior divinum quoddam mysterium practicus. An non tale quiddam contigit in disciplinis? Etenim cum duo pueri sunt unus ingenio

So too, the disciples, slow and untutored, “[un]suited to the cognition of divine things,” but earnestly attuned to puzzling over evidentiary analogies, came gradually to know the most sublime of mysteries.⁵⁸ Nicholas avows that the same could be said about the women, who arrived at knowledge of the resurrection in stages (*gradatim pervenerunt ad cognoscendum hanc resurrectionem*), starting with their unexpected discovery of the empty sepulchre.⁵⁹

Fourth, our attachment to *signa* often results from and augments our love for the persons whose traces they record. The disconsolate Magdalene epitomizes this affective bond between the person signified and the recipient of the sign: even after seeing that the tomb was empty, she peered into it a second time, impelled by love (*vis amoris*) to search for some vestige of Christ (*aliquid eius vestigium*). Furthermore, longing moved her to inquire into the meaning of what she saw (*vis amoris intentionem multiplicat inquisitionis*).⁶⁰ Her fervent desire to gaze at and into the sepulchre typifies, as one of the tropological glosses puts it, the impulse solicitously to acquire knowledge of divine truths (*significatur quaelibet persona de cognitione veritatis divinae valde sollicita*), and in turn, the meritorious effort thus expended ensures that knowledge is finally attained and the yearning to know is assuaged.⁶¹ The glossator cites Matt 7:7 as his proof text: “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find it; knock, and it shall be opened to you.”

An expansive theory of vision underlies the conception of *signa* that informs these four points. Nicholas, with reference to the story of doubting Thomas in John 20:25—“Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger in the place of the nails”—adduces the first book of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* to explain the apostle’s call for sensory cor-

acutior, alter tardior, praeoccupat hic suo studio velocitatem naturae alterius. Etenim in spiritualibus saepe practicus & sermone idiota sensit quoddam sublimius, percipit contemplativo” (Gloss. ord. 5:1321).

58. See the glossator’s remarks on Matt 28:13, in Gloss. ord. 5:470, which cite Chrysostom in describing the disciples as “homines pauperes, & idiotae.” The passage from Theophylact, quoted as a gloss on John 20:4, implicitly alludes to the disciples, John excepted, as practical men “haud idonei,” in the sense of “inepti,” “ad divinorum cognitionem.”

59. Gloss. ord. 5:1319.

60. Gloss. ord. 5:1322. The argument that *vis amoris* motivated the Magdalene’s search for *vestigia Christi* derives from the glosses of Nicholas of Lyra.

61. Gloss. ord. 5:1319–20.

roboration. His protestation issues from the nature of sight and sound, which are considered more veracious than the other senses: “For those two senses are the least likely to be deceived, given that vision, in comparison with the other [senses], reveals more differences amongst things (*plures differentias rerum monstrat*), as is stated in 1 *Metaphysics*, whereas human touch is [taken for] the most dependable.”⁶²

He adds, with reference to John 20:27, Christ’s command to Thomas, “See my hands,” that the sureness of vision is being confirmed by the Lord himself. He has just told Thomas “to put in thy finger hither,” but then, instead of specifying where, he suddenly changes gears, eliding touch into sight: *Infer digitum tuum huc, & vide manus meas*. This leads Nicholas to pose the question, “Why?” The answer lies, once again, in the relation between sight and the other senses: “vision,” on account of its certitude, “is construed as a proxy for every other sense (*accipitur pro omni sensu*),” and more than this, it is sometimes used as a “synonym for understanding” (*accipitur pro intellectu*), as one observes from the familiar question “Do you see?,” which substitutes for “Do you apprehend?”⁶³ A famous example of such usage occurs in Exod 20:18, God’s bestowal of the Ten Commandments: “And all the people saw the voices and the flames, and the sound of the trumpet, and the mount smoking.”⁶⁴

In the same way, vision in John 20:27 subsumes touch. Nicholas thus expands on the glossator’s reading of John 20:29, “Because thou hast seen me, Thomas, thou hast believed”: Thomas has beheld and touched the risen Christ, whose admonitory rebuke, since it mentions only sight, constitutes a tacit acknowledgement of vision’s capacity to encompass touch and, by implication, the other four senses (*visus ... de alijs quatuor dici solet*). *Visus*, on this account, is a “comprehensive sense” (*generalis sensus*). It also renders believable those spiritual truths that exist beyond the threshold of sense, as becomes obvious when Thomas, having seen

62. “Isti enim sunt duo sensus qui minus possunt decipi, quia visus inter alios plures differentias rerum monstrat, ut habetur .1. *Metaph.* Tactus autem in homine est certissimus” (Gloss. ord. 5:1331).

63. “Videtur enim, quod deberet dicere, tange manus meas: Dicendum, quod visus propter sui certitudinem accipitur pro omni sensu immo etiam aliquando accipitur pro intellectu sicut dicitur alicui: Vides tu hoc, id est, intelligis?” (Gloss. ord. 5:1332).

64. Gloss. ord. 5:1332. As Nicholas explains with reference to this passage, “Cunctus populus videbat voces”: “Id est, audiebat, ita quod ibi accipitur visus pro auditu. Et eodem modo hic accipitur pro tactu.”

Christ in the flesh, finally declares, “My Lord, and my God,” even though he has not seen and, being mortal, cannot see at first hand the Lord’s celestial glory (*confitebatur quem non videbat*).⁶⁵ In explanation of this point, Nicholas distinguishes between “active faith” and “faithful disposition”: the former, according to Heb 11:1, pertains to *invisibilia* and consists of the “substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not”; the latter, since it pertains to the condition of faith rather than to acts performed as a function of faith, can consist of *visibilia*, as shown by John 20:29. Nicholas employs *praeteritio*, the rhetorical figure of demurral, to reconcile even while differentiating between these two key scriptural passages on faith: “And so it is clear that faith, at least with respect to action (*quantum ad actum*), cannot be about visible things (*de visis*): but whether it can be about such things, as regards disposition (*quantum ad dispositionem*), is not a matter of present speculation. It must be said that Thomas saw one thing and believed another, for he saw the humanity [of Christ] and believed in his divinity which cannot be seen in the here and now.”⁶⁶

The Glossa’s exposition of faith in relation to the bipartite distinction between *visibilia* and *invisibilia*, the *actus fidei* and the *dispositio fidei*, corresponds to Bruegel’s division of the *Resurrection* into binary zones along its horizontal and vertical axes. At left are the soldiers who attend to the *signa resurrectionis* but, lacking the *dispositio fidei*, fail to equate these *visibilia* with the invisible presence of Christ, the true source of these proofs. At right are the women whose faith predisposes them to attend to these same *signa*: their phased responses—one of them, her hands folded in prayer, looks up at the angel; another gazes at the stone, her right hand raised in a gesture of astonishment; while a third looks intently at this same woman, gauging her reaction to the *signa*—give evidence of their growing awareness of the resurrection. *Dispositio fidei* is swiftly changing into *actus fidei*, as the prayerful gesture of the woman in front indicates. Unlike the soldiers, by turns oblivious or incredulous, the women can be seen gradually to read the *signa* as markers of “things that appear not” and thereby to endorse the nexus between *visibilia* and *invisibilia*.

65. Gloss. ord. 5:1332.

66. “Et sic patet quod fides saltem quantum ad actum, non potest esse de visis: utrum autem possit esse de eis quantum ad habitum non est praesentis speculationis. Dicendum, quod Thomas aliud vidit, & aliud credidit, quia humanitatem vidit, et deitatem quae in praesenti videre non potest credidit” (Gloss. ord. 5:1322).

The soldier in the foreground who tries to shield his eyes from the angel and/or the sun, rather than looking directly at these *signa resurrectionis*, bodies forth the lack of either *dispositio* or *actus fidei*, instead enacting a sort of sensory resistance to both. He resembles Christ in some respects—one arm raised and extended, the other lowered, drapery folds gathered around his legs—but otherwise functions as an antithesis to him: whereas Christ hovers at the top of the image and holds the blazon of life eternal, the soldier sits heavily on the ground and grasps a crossbow, looks up not down, to the right not the left. In these ways, he also contrasts with the angelic messenger who serves as an emanation of Christ. The willingness of the women to see what may be seen contrasts ironically with the impaired vision of the soldiers: many of them are fast asleep and altogether fail to look at the wondrous sights, while others peer into the cave or at each other but wear helmets that partially cover their eyes.

As in the Glossa the resurrection draws attention to the primacy of the *generalis sensus* that subsumes touch and the other senses, so in Bruegel's *Resurrection* the emphasis falls on kinds and degrees of sight (and blindness) rather than on touch. The *signa*, to the extent they are noticed, are seen, not handled. The gesture of the soldier at left, whose arm extends toward the empty tomb, correlates to the motion of his eyes, tracking his line of sight rather than tangibly verifying what his eyes observe. His outstretched arm therefore functions as another *signum visibile* of the resurrection.

Erasmus's popular *Paraphrases* on the gospels amplify the Synoptic and Johannine accounts of the resurrection, greatly accentuating the thematic of visual proof. They furnish another discursive lens, complementary to the Glossa, through which Bruegel's *Resurrection* may be viewed. Erasmus proposes that Christ revealed the truth of the resurrection indirectly, by means of *argumenta*, in order that his disciples should rise to the challenge of knowing this great mystery through the application of their human faculties, both sensory and cognitive. He strongly implies that activation of these faculties is constitutive of the very *actus fidei* that cognition and sense, especially the sense of sight, set in motion.

Throughout the *Paraphrases*, especially the *Paraphrasis in Evangelium Matthaei*, Erasmus uses the term *fides* in its dual meaning of "faith" and "piece of evidence" or, better, "evidentiary proof." The resurrection is thus presented as a mystery of faith that requires the faithful to engage in the process of reading divinely promulgated proofs. Typical of this usage is his description of the vigil kept at the tomb by Mary Magdalene and the

“other Mary” on the evening of the Lord’s burial. They were searching, he contends, for evidence of the resurrection: “Indeed, after the rest had gone away, two women continued to remain there, Mary Magdalene and one other, sitting opposite the tomb, and noting (*annotantes*) the place where they buried the body so that at their own time they might perform the duty of anointing it. The Lord had incited the zealous vigilance (*vigilantem sedulitatem*) of these women so that the evidence of/faith in the resurrection would be more certain (*quo certior esset resurrectionis fides*).”⁶⁷ This reading of *fides* is an elaboration on Matt 27:61, which tersely states: “And there was there Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary sitting over against the sepulchre.” Erasmus similarly augments Matt 27:62–66, stating, as had Jerome in his *Commentary on Matthew*, that the efforts of the chief priests and Pharisees to prevent removal of the body served instead to give further evidence of the resurrection: “But while they were trying to block up the exit for the one who was going to rise again, they enhanced the miracle and the evidence of/faith in the resurrection (*fidem resurrectionis*).”⁶⁸

Erasmus also amplifies Matt 28:6, the angel’s invitation, “Come, and see the place where the Lord was laid,” enhancing his description of indexical *visibilia*. The angel defers to sights seen, over his own words, averring that the former have a greater power to convince: “Come, and see the place that still shows the imprint of a body, though no body is here, and the clothing of the body, the linens in which it was wrapped. These things will convince you if you do not believe me (*haec vobis fidem facient*).”⁶⁹ Matthew 28:8 mentions only that the women “went out quickly from the

67. Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, in vol. 45 of *Collected Works of Erasmus*, ed. and trans. Dean Simpson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 372–73. Cf. *In Evangelium Matthaei D. Erasmi Rot. Paraphrasis* (Lyons: Apud Sebastianum Gryphium, 1544), 324: “Ac caeteris quidem digressis, perseverarunt illic duae, Maria Magdalene & altera quaedam, sedentes e regione sepulchri, & annotantes locum, ubi reconderent corpus, quo suo tempore praestarent officium unctionis: & harum vigilantem sedulitatem in hoc excitarat dominus, quo certior esset resurrectionis fides.” This passage first appeared in the edition of 1534. On the *Paraphrase on Matthew*, see Robert D. Sider and Dean Simpson, “Preface,” in Simpson, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, ix–xvi.

68. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 373. Cf. Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam, *Paraphrasis in Evangelium Matthaei* (Basel: Johann Froben, 1522), [n.p.]: “Illi vero dum resurrecturo conantur exitum ocludere, auxerunt miraculum & fidem resurrectionis.”

69. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 374. Cf. Erasmus, *Paraphrasis in Evangelium Matthaei*, [n.p.]: “Venite videte locum, qui corpore vacuus, corporis adhuc habet

sepulchre,” but Erasmus adds that they actually inspected it (*inspecto monumento vacuo*), after ascertaining that it had formerly been closed (*quod ocllusum compererant*).⁷⁰ He prefaces the paraphrasis of Matt 28 by noting that the women, in visiting the sepulchre, were motivated by their desire to see what had transpired (*ut viderent quid esset actum*), that is, to pay heed to the traces of events already come to pass.⁷¹ When Christ appears to them at first hand as they hasten back to Jerusalem, he does so to certify the things they have observed, making their testimony incontrovertible (*certiora*).⁷² He also imagines the guards recounting to the chief priests what they had witnessed, thereby bringing evidence of the resurrection manifestly into view:

Then some of the guards left the sepulchre, went to Jerusalem, and reported to the chief priests what had taken place—this was done so that confidence in the resurrection might be strengthened even by the testimony of enemies. The guards told how, although the sepulchre had been closed and sealed, the body had not been found; how an angel of wondrous aspect moved the stone; they spoke about the earthquake, and how they had been paralysed with fear; also how they had heard the angel speaking with the women.... Since the matter was too evident to be doubted, [the chief priests] bribed the guards with an offer of money to lie.⁷³

vestigium, habet & corporis exuvias, lintea quibus fuit involutus. Haec vobis fidem facient, si mihi parum creditis.”

70. Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam, *Tomus primus Paraphraseon D. Erasmi Roterodami, in novum Testamentum, videlicet in quatuor Evangelia, & Acta apostolorum* (Basel: Johann Froben, 1524), 174. Cf. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 374.

71. Erasmus, *Tomus primus Paraphraseon*, 173–74. Cf. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 374.

72. Erasmus, *Paraphrasis in Evangelium Matthaei*, [n.p.]: “Atque inter eundum, obvis fit illis Iesus, quo certiora nunciare possent.” Cf. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 375.

73. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 375. Cf. Erasmus, *Paraphrasis in Evangelium Matthaei*, [n.p.]: “Quae quum abissent, quo resurrectionis fides etiam inimicorum testimonio confirmaretur, quidam e custodibus relicto sepuchro, abierunt Hierosolymam, ac renunciaverunt principibus sacerdotum quae gesta fuerant, quemadmodum clauso & obsignato sepulchro, non esset repertum corpus. Et quemadmodum angelus mirabili specie submoverit saxum, deque terraemotu, & quemadmodum metu fuerint exanimati. Et quemadmodum audierint angelum cum mulieribus colloquentem.... quum res esset manifestior, quam ut posset dubitari, mendacium ab illis pecunia [sacerdotes] redimunt.”

Even after appearing to the disciples assembled on the mountain in Galilee, Christ continues to disseminate indubitable proofs of the resurrection (*plurimis ac certissimis argumentis*), shoring up their faith/providing further evidence (*illis fides facta est*), converting doubt into certitude (*ad fidei nostrae certitudinem*).⁷⁴ He situates these visible proofs among other images of himself that the disciples are enjoined to call up when they preach the gospel:

You have seen me, through the weakness of the flesh, hungry, thirsty, weary, needy, despised, arrested, bound, spat upon, condemned, struck, crucified, covered with every sort of abuse, and in some way made lower than the most lowly of human beings.... Teach them what they ought to believe about me, what they ought to hope for from me.... Though innocent, he suffered for the sins of the entire world, died on the cross, was laid in a sepulchre, then rose on the third day, in keeping with the oracles of the prophets. After this he dwelt with his disciples for many days, and, with the truth of his resurrection made clear by sure proofs [*certis argumentis declarata resurrectionis veritate*], he again ascended into heaven where, as a sharer of the kingdom and of paternal glory, he sits on the right hand of the Father almighty.⁷⁵

Erasmus makes clear that the *argumenta resurrectionis* belong among or, more precisely, mediate between the vivid images of his passion and ascension stored in the minds and hearts of the disciples. They are no less evocative of his visible presence than these other mnemonic images that he urges them to cherish.

The *Paraphrasis in Evangelium Marci* retains emphasis on *argumenta* as mediating instruments that disperse knowledge of the resurrection.

74. Erasmus, *Tomus primus Paraphraseon*, 175. Cf. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 376.

75. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 376–77. Cf. Erasmus, *Paraphrasis in Evangelium Matthaei*, [n.p.]: “Vidistis per imbecillitatem carnis esurientem, sitientem, lassescentem, egenum, contemptum, captum, vinctum, consputum, damnatum, caesum, crucifixum, omni contumeliarum genere coopertum, & quodammodo infra infimos deiectum homines.... docete quid de me credere, quid ex me sperare debeant.... Et innocens pro totius mundi peccatis afflictus est, & in cruce mortuus. Conditus sepulchro, resurrexit tertia die, iuxta vaticinia prophetarum. Hinc, dies complures versatus cum suis, ac certis argumentis declarata resurrectionis veritate, rursus ascendit in caelum, ubi veluti consors regni gloriaeque paternae, dexter assidet patri omnipotenti.”

Erasmus, in amplifying Mark 16:15—"And he said to them: Go ye into the whole world, and preach the gospel to every creature"—has Christ posit a link between the evangelical vocation and the discernment of evidentiary proofs. *Argumenta*, properly discerned, give impetus to preaching: "And Jesus said to them: 'After all these things have finally been proven to you with many and certain proofs (*multis ac certis argumentis*) and have been found true, go out into the whole world and proclaim this gospel to all nations of the world. For I have died for all, I have risen for all.'"⁷⁶

Erasmus confers authority on the *argumenta resurrectionis* by conflating their testimony with that of the disciples who themselves observed the passion. He refers to both types of evidence as *spectacula*—wondrous sights seen. The death of Christ, seen at first hand, is no less certain than the resurrection, seen at second hand by means of representative proofs, and nor has the knowledge of either mystery been bestowed indiscriminately. On the contrary, it is a privilege belonging to the select few: "For the sight of death and resurrection (*mortis ac resurrectionis spectaculum*) was not for everyone's eyes, yet it was sufficient for evangelical faith to have the matter proven once by suitable witnesses."⁷⁷ The implication is that the power of veridical signs, such as those that broadcast the resurrection, subtends the evangelical oratory of the disciples whose sermons will bear witness to the doctrine of Christ: "Otherwise how would the gentiles believe what had happened if they were as doubtful about the apostles' report as Thomas and some others among them had been in the beginning?"⁷⁸

76. Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam, *Paraphrase on Mark*, in vol. 49 of *Collected Works of Erasmus*, ed. and trans. Erika Rummel (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 175. Cf. Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam, *Paraphrasis in Evangelium Marci* (Basel: Johann Froben, 1524), [n.p.]: "Et ait illis Iesus: Postea iam tandem vobis haec omnia multis ac certis argumentis probata compertaque sunt, ite in mundum universum, & praedicate hoc Evangelium, universis orbis nationibus. Omnibus enim mortuus sum, omnibus resurrexi." On the *Paraphrase on Mark*, see Robert D. Sider, "Preface," in Rummel, *Paraphrase on Mark*, ix–x; and Erika Rummel, "Translator's Note," in *Paraphrase on Mark*, xi–xiv.

77. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Mark*, 175. Cf. Erasmus, *Paraphrasis in Evangelium Marci*, [n.p.]: "Nec enim omnibus exhiberi debebat mortis ac resurrectionis spectaculum, verum ad fidem Evangelicam sufficebat, rem semel per idoneos testes esse comprobata."

78. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Mark*, 175. Cf. Erasmus, *Paraphrasis in Evangelium Marci*, [n.p.]: "Alioqui quomodo credent gentes quae gesta sunt, si tam essent diffidentes apostolorum narrationi, quam Thomas et alij quidam ex ipsis initio fuerant?"

Given this line of argumentation, one is not surprised to learn that Erasmus interpolated numerous references to close observation into Mark 16:4–5 on the women's reaction to the things they saw at the tomb. Verbs signifying "to look around" recur like a refrain: "They looked around (*circumspiciunt*) to see if they could get hold of someone whose help they could use for this end. As they were looking around (*respiciunt*), they saw that the stone had already been removed. Upon entering the vestibule of the tomb they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting at the right side of the tomb. The women stood amazed at this sight, which was joyful and auspicious, but nevertheless sudden and unexpected."⁷⁹

These *spectacula* are presented as the direct result of a change in the way Christ allows himself to be seen and known after he has risen and been glorified. Whereas previously he had given himself over to anyone who would touch him, permitting "even impious men to strike him and spit on him," now he forestalls unimpeded access to his person: "Once dead, he immediately claimed his due respect and did not want to be touched except by upright and pious men; indeed he did not even wish to be looked upon except by the disciples destined for eternal life."⁸⁰ The *signa* of the Lord's presence that the angel instructs the women to examine (*ecce locus vacuus, ubi reposuerant corpus illius*) are construed as an earnest of the glorious presence that Christ just now withholds from mortal eyes, in token of his newly numinous condition and in preparation for the *apparitiones*, soon to follow, of his divinized humanity.⁸¹

79. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Mark*, 174. Cf. Erasmus, *Paraphrasis in Evangelium Marci*, [n.p.]: "Et circumspiciunt, si quem nancisci possent, cuius ad id uterentur opera. Ac dum respiciunt, viderunt lapidem iam amotum. Mox ingressae monumenti vestibulum, viderunt iuvenem ad dextram monumenti partem, amictum stola candida. Ad hoc spectaculum tametsi laetum faustique ominis, tamen quia subitum & inexpectatum, obstupuerunt mulieres."

80. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Mark*, 174. Cf. Erasmus, *Paraphrasis in Evangelium Marci*, [n.p.]: "Iesus enim quam diu vivebat, impijs etiam sese pulsandum & conspuendum permisit. Mortuus statim dignitatem suam sibi vindicat, nec tractari vult, nisi ab honestis ac pijs: ne conspici quidem, nisi a discipulis aeternae vitae destinatis." Erasmus adds that this exemplary *imago* was designed to teach the virtue of humility: "nos hac imagine docens, ne quis dignitatem suam in hac vita vindicet."

81. Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam, *Paraphrases in Novum Testamentum*, ed. Johannis Clericus and Io. Frid. Sigism. Augustinus (Berlin: Sumtibus Haude & Speneri, 1777), 522. Cf. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Mark*, 174–75.

The *Paraphrasis in Evangelium Lucae* puts forward an exegetical analogue for the *signa resurrectionis*: just as Christ during his life signified in words and deeds that he was the messiah foreseen by the prophets, so he now dispensed signs of the mystery that itself signifies, as well as guarantees, the reality of eternal salvation. Indeed, signifying types, as presented by the prophets and the signs of the resurrection put forth by Christ are seen to coalesce in the prophetic figure of Jonah, invoked by Christ in Matt 12:38–40. Crucially for Erasmus, Christ uses the phrase *signum Ionae* (“sign of Jonah”) to refer to the resurrection. He has Jesus himself argue this point in a very extended paraphrase of Luke 24:27, “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded to them in all the scriptures, the things that were concerning him.” As part of his exegetical disquisition addressed to the two disciples journeying to Emmaus, Jesus declares:

Jonah was swallowed by a whale, and on the third day, contrary to all expectation, he was released from its belly. Christ was buried in the tomb, from which he promised that he would come forth on the third day. For when the Jews were asking for a sign from heaven he promised them the sign of the prophet Jonah [*signum Ionae prophetae*], and that like Jonah he would flash forth from the secret places of the earth on the third day. How many times did he impress upon his disciples that he would die and return to life on the third day! The prophet [Hosea] had foretold it: “After two days he will revive us, on the third day he will raise us up” (6:3).⁸²

Dubbed *signum Ionae*, the resurrection is itself understood as a sign, different in degree not kind from the various other *signa* that announced the divinity of the risen Christ. Conversely, these *signa* are construed

82. Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam, *Paraphrase on Luke 11–24*, in vol. 48 of *Collected Works of Erasmus*, ed. and trans. Jane E. Phillips (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 268–69. Cf. Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam, *In Evangelium Lucae paraphrasis Erasmi Roterodami per autorem recognita* (Basel: Johann Froben, 1526), 257: “Ionas absorptus est a ceto, e cuius ventre redditus est die tertio praeter omnium expectationem. Christus conditus est in monumento unde promisit sese proditum tertio die. Promisit enim Iudaeis, petentibus signum e coelo, signum Ionae prophetae, seque ad illius exemplum emicaturum tertio die e latebris terrae. Praedixerat hoc Osee propheta: Vivificabit, inquit, nos post duos dies, in tertio die suscitabit nos.” On the *Paraphrase on Luke 11–24*, see Jane E. Phillips, “Translator’s Note,” in *Paraphrase on Luke 11–24*, ix–xv.

as no less veridical than the events of the passion (*rerum eventus*) witnessed by the disciples and just now exegetically expounded by reference to the “prefigurings of the Law” and “predictions of the prophets.” The *signa resurrectionis* are no less sure than this *rerum eventus* (“course of events”), for both *signa* and *res* are subject, as Christ shows, to exegetical confirmation:

So when you see that so far everything is completely consistent, the prefigurings of the Law, the predictions of the prophets, the prophecies of Christ himself, and finally the actual course of events [*rerum eventus*], how is it that now, as if you were drowsing and dreaming, you are distrustful? How is it that you are not rather drawing conclusions about the future from the past? He foretold that he would be handed over to the gentiles, bound, flogged, mocked, crucified. Every one of these happened. You saw, and you believe; but he foretold that on the third day he would live again, and for some days show himself (Gen 49:9, Ps 15:10, Matt 12:38, John 2:21–22, 14:18–21, 16:16–23)—not to the world, but to his disciples. Why then do you not trust the women, who say that they learned from angels that he had risen?⁸³

Early in the paraphrasis of Luke 24, Erasmus had emphasized that the women first learned about the triumph of Christ from visual *signa*. It was the appearance of the angels, the image they put forth (*haec ipsa species angelorum*) that revealed the glory of the resurrection to the women (*resurrectionis triumphum praeseferebat*), in spite of their deficient faith and consequent failure to hope that Christ “would rise again” (*quum tamen non sperarent resurrecturum*).⁸⁴ These signs were necessary, explains Erasmus, because the disciples “had no hope at this point of resurrection, of which Jesus had made indication to only a few of [them], and even that

83. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Luke 11–24*, 269. Cf. Erasmus, *In Evangelium Lucae paraphrasis*, 257: “Quum igitur videritis hactenus omnia congruere, figuras legis, vaticinia prophetarum, praedictiones ipsius Christi, denique rerum eventus, quo pacto nunc veluti dormitantes ac somniantes diffiditis, ac non potius ex praeteritis colligitis futura? Praedixit se tradendum gentibus, alligandum, flagellandum, illudendum, crucifigendum. Nihil horum non evenit. Vidistis & creditis, sed idem praedixit se tertio die revicturum, & aliquot dies sese ostensurum non mundo, sed discipulis. Quur igitur diffiditis his, quae dicunt se ex angelis cognovisse quod resurrexisset?”

84. Erasmus, *In Evangelium Lucae paraphrasis*, 234. Cf. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Luke 11–24*, 226–27.

in such a way that in the present circumstances they remembered it more than believed it.”⁸⁵

Signa were therefore dispensed by Christ, not singly but steadily, in order that his followers might come gradually to recognize a mystery, the grandeur of which exceeds human perception or understanding. This is why, opines Erasmus, Christ countenanced the disciples’ disbelief and showered them with *argumenta*: “But because of the unbelievable thing [the women] were reporting, the weaker sex found no credence with the apostles, whom the Lord allowed to be slower to believe so that faith in the Lord’s resurrection would be strengthened by more proofs.”⁸⁶ Peter, for instance, does not believe, but his curiosity is piqued so that he visits the tomb, peers inside, confirms the body’s absence, observes the neatly folded wrappings, and then leaves “wondering to himself what had happened” and “thinking over various possibilities as to how and why it was that, though the body was gone, he saw the grave-clothes left behind, as if they had been taken off the body without haste.”⁸⁷

Erasmus later draws a parallel between these many evidentiary proofs vouchsafed by Christ and the profusion of exegeses that he imparted while traveling incognito to Emmaus. Both the one and the other appeal to sight and have the effect of opening the eyes, which are, says Erasmus, the primary instruments of faith. His assertion rests on Christ’s reading of the story of the brazen serpent in Num 21:2–9, as paraphrased by Erasmus in his extended account of the journey to Emmaus. Jesus helps the two disciples detect the analogy between the action of beholding the serpent and that of parsing Scripture in search of images correspondent to his life and death, words and deeds. The exegetical parallels to be discovered operate visually, by means of recollected images, as Erasmus’s abundant references to vision demonstrate:

When you saw Jesus hanging high on the tree, did the recollection not come to you of the mystic serpent that Moses once hung on a pole to be

85. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Luke 11–24*, 226–27. Cf. Erasmus, *In Evangelium Lucae paraphrasis*, 233.

86. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Luke 11–24*, 229. Cf. Erasmus, *In Evangelium Lucae paraphrasis*, 235: “Caeterum ob rem incredibilem quam nunciabant, sexus infirmior non invenit fidem apud apostolos, quos ideo dominus passus est esse tardiores ad credendum, ut pluribus argumentis confirmaretur resurrectionis dominicae fides.”

87. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Luke 11–24*, 230. Cf. Erasmus, *In Evangelium Lucae paraphrasis*, 236.

safety for all who had been bitten by serpents, provided only that they turn their eyes towards it? Faith is the eye of a human being [*oculus hominis est fides*]. Whoever turns his eye towards the crucified Jesus will be saved then and there.... Now compare what happened while Christ was hanging on the cross.... See how the psalm prophecy not only foretold the actual event but even reported the very words of the ungodly: "But I am a worm and no man, an object of human reproach and rejected by the people. All who saw me have mocked me, they have spoken with their lips and wagged their heads, saying, 'He hoped in the Lord, let him rescue him, let him save him, since he wants him!'" (21:6–8). You *saw* the lamb foretold by Isaiah, dumb before all insults and even praying for those responsible for his death: "Father, pardon them, they do not know what they do." Now *see* whether he did not also prophesy this: "They have spoken against me with a lying tongue, and have surrounded me with words of hatred and have assaulted me without cause. Instead of loving me they disparaged me, but I prayed for them" (Ps 108:2–4). You *saw* him fastened to the cross with nails, hanging there naked, his body stretched out. Now hear the plain prophecy: "They pierced my hands and my feet, they numbered all my bones" (Ps 21:16–17).... You could also have *noticed* that he overcame the resources of the world and Satan by a variety of means. By simplicity he overcame cunning, by gentleness he overcame savagery ... thus by weakness he overcame the might of Satan. For what is weaker than a dying man? Yet you *saw* how much strength this weakness had. You *observed* the sun grow dark, the earth shake, the rocks explode, the tombs gape open, the veil of the temple tear. These things merely *made clear* that his eminent strength, whereby he defeated the world and the devil, had been unshackled in his dying. The mystic psalm had foretold this too, saying, "Tell it amongst the nations, God has reigned from the tree" (95:10).⁸⁸

88. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Luke 11–24*, 264–67. Erasmus, *In Evangelium Lucae paraphrasis*, 255–56: "Quum videretis Iesum pendentem in sublimi ligno, nonne vobis veniebat in mentem serpens ille mysticus, quem olim Moses suspendit in stipite, saluti futurum omnibus morsus a serpentibus, si modo in eum intenderent oculos? Oculus hominis est fides.... Conferte iam quae facta sunt Christo in cruce pendente.... Videte quam vaticinium psalmi non solum rem ipsam praedixerit, verum etiam ipsa impiorum verba retulerit: Ego autem, inquit, sum vermis & non homo, opprobrium hominum & abiectio plebis. Omnes videntes me deriserunt me, loquuti sunt labijs & moverunt caput. Speravit in domino, eripiat eum, salvum faciat eum, quoniam vult eum. Vidistis agnum ab Esaia praedictum, obmutescentem ad omnia probra, atque etiam deprecantem pro mortis autoribus, dum clamaret: Pater ignosce illis, nesciunt quid faciunt. Iam videte an non & hoc praedixerit: Loquuti sunt adversum me lingua dolosa, & sermonibus odij circumdederunt me, & expugnaverunt me gratis. Pro eo

Exegesis discloses the relation between the images of the passion imprinted by the disciples and those formerly prophesied by the psalmist and now correlated to these visual experiences, as a prelude to the calling forth of a further image—that of the resurrection, which is to be visualized on the basis of scriptural prophecies such as Jonah 2:1–11 and Hos 6:3 and the *argumenta resurrectionis* apportioned by Christ.

So central is the thematic of *signa* to Erasmus's paraphrase of Luke 24 that he insists on construing even actual facts (*nunc conferte rem*) as complete *indicia resurrectionis*. Christ's deeds are read as signs of the truths figuratively embedded in the *typi* of the Law and the prophets: "There you have the prophecy to Moses; now compare the actual fact.... Moses fasted for forty days; Christ did the same, so that even in this sign you might recognize the second Moses [*ut vel hoc indicio agnosceretis alterum Mosen*]."⁸⁹ Similarly, Erasmus argues that the *res passionis* should serve to corroborate the *signa resurrectionis*, giving credence to these signifiers of an event whose actuality must now be acknowledged: "You believe that he died because you saw it; believe also that he has come back to life. For he will not have deceived you on this latter point when he foretold the truth in the other."⁹⁰

Even the absence of the Lord's body functions as an *indicium*: its disappearance signifies the supplantation of the terrestrial Jerusalem by the spiritual city governed by Christ, and this analogy hints further at the fact that access to this noncorporeal place is secured by the resurrection. Jesus,

ut me diligenter detrahebant mihi, ego autem orabam. Vidistis eum clavis affixum cruci, nudum pendere distento corpore. Audite nunc vaticinium dilucidum: Foderunt manus meas & pedes meos, dinumeraverunt omnia ossa mea.... Potuistis & illud animadvertere, quod diversis rationibus vicit praesidia mundi & satanae. Simplicitate vicit astutiam, mansuetudine superavit ferociam ... ita infirmitate vicit potentiam satanae. Quid enim imbecillius moriente? Et tamen haec imbecillitas quantum habuit robur, vidistis. Conspexistis obscurari solem, concuti terram, dissiliere saxa, dehiscere monumenta, scindi velum templi. Haec nimirum declarabant praecipuum illius robur, quo devicit diabolus ac mundus, in morte fuisse expeditum: praedixerat & hoc psalmus mysticus, dicens: Dicite in nationibus, regnavit a ligno deus."

89. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Luke 11–24*, 237. Cf. Erasmus, *In Evangelium Lucae paraphrasis*, 239: "Habetis vaticinium Mosi, nunc conferte rem.... Moses ieiunavit quadraginta diebus, fecit idem Christus, ut vel hoc indicio agnosceretis alterum Mosen."

90. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Luke 11–24*, 228. Cf. Erasmus, *In Evangelium Lucae paraphrasis*, 235: "Mortuum esse creditis quia vidistis, credite & revixisse. Non enim hic fefellerit vos, qui in altero vera praedixit."

in comparing his departed body to the heavenly Jerusalem, which cannot be pointed to, prompts the two disciples to make these connections: “You have a spiritual city and temple, which cannot be pointed to by fingers, and just so neither can its king and builder himself, as he himself said when he was alive. ‘When they say, “Look, Christ is here; look, he is there,” do not believe them.’”⁹¹

Erasmus has Jesus remind the two disciples that the denotative value of *signa* was advertised by the Lord himself, when he confirmed John the Baptist’s exegesis of Isa 35:4–6. This prophecy, applied by John to Christ, enumerates the signs by which the Messiah, in the latter days, will make himself known:

The same prophet speaks again even more directly thus: “... God himself will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap like a deer and the tongue of the dumb be loosed” (Isa 35:4–6). Or did you not see Jesus doing these things with your own eyes, and even greater things than these? You heard him himself acknowledging that this prophecy had been made about him, when the disciples sent by John asked him whether he was the expected Messiah or whether another was to be looked for. He replied, “Go and say to John what you have seen and heard: the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor are made joyful by the good news of the gospel.”⁹²

Jesus urges the disciples to infer that the *signa resurrectionis* likewise bear witness to his divinity, for they certify, as may be shown exegetically, that

91. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Luke 11–24*, 244. Cf. Erasmus, *In Evangelium Lucae paraphrasis*, 245: “Habetis civitatem ac templum spirituale, quod digitis ostendi non potest, sicuti nec rex & opifex ipse, quemadmodum ipse docuit, quum viveret. Cum dixerint: Ecce Christus hic, ecce illic, nolite credere.”

92. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Luke 11–24*, 256–57. Cf. Erasmus, *In Evangelium Lucae paraphrasis*, 250: “Rursus idem apertius etiam ita praedicat: ... deus ipse veniet, & salvabit vos. Tunc aperientur oculi caecorum, & aures surdorum patebunt. Tunc saliet sicut cervus claudus, & aperta erit lingua mutorum. An non vidistis oculis vestris haec, & his etiam maiora patrantem Iesum? Audistis ipsum agnoscentem hanc prophetiam de se proditam, quum ab Ioanne missi discipuli percontarentur eum, utrum ipse esset expectatus ille Messias, an alius esset expectandus, respondit: Euntes, inquit, renunciate Ioanni quae audistis & vidistis: Caeci vident, claudi ambulant, leprosi mundantur, surdi audiunt, mortui resurgunt, pauperes Evangelizantur.”

the prophecies of the resurrection have finally come to pass: "Is the weakness of a dead body such a stumbling block to you that you now despair, as if all his grand promises had come to naught ... ? No indeed: his death has opened the way to these majestic things. Just as you saw him dead and buried, so you will see him alive again."⁹³ The exegetical authority displayed by John in his reading of Isa 35:4–6 licenses the authoritative reading of *signa resurrectionis* as evidentiary proofs of the divinity of Christ *redivivus*.

Like the glossator and Nicholas of Lyra, Erasmus asks why Christ chose to promulgate knowledge of the resurrection by means of *signa* and *indicia*. He also poses the corollary question, why was it that Christ not only forestalled to appear, but later, when he actually appeared, did so briefly and sparingly. He has in mind the way Christ at last revealed himself at Emmaus by blessing and breaking bread in a manner peculiar to him and readily familiar to the disciples and then, having been recognized, suddenly vanished. The answer put forward by Erasmus proves surprising: the presence of Christ at this juncture, far from preempting the *signa resurrectionis*, must itself be thought to have functioned as a kind of bodily *signum*. What he definitively revealed, therefore, was the necessity of bodily signs to the propagation of this key mystery of faith. At Emmaus, he enacted a corporal sign (*corporali signo*) with a dual significance: the spiritual truths he had been unveiling by exegetical means during the journey, he now reenacted "in a bodily sign" signifying the process of exegetical disclosure and verifying, in line with the truths disclosed, that he had indeed risen from the dead: "He had broken and offered that bread mystically during the journey, when he unveiled the Scriptures to them. And what he had done there in spirit he afterward renewed in the bodily sign [*post corporali signo renovavit*]."⁹⁴

The *corporale signum*, in the brevity of its showing, also signifies prophetically that Jesus, whose ascension was soon to occur, would shortly

93. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Luke 11–24*, 269. Cf. Erasmus, *In Evangelium Lucae paraphrasis*, 257: "Adeo ne vos offendit mortui corporis infirmitas, ut nunc despondeatis animum, quasi interierint omnia illa magnifica promissa...? Imo ad harum rerum maiestatem mors aperuit aditum. Sicut vidistis illum morientem ac sepultum, ita videbitis redivivum."

94. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Luke 11–24*, 272. Cf. Erasmus, *In Evangelium Lucae paraphrasis*, 259: "In via fregerat, ac porrexerat illum panem mystice, quum illis aperiret scripturas. Et quod illic fecerat iuxta spiritum, post corporali signo renovavit."

thereafter remove himself altogether from human affairs of the body. His *apparitions*, by their brevity and scarcity, were designed to “accustom [the disciples] slowly to being without the sight of his body.” More importantly, they were intended to help them make the transition from dealing with him in the flesh to dealing with him in spirit. This, then, is the crucial response to the question, “Why *signa*?” Christ was not only accommodating the weakness of human sense, the human inability to “bear the majesty of [his] resurrected body”; he was preparing his disciples for the time, presently to follow, when he must be discerned intangibly—spiritually—by means of the “eyes of faith.” *Signa*, because they mediate between presence and absence, standing proxy for truths that are conveyed representationally and cognized internally, mediate between the registers of body and spirit, sensation and discernment, perception and understanding. They are, on this account, crucially propaedeutic, for they prepare their recipients to see clearly, with spiritual eyes, the image of Christ that is first shown through mediating signs—*corporali signo*:

And while sudden amazement gripped their hearts, Jesus vanished from their sight. For after his death he made his body available gradually and sparingly, either because human weakness would not bear the majesty of the resurrected body or to accustom them slowly to being without the sight of the body; it was going to be taken away soon so that they would then love him in spirit. Also, they did not recognize Jesus except in the house, that is, the church; they did not recognize him except when he himself offered them the bread of the gospel word. For that is what opens the eyes by which Jesus is recognized.... When Jesus was taken away in body they now saw him better than when he was with them in body. Their eyes had been held fast because they did not believe. Now, though he was not there, they saw him with the eyes of faith.⁹⁵

95. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Luke 11–24*, 271–72. Erasmus, *In Evangelium Lucae paraphrasis*, 25859: “Dumque subitus quidam stupor corripit illorum animos, Iesus evanuit ex illorum conspectu. Paulatim enim ac parce faciebat sui corporis copiam a morte, vel quod imbecillitas humana non ferret redivivi corporis maiestatem, vel ut sensim assuescerent carere corporis conspectu, quod mox esset abducendum, quo iam amarent illum iuxta spiritum. Porro non agnoscunt Iesum nisi in domo, quae est ecclesia: non agnoscunt nisi ipso porrigente panem sermonis Evangelici. Is enim aperit oculos, quibus agnoscitur Iesus.... Sublato corpore Iesu, iam melius illum videbant, quam tum quum esset corpore praesens. Tenebantur oculi, quia non credebant. Nunc absentem vident oculis fidei.”

Erasmus's *Paraphrasis in Evangelium secundum Ioannem*, written between the *Paraphrase on Matthew* and the *Paraphrases on Mark and Luke*, examines the psychology of reception that necessitated the use of *signa* as harbingers of the *apparitiones Christi*, the risen Christ's appearances to the disciples. Forgetful of his prophecies of the resurrection, recorded in Matt 16:21, 17:21, 26:61, 27:40; Mark 8:31, 9:30, 14:58, 15:29; Luke 9:22, 24:7, 24:45–46; and John 2:19–22, the disciples were initially impervious to the *signa resurrectionis* and would have been powerless to endure the sight of Christ glorified, had he shown himself to them. For this reason, the signs were orchestrated by Jesus gradually to penetrate their eyes, minds, and hearts, preparing them to receive him and to recognize that he was in fact not the same, his flesh having been divinized, his humanity exalted. Erasmus describes the gradual and sometimes halting process of recognition that leads from various kinds and degrees of indexical *signum* to the *apparitio* of Christ as gardener, in a form functionally coterminous with the preceding *signa* that announced and simultaneously veiled "his true appearance" (*sua specie*).⁹⁶ These *signa* and preliminary *apparitio* testify to the mercy of *Christus magister*, who repeatedly adapts his method of instruction to the capacities and limitations of his students.

In the *Paraphrasis in Evangelium secundum Ioannem*, the first *signum resurrectionis* is the grandeur of the Lord's burial, as expressed in the fine rock-cut tomb and the hundred-weight of myrrh and aloes donated by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, respectively: "But as Christ wanted his whole life to be humble, so he wanted his burial to be grand: not to teach us to be concerned about tombs, but so that when the things that had to do with the dispensation of his humility were complete, he might then rehearse the glory of his resurrection.... Nicodemus brought ointment made from myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds, which was enough to bury a body in grand style."⁹⁷

96. Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam, *Paraphrase on John*, in vol. 46 of *Collected Works of Erasmus*, ed. and trans. Jane E. Phillips (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 218. Cf. Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam, *Paraphrasis in Evangelium secundum Ioannem* (Basel: Johann Froben, 1524), 187. Erasmus distinguishes between the *humili specie* adopted by Christ and his *sua specie* (see n. 106 below). On the *Paraphrase on John*, see Robert D. Sider, "Preface," in Phillips, *Paraphrase on John*, ix–x; and Jane E. Phillips, "Translator's Note," in Phillips, *Paraphrase on John*, xi–xvi.

97. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on John*, 215. Cf. Erasmus, *Paraphrasis in Evangelium secundum Ioannem*, 185: "Christus autem quemadmodum omnem vitam humilem esse voluit, ita sepulturam voluit esse magnificam: non ut nos doceret sepulchri

Joseph and Nicodemus, providers of this *signum*, remain ignorant of its true significance, for “they offered this degree of honor to the Lord Jesus as to a great and blameless man, lest anyone think that he had died of his misdeeds”; which is to say that “they thought no more highly of him than that he was an innocent and upright man, and dear to God, to whose memory such honor was owed because he had been driven to death by envy of his excellence.”⁹⁸ The *signum* encoded but unnoticed in the circumstances of the Lord’s burial goes hand in hand with the *signa* set about the tomb by the chief priests and the Pharisees, ostensibly to prevent his followers from falsely staging the miracle of resurrection. These corollary *signa*—the huge rock shutting up the tomb, the seals impressed on it, and the guards posted around the sepulchre—are instead “put to the service of faith in the coming resurrection” and “in every way [result] in the glory of Christ.”⁹⁹ The *signum* undiscerned, like the *signa* misconstrued, betrays the fallibility of the readers of signs, whose imperfections Jesus takes into account.

The Magdalene, when she visits the tomb on the day following the Sabbath, misinterprets the *signa* she encounters, thinking that the Lord’s body has been removed for proper burial. She is blindsided by the horror of his crucifixion: “The hope of resurrection had dropped out of the minds of all of them, distraught as they were by the actual death of the Lord.”¹⁰⁰ Mary’s immediate response is to shrink back from the sight of the opened tomb: inattentive to the true significance of what she has superficially observed,

curam agere, sed ut pactis his quae pertinebant ad dispensationem humilitatis, iam ad resurrectionis gloriam praeluderet.... Attulit autem Nicodemus unguentum ex myrrha, & aloë mixtum, ad libras ferme centum, quantum corpori magnifice condendo sufficebat.”

98. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on John*, 215. Cf. Erasmus, *Paraphrasis in Evangelium secundum Ioannem*, 185: “Atque hoc honoris deferebant domino Iesu, velut homini magno & integro, ne quis existimaret eum, ob maleficia mortuum fuisse. Nihil enim adhuc altius de illo sentiebant, nisi quod vir innocens ac probus deoque charus fuisset, cuius memoriae deberetur hoc honoris, quod perisset oppressus invidia virtutis.”

99. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on John*, 216. Cf. Erasmus, *Paraphrasis in Evangelium secundum Ioannem*, 186: “Quin & Iudaeorum diligentia, servivit ad fidem resurrectionis futurae.... nulla ex parte Iudaeorum malicia non evadente in gloriam Christi, cuius nomen conabantur abolere.”

100. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on John*, 216. Cf. Erasmus, *Paraphrasis in Evangelium secundum Ioannem*, 186: “Perturbatis enim morte certa domini, spes illa resurrectionis exciderat omnibus.”

she rushes away and tells Simon Peter and John, "The Lord has been taken from the tomb, and I don't know where the people who moved him have transferred him."¹⁰¹ Aroused by her words, they go to the tomb, gripped by "great longing for so beloved a teacher" but encumbered by their "very slender hope" of seeing him.¹⁰² John arrives before Peter and, though he stays outside, is the first to peer into the empty tomb, see the linens and head cloth coated with aromatics, and notice how they are rolled up, not strewn about, and placed neatly to the sides. These *signa*, glimpsed rather than scrutinized, constitute, as Erasmus puts it, "the first hope presented of the resurrection": "Hence it was readily apparent that the body had not been removed by thieves, who would have taken away the whole body, wrapped as it was, along with its aromatics, its linens, and the other cloth, if not because of the value of the items certainly because they would not have had the time to remove the ointments, stickier than any birdlime, from the body and to arrange everything in its rightful place."¹⁰³

Peter now arrives and actually enters the tomb, observing "at first hand what [John] had seen dimly" (*iamque certo viderunt cominus, quod alter ceu per umbram viderat*). Motivated by greater curiosity, he is bolder and more eager to inspect what he finds, "to make an investigation" (*audacior fuit pariter & curiosior investigando*).¹⁰⁴ His example converts John from *prospector* to *investigator*, impelling him likewise to step into the tomb.¹⁰⁵

101. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on John*, 216. Cf. Erasmus, *Paraphrasis in Evangelium secundum Ioannem*, 186: "Sublatus est dominus a monumento, nec scio quo transtulerint eum, qui sustulerunt."

102. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on John*, 216. Cf. Erasmus, *Paraphrasis in Evangelium secundum Ioannem*, 186: "Spes sane perquam tenuis habebat illos, tamen ingenti sic dilecti praeceptoris desiderio tenebantur."

103. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on John*, 216–17. Cf. Erasmus, *Paraphrasis in Evangelium secundum Ioannem*, 186–87: "Ut facile liqueret corpus non esse sublatum a furi-bus, qui totum corpus ut erat obvolutum potius abduxissent, cum aromatibus, linteis, & sindone, si non ob precium rerum, certe ob id, quod non tantum habuissent ocij, ad detrahenda corpori unguenta quovis visco tenacius inhaerentia, & suo quaeque loco digerenda. Haec erat prima qualis qualis resurrectionis spes oblata."

104. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on John*, 217. Cf. Erasmus, *Paraphrasis in Evangelium secundum Ioannem*, 187.

105. Erasmus, *Paraphrasis in Evangelium secundum Ioannem*, 186–87: "Quumque repperisset [Ioannes] ostium apertum, non ingressus est quidem, sed circumflexo corpore prospexit in monumentum, si vacuum est.... Non enim contentus in monumentum prospexisse, etiam ingressus est [Petrus]. Hunc consequutus est

Even so, their ability to read the *signa resurrectionis*, albeit improved, remains as nascent as their exegetical competence is rudimentary:

They did not yet believe that he had come to life again; they only thought that what Mary had said was true, that the body had been taken from the tomb. For although they had heard from Jesus that he would rise again, it had not implanted itself deep in their hearts, and whatever had taken root had been shaken out by the fear and confusion of the cross. For they had not yet reached a profound understanding of the scriptural prophecy, which had beyond all doubt predicted what was going to happen, that Jesus would die and on the third day live again.¹⁰⁶

The next phase in this gradual ascent toward semiotic legibility is taken by the Magdalene, who, refusing to leave the tomb, continues “looking about to see if there might be some glimmer of hope of finding the body.”¹⁰⁷ So great is her yearning for Jesus that she finally peers deep into the tomb, craning her neck to see if she might espy him. The two angels she now describes answer to her intense desire to be reunited with his mortal remains: they are sent to quicken hope, as a prelude to the appearance of Christ himself, whose question to Mary, “Woman, why are you crying?” they pose in anticipation of the exchange soon to follow.

Moreover, their manner of beholding exercises hers: realizing from their awestruck expressions that someone is standing behind her (*ex angelorum vultibus suspicata est*), she turns and catches sight of Jesus (*respexit*); but still she fails to realize who he is, “for he appeared in humble guise (*humili specie*) so as not to frighten the woman with the sudden sight of his true appearance [*sua specie*].”¹⁰⁸ Nor does she prove capable of leveling her gaze: instead, she turns back and forth from the angels

alter ille discipulus prospector, qui solus ingredi non audebat, sed socius adiunctus, ademit formidinis partem.”

106. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on John*, 217. Cf. Erasmus, *Paraphrasis in Evangelium secundum Ioannem*, 187: “Tamen credebant eum revixisse, tantum illud credebant esse verum, quod dixerat Maria, corpus sublatum a monumento. Quanquam enim audierant ex Iesu, quod resurrecturus esset, tamen ea non insederant penitus animis eorum, & si quid inhaeserat, id metus ac tumultus crucis excusserat. Nondum enim penitus intellexerant scripturam prophetica, quae certo praedixerat futurum ut Iesus moreretur, ac die tertio revivisceret.”

107. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on John*, 217. Cf. Erasmus, *Paraphrasis in Evangelium secundum Ioannem*, 187: “Circumspicientans, si qua spes affulgeret inveniendi corporis.”

108. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on John*, 218. Cf. Erasmus, *Paraphrasis in Evangelium*

to the man she has misidentified as gardener, caretaker, or watchman, until hearing him call "Mary," and prompted by "his known and familiar voice," she finally recognizes Jesus, addressing him "by his usual title: 'Rabboni' ('Teacher')." ¹⁰⁹ The mediating image (*species*) that makes her ready to discover Christ glorified, showing him as a humble man, is itself a *signum* signifying the loving care he expends to inculcate the mystery of the resurrection.

The progression from *signum* to *species*, and thence to *praesentia*, is still incomplete, however, as Erasmus points out. Mary misapprehends Christ, thinking that he has returned to life essentially unchanged from who and what he formerly was. She knows that he has risen, but still fails truly to discern the mystery of the resurrection: "For Mary saw him resurrected, but she thought that he had come to life again for nothing other than to carry on his relations with his friends in his usual way, once dead but now alive; she did not know that he now possessed an immortal body that must be treated with more reverence, a body which the Lord never showed to the wicked nor allowed to be touched by just anyone, so that he might gradually guide [us] entirely away from love of the body [*ab amore corporis*]." ¹¹⁰ So Jesus forbids her to touch him, thus staging a supplementary *signum*, enacted by Mary herself, that (ironically) bodies forth the requisite transition from *amor corporis* to "spiritual fellowship" with Christ (*meo spirituali consortio*) that every Christian must learn to negotiate. ¹¹¹

Mary's, Peter's, and John's responses to the *signa* they come gradually to discern are inflections of the relation (parsed in the *Paraphrases* on the gospels) between the *evidentiae resurrectionis* and the recipients of

secundum Ioannem, 187: "Apparebat enim humili specie ne subito sua specie conspectus, mulierem expavesceret."

109. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on John*, 218. Cf. Erasmus, *Paraphrasis in Evangelium secundum Ioannem*, 188: "Voce iam nota & familiari, compellat eam: Maria. Ad hanc vocem notam, subito conversa mulier: ... solito titulo compellat discipula praeceptorem: Rabboni."

110. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on John*, 218. Cf. Erasmus, *Paraphrasis in Evangelium secundum Ioannem*, 188: "Videbat enim Maria redivivum, sed non aliud revixisse putabat, nisi ut more solito consuetudinem ageret cum amicis ex mortuo vivus, ignara quod iam corpus gestaret immortale maiore veneratione tractandum: quod nec impijs unquam exhibuit dominus, nec cuius attrectandum permisit, quo paulatim in totum abduceret ab amore corporis."

111. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on John*, 218. Cf. Erasmus, *Paraphrasis in Evangelium secundum Ioannem*, 188.

the *indicia*, *argumenta*, *documenta*, and *species* constitutive of this visual evidence. Erasmus demonstrates that such signs were originally difficult to read, that they were ordered by Christ into an instructive doctrinal program centering on the mystery of the resurrection, and that they were designed to lead from *coporalia* to *spiritualia*.

The *Paraphrases* supply a further layer of discourse against which the particulars of Bruegel's *Resurrection* may be read. The varied reactions of the women, ranging from inexpectancy to dawning awareness, and the puzzlement of the soldiers evoke Erasmus's argument that the *signa resurrectionis* were anything but transparent. They had to be noticed, then parsed, and finally apprehended. The distant figures of the two disciples journeying to Emmaus correlate with this view of *signa*: they are shown before Jesus drew near, when their knowledge of the resurrection, its prophecies, and signs was still dim and shadowy. Bruegel's stepped composition, in which the angel functions as an ostensible emissary of Christ, mediating between his invisible presence and the visibility of the *indicia resurrectionis*, recalls the argument, in the *Paraphrase on Luke*, that corporal signs served to prepare their recipients to behold Christ spiritually. The axial position of the stone, cardinal placement of the seal and empty tomb, and pointing gestures of Christ and the angel, along with the latter's representative relation to Christ correspond to the argument, in the *Paraphrase on Mark*, that close observation of divinely dispensed *spectacula* was the principal means whereby the resurrection came to be known and verified.

The prayerful gesture of the foremost woman exemplifies the argument, in the *Paraphrase on Matthew*, that the two senses of *fides* ("faith" and "proof") coalesce in the *actus fidei* engendered by solicitude for the *argumenta resurrectionis*. In these and other ways, Erasmus's *Paraphrases*, like the *Glossa*, provide an exegetical warrant for those features of Bruegel's *Resurrection* that distinguish it so remarkably from pictorial convention. The print, in diverging from visual precedent, cleaves closely to the scriptural account of the resurrection—more specifically, of the *evidentiae* and *apparitiones* by which this great mystery came to be inferred. More than this, the *Resurrection* invites us to engage with the Gospels, urging us to dwell on the scriptural crux—why the *resurrectio Christi* was made known, not directly, but through the mediation of evidentiary *signa*, *indicia*, and *vestigia*. The print operates in this sense as an exegetical prompt or instrument.

Thomas Aquinas's *Catena aurea* would have been equally relevant, as a brief closing excursus on this anthology will serve to demonstrate. The *Catena* consists of excerpts from biblical commentaries, the major-

ity patristic, subsumed under the scriptural verses they interpret. Many of these excerpts were interpolated into the multivolume editions of the Glossa published throughout the sixteenth century, as elaborations of the ordinary and interlinear glosses and supplements to the comments of Nicholas of Lyra.

Take the *catena* on Matt 28, which exhaustively argues, in the words of Chrysologus, that at the sepulchre “there is seen evidence of the Resurrection not to be gainsaid”—namely, the absence of the Lord’s body, the presence of the watch, and the seal of the tomb.¹¹² Thomas Aquinas brings together *auctoritates* that underscore the compelling nature of this visual evidence. Bede, for example, is cited to make the point that the angel rolled back the stone, “not to open the door for the Lord to come forth,” for he needed no assistance but, rather, “to give evidence to men that he was already come forth.”¹¹³

Jerome is quoted as saying that the “Lord, Son at once of God and man, according to his two-fold nature of Godhead and of flesh, gives a sign one while of his greatness” (viz., preternatural events, such as the earthquake), “another while of his lowliness” (viz., his death and burial).¹¹⁴ These *signa*, traces comprising the event they signify, conform to the mode of expression found everywhere in Scripture, as Thomas Aquinas infers on the basis of Augustine: “And this is the usual mode of speaking in Holy Scripture, to express the whole by a part.”¹¹⁵ Augustine is referring to Matt 24:1, “On the evening of the Sabbath,” which uses “evening” to “denote the whole night in the end of which [the women] come to the sepulchre.”¹¹⁶ For Thomas Aquinas, the observation has a dual significance: it serves to justify the evidentiary value of the *signa resurrectionis*, which have the power to conjure up the whole of this unseen event, making it seem virtually discernible; and it implies that the *signa resurrectionis* must be seen in the way Scripture is read, by recourse to a process of exegetical amplification that infers the event from its particulars.

112. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel according to Matthew*, vol. 1.3 of *Catena aurea: Commentary on the Four Gospels Collected out of the Works of the Fathers*, ed. John Henry Newman, trans. Mark Pattison, John B. Calgairns, and T. D. Ryder (London: John H. Parker, 1841–1845), 984.

113. *Ibid.*, 977.

114. *Ibid.*, 976.

115. *Ibid.*, 974.

116. *Ibid.*, 974.

Thomas Aquinas also supplies a frame of reference for specific features of Bruegel's *Resurrection*, such as the compositional prominence of the angel whose presence, according to Hilary and Bede, signifies the divinity of Christ, newly made manifest after the resurrection: "Hilary: 'This is an instance of the mercy of God the Father, to supply the ministry of heavenly power to the Son on his resurrection from the grave; and he is therefore the proclaimer of this first resurrection, that it may be heralded by some attendant token of the Father's good pleasure.' Bede: 'Forasmuch as Christ is both God and man, therefore there lack not amidst the acts of his humanity the ministrations of angels, due to him as God.'"¹¹⁷

Another potent *signum* enunciated by Bruegel is the clear distinction between the brightness of the angel's robe and the splendor of the angel's face, the former glowing amidst the crepuscular environs of the sepulchre, the latter flashing so intensely that the angel's wings seem to evanesce in its aureola:

Chrysologus: "The splendor of his countenance is distinct from the shining of his raiment; his countenance is compared to lightning, his raiment to snow; for the lightning is in heaven, snow on the earth; as the Prophet saith (Ps 148:7), 'Praise the Lord from the earth; fire and hail, snow and vapors.' Thus in the angel's countenance is preserved the splendor of his heavenly nature; in his raiment is shewn the grace of human communion. For the appearance of the angel that talked with them is so ordered, that eyes of flesh might endure the still splendor of his robes, and by reason of his shining countenance they might tremble before the messenger of their Maker."¹¹⁸

The position of Christ, who hovers over everything, gazing down at the empty tomb, pointing at the distant sun, enveloped by clouds stretching over the entire scene, calls to mind Hrabanus Maurus's description of *Christus redivivus* as everywhere present spiritually, even while absent bodily from the sepulchre: "His fleshly presence, that is; for his spiritual presence is absent from no place."¹¹⁹

Finally, Thomas Aquinas's sources also help to explain why Bruegel placed so much emphasis on certain elements of the *Resurrection*, such as the seated posture of the angel. The angel sat on the stone to signify the

117. Ibid., 976–77.

118. Ibid., 978.

119. Ibid., 979.

power of Christ to triumph over death, as Bede avows: "But the herald of the Resurrection is related to have been seated, to shew that now [Jesus] had overcome him that had the power of death, [and] he had mounted the throne of the everlasting kingdom. He sat upon the stone, now rolled back, wherewith the mouth of the sepulchre had been closed, to teach that he by his might had burst the bonds of the tomb."¹²⁰

The *catena* on Mark 16 precisely correlates with other components adduced by Bruegel, some of which are notably unconventional. The least inapt is the analogy between the light of Christ and that of the rising sun. Christ is ascending, as his robe indicates, and his upward motion and shining aureole accord with the new day brightly dawning at right: "Pseudo-Jerome: 'After the sadness of the sabbath, a happy day dawns upon them, which holds the chief place amongst days, for in it the chief light shines forth, and the Lord rises in triumph.'"¹²¹ More unusual is the detailed description of dawn's effects on the surrounding darkness: kinds and degrees of shadow become distinguishable, ranging from semiopaque to semitransparent. These effects correspond to Augustine's reading of Mark 16:2, "And very early in the morning ... at the rising of the sun":

What Luke expresses by 'very early in the morning,' and John by 'early when it was yet dark,' Mark must be understood to mean, when he says, 'very early in the morning, at the rising of the sun,' that is, when the sky was growing bright in the east, as is usual in places near the rising sun; for this is the light which we call the dawning. Therefore there is no discrepancy with the report which says, 'while it was yet dark.' For when the day is dawning, the remains of darkness lessen in proportion as the light grows brighter; and we must not take the words 'very early in the morning, at the rising of the sun,' to mean that the sun himself was seen upon the earth, but as expressing the near approach of the sun into those parts, that is, when his rising begins to light up the sky.¹²²

The directional attitude of Christ, his left arm pointed rightward, his robe fluttering leftward, indicates that he is passing over the tomb. This

120. *Ibid.*, 977.

121. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel according to Mark*, vol. 2 of *Catena aurea: Commentary on the Four Gospels Collected out of the Works of the Fathers*, ed. John Henry Newman, trans. Mark Pattison, John B. Calgairns, and T. D. Ryder (London: John H. Parker, 1841–1845), 334.

122. *Ibid.*, 334–35.

motion from left to right puts one in mind of Gregory's comparison of the resurrection to *transmigratio*, "passing over," from the register of flesh to that of spirit: "He then who is announced at the tomb, is shewn in 'passing over,' because he who is first known in mortification of the flesh, is seen in this passing over of the soul."¹²³

The angel whose appearance Bruegel conforms to that of the risen Christ exemplifies what Pseudo-Jerome claims to have been this angelic minister's chief representative function: "This young man then shews an image of the Resurrection to them who feared death."¹²⁴ (As Theophylactus argues, the angel "sitting on the stone" in Matthew is the same angel whom the women saw "sitting on the right hand" when they entered the sepulchre in Mark; and as Augustine infers, the "stone" and the "right hand" may actually refer to the same place.¹²⁵) The long, brilliantly white garment in which Bruegel dresses the angel derives, not from Scripture, but from Severianus, who describes him as a "young man ... dressed in a long white robe ... not from mortal fleece, but of living virtue, blazing with heavenly light, not of an earthly dye, as saith the Prophet, 'Thou deckest thyself with light as with a garment.'"¹²⁶

The angel's gesture of showing the empty tomb not only alludes to his statement in Mark 16:6, "He is not here," but also fulfills the task he was sent to accomplish, as Theophylactus specifies: "This too was the reason why he had rolled away the stone, that he might shew them the place."¹²⁷ Last but not least, the two women bringing up the rear, their eyes closed, bodies shadowed, seem closely adapted to Severianus's description of the women as fervent in love yet lacking in faith, and as such, ignorant of the resurrection: "Your breast was darkened, your eyes shut, and therefore ye did not before see the glory of the opened sepulchre."¹²⁸

The *catenae* on Luke 26 and John 20 examine the contingent nature of all *signa*: they are adapted, as Thomas Aquinas's sources indicate, to a wide spectrum of sense and intellect, to the differing capabilities of their recipients, whose emotions they arouse, and analytical skills they test. If, as Chrysologus states, the stone was rolled away *after* the resurrection for

123. Ibid., 339.

124. Ibid., 337.

125. Ibid., 336.

126. Ibid., 337.

127. Ibid., 338.

128. Ibid., 335.

the sole purpose of convincing the women that the Lord had risen, its effect on them was anything but straightforward, for, having “found not the body of Christ, ... they were distracted by various thoughts.”¹²⁹ Therefore, responding to “their love of Christ and the tender care they had shewn him,” he deigned additionally to confer the “vision of angels,” as Cyril concludes.¹³⁰ Eusebius calls them “messengers of the health-bearing Resurrection,” since they were sent to “stand for tokens of pleasantness and rejoicing,” soothing the women and enabling them to delight in the proofs of the resurrection.¹³¹

The *catena* on John 20 takes up this line of argument, applying it to Mary Magdalene, whose love, as Gregory surmises, drove her to stoop down and inspect the place where the Lord’s body had lain, in the manner of a lover whom desire impels “to look over and over again” at her beloved.¹³² However, “too great grief,” as Augustine puts it, mixed in with this love, caused her “to believe neither her own eyes, nor the disciples.” Yet, after all, was it not a “divine impulse which induced her to look in?”¹³³

Thomas Aquinas’s point in marshaling these sources is to show how the passions of love and grief qualify the effect of a divinely sanctioned impulse; the proofs of the resurrection—the empty tomb, the neatly folded wrappings, the face cloth carefully set aside—must thus be supplemented by the appearance of angels: “Chrysologus: ‘As her understanding was not so raised as to be able to gather from the napkins the fact of the Resurrection, she is given the sight of angels in bright apparel, who sooth her sorrow.’”¹³⁴ When they question her, asking, “Woman, why weepest thou?” and she answers, “Because they have taken away my Lord,” she further misconstrues the missing *signum* of the Lord’s body: she wrongly assumes that the body is all of Christ, when “only his flesh was buried,” and she thus

129. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel according to Luke*, vol. 3.1–2 of *Catena aurea: Commentary on the Four Gospels Collected out of the Works of the Fathers*, ed. John Henry Newman, trans. Mark Pattison, John B. Calgairns, and T. D. Ryder (London: John H. Parker, 1841–1845), 768.

130. Ibid.

131. Ibid.

132. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel according to John*, vol. 4.1–2 of *Catena aurea: Commentary on the Four Gospels Collected out of the Works of the Fathers*, ed. John Henry Newman, trans. Mark Pattison, John B. Calgairns, and T. D. Ryder (London: John H. Parker, 1841–1845), 600.

133. Ibid.

134. Ibid.

fails to discern that the body's absence is itself a supervening *signum*, proof positive of the resurrection: "Augustine: 'The lifeless body of her Lord, she calls her Lord, putting the part for the whole; just as we confess that Jesus Christ the Son of God was buried, when only his flesh was buried.'"¹³⁵

In this respect, she is like Peter and John, who beheld circumstantial proofs of the resurrection, and having rightly conjectured that the grave had not been robbed, then failed to draw the right conclusion, namely, that Jesus was risen. They mistook veridical proofs for mere allegories that signify by means of parabolic figures:

Chrysologus: "For had they carried him away, they would not have stripped him; nor, if any had stolen him, would they have taken the trouble to wrap up the napkin, and put it in a place by itself, apart from the linen clothes; but would have taken away the body as it was.... If he did not yet know that he must rise again from the dead, he could not believe that he had risen. They had heard as much indeed from our Lord, and very openly, but they were so accustomed to hear parables from him, that they took this for a parable, and thought he meant something else."¹³⁶

Here, as elsewhere in the *Catena aurea*, Thomas insists on the importance of *signa* as conveyors of the mysteries of faith, but equally, he demonstrates that signs must often be layered upon signs, since their fallible recipients "are not to be lifted suddenly, but gradually to high things."¹³⁷ The material properties of signs along with the conditions of their reception impinge in complex ways upon their signifying function.

Thomas Aquinas's account can be said to underwrite the descriptive specificity of Bruegel's *Resurrection*, the attention paid to the look of the *signa resurrectionis*, and to the ways in which they are gradually seen (or not seen) by their beneficiaries. The *Catena*, then, like the *Glossa* and Erasmus's *Paraphrases*, reveals how the *Resurrection*, in its emphasis on mediating signs, operates within a scriptural frame of reference, putting forward an exegetical argument about the nature of this glorious mystery. The notion that Christ allowed it to be known *ex post facto* by means of visible traces and proxies serves implicitly to adduce the probative value

135. *Ibid.*, 600–601.

136. *Ibid.*, 596–97.

137. *Ibid.*, 601.

of Bruegel's *Resurrection* as a latter-day *signum* bearing on the evidentiary status of all such *signa Resurrectionis*.¹³⁸

APPENDIX

On the *Resurrection*, 451 × 330 mm, see Manfred Sellink, "Philips Galle, after Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *The Resurrection of Christ*, 1562–63," in *Hieronymus Cock: The Renaissance in Print*, ed. Joris van Grieken, Ger Luijten, and Jan van der Stock (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 262–63, no. 69, exhibition catalog. Also see: René van Bastelaer, *Les estampes de Peter Bruegel l'Ancien* (Brussels: Van Oest, 1908), no. 114; Konrad Oberhuber, *Zwischen Renaissance und Barock: Das Zeitalter von Brueghel und Bel-lange; Werke aus dem Besitz der Albertina* (Vienna: Albertina, 1967), no. 57, exhibition catalog; Louis Lebeer, *Beredeneerde catalogus van de prenten naar Pieter Bruegel de Oude* (Brussels: Royal Library of Belgium, 1969), no. 84, exhibition catalog; Timothy A. Riggs, *Hieronymus Cock: Print-maker and Publisher* (New York: Garland, 1977), no. 30; Arno Dolders and Walter L. Strauss, eds., *The Illustrated Bartsch 56: Netherlandish Artists—Philips Galle* (New York: Abaris, 1987), no. 56.044; Roger H. Marijnissen et al., eds., *Bruegel: Het volledige oeuvre* (Antwerp: Mercatorfonds, 1988), 170–71; David Freedberg et al., *The Prints of Peter Bruegel the Elder* (Tokyo: Tokyo Shimbun, 1989), no. 84, exhibition catalog; Manfred Sellink, "Philips Galle (1537–1612): Engraver and Print Publisher in Haarlem and Antwerp," 3 vols. (PhD diss., Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, 1997), 1:78; Jürgen Müller and Uwe M. Schneede, *Pieter Bruegel invenit: Das druckgraphische Werk* (Hamburg: Hamburger Kunsthalle, 2001), no. 84, exhibition catalog; Nadine Orenstein and Manfred Sellink, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Drawings and Prints* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), no. 97, exhibition catalog; Manfred Sellink and Marjolein Leesberg, eds., *The New Hollstein: Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings, and Woodcuts, 1450–1700—Philips Galle*, 4 vols. (Rotterdam: Sound & Vision, 2001), 1:no. 172; Nadine Orenstein and Manfred Sellink, eds., *The New Hollstein: Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings, and Woodcuts, 1450–1700—Pieter Bruegel the Elder* (Oudekerk aan de IJssel, 2006), no. 5; Manfred Sellink, *Bruegel: Het volledige werk. Schilderijen, tek-*

138. It is worth noting that the term *signum*, since it signifies "engraved figure," can be seen to have a specific purchase on Galle's print after Bruegel.

eningen, prenten (Ghent: Idea Books, 2011), no. 120; Jürgen Müller, "Von Korbträgern und Vogeldieben: Die Zeichnung *Die Imker* Pieter Bruegels d. Ä. als Allegorie der Gottessuche," in *Pieter Bruegel d. Ä. und das Theater der Welt*, ed. Ingrid Mössinger et al. (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2014), 25–42, exhibition catalog; and Jürgen Müller, "Die Auferstehung Christi, um 1562/63," in Mössinger, *Pieter Bruegel d. Ä. und das Theater der Welt*, no. 38.

I am using the term *evidentia* in its rhetorical and performative sense of bringing someone or something vividly before the eyes as if, through the faculty of imagination, the virtual object of attention were actually being witnessed. In Bruegel's *Resurrection*, as I shall argue, the unseen miracle is brought to mind and made apprehensible by means of visual proofs, even while its status as a mystery neither observed nor observable is underscored. On *evidentia*, the Latin form of the Greek *enargeia*, see Heinrich F. Plett, *Rhetorik der Affekte* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1975), 184–93; Terence Cave, "Enargeia: Erasmus and the Rhetoric of Presence in the Sixteenth Century," *L'Esprit Créateur* 16 (1976): 5–17; Carlos Lévy and Laurent Pernot, *Dire l'Évidence (philosophie et rhétorique antiques)* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997); Bernhard F. Scholz, "Ekphrasis and *enargeia* in Quintilian's *Institutiones oratoriae libri XII*," in "Rhetorica movet": *Studies in Historical and Modern Rhetoric in Honour of Heinrich F. Plett*, ed. Peter L. Oesterreich and Thomas O. Sloane (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 3–24; and Heinrich F. Plett, *Rhetoric and Renaissance Culture* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 98–99.

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