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DISSERTATION

Title of the Dissertation

Does Fear Remain in Old Testament יראת יהוה?

Author

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To
Pastor Paul Leroy Dirks, D.Min.

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."
(Second Timothy 4:7)

CONTENTS

CHAPTER TWO

CHAPTER THREE

FOREWORD

While serving as an aviator in the US Navy—and just after submitting my life to Jesus Christ—I began to sense a call to academic work. In the decade following military service, I pursued master degrees in divinity and theology while continuing to fly as an airline pilot. Believing that I should continue studying at the doctoral level, I wondered how this would be done while still flying. The answer was given when I suddenly developed eye problems, lost my job as a result, but was provided a disability pension that would provide for my needs going forward. The next step was to learn some theological German and then begin applying to doctoral programs in the US. But while in Vienna for a short German course, providential circumstances put me in contact with Professor J. A. Loader, and this eventually resulted in the decision to pursue a Doctor of Theology at the University of Vienna. I could not have known then that studying in the German-speaking world would force an improvement in my German language ability sufficient to critically interact with several key fear-of-God works—especially Joachim Becker's *Gottesfurcht im Alten Testament*. Now at the end of the program, it seems that the Lord allowed me to have contact with the science-based theological world so as to best understand the fear-of-God views that have their source in that world. I extend my heartfelt appreciation to Dr. Loader—my advisor—who was always gracious and available throughout the program. It should be said that the views expressed in this dissertation do not necessarily reflect his views or those of the University of Vienna; the general direction of the following work is largely driven by a worldview that is fundamentally different than the worldview of the secular academy. Nevertheless, Dr. Loader was extremely patient with me and was very flexible when I requested an abrupt mid-stream change of direction. He also cared enough to insist that I write with gentleness and respect. This last lesson—very much bound up with the greatest commandment—is probably the most valuable benefit obtained during my time in Vienna. I also thank Professors Heine and Pratscher who were always kind and accommodating, and thank as well the always-helpful and friendly library staff—especially Mr. Hrabe and Mr. Szczypiorkovski—who did their best to make my research experience a pleasure. Finally, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my fellow students Siegfried Kröpfel and Patrick Todjeras who shared the love of Christ and whose families extended wonderful hospitality on many occasions. Now, I praise God who supplied all my needs during several challenging and rewarding years in Austria

Vienna, June 2009   Eric Engleman

ABBREVIATIONS

ANE	Ancient Near East
BDB	Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon
BGAD	A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (2nd edition)
BHS	*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (5th edition)
DBLSD	Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains (Swanson)
ESL	Enhanced Strong's Lexicon
ESV	English Standard Version
FN	Footnote
JB	Jerusalem Bible
KJV	King James Version
LB	Luther Bible (1912)
LDLS	Libronix Digital Library System (version 3.0d)
LXX	Septuagint (Rahlfs [*Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft*])
MT	Masoretic Text (from BHS)
NT	New Testament
NA27	*Novum Testamentum Graeca* (Nestle, Aland—27th edition)
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NCV	New Century Version
NIV	New International Version
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NKJV	New King James Version
NLT	New Living Translation
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
OT	Old Testament
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Kittel, Friedrich—1964)
THAT	*Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament*
TM	My Translation
TWOT	Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (Harris)
Vg	Vulgate

Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible quotes are from the NRSV. Versification: English versions first, MT (or LXX) second in parentheses—e.g., Eccl 5:7(6).

ABSTRACT

Scholars have many different views about what OT fear-of-God means, and these different views are reflected in the various translations of the expression in the many Bible versions. The variety of opinions is to a large extent a product of the understanding that the concept evolved as Israel's religion evolved. The present work takes the position that the OT fear-of-God idea remains closer to the fear emotion/feeling than many critical-era scholars have allowed. While the expression may be used from time to time to signify the more refined elements of faith (e.g., reverence, awe, honor, worship), it is likely that the semantic center remains on the fear emotion/feeling. To build a case for this, several works that assume a critical reconstruction of Israel's history are challenged—especially the influential form-critical work of Joachim Becker (*Gottesfurcht im Alten Testament*); the evidence that Becker musters to make the case that the fear-of-God concept evolved is argued to be insufficient. The OT fear-of-God texts in their biblical contexts (opposed to critically-reconstructed contexts) are then analyzed from a conservative hermeneutical starting point, and the case is made that the semantic range of fear-of-God remains quite stable throughout the OT (and throughout the NT as well): "event" fear-of-God cases (i.e., narrative events that depict people fearing before a fear-evoking object) demonstrate that "fear" (usually ירא) is semantically centered on the emotion/feeling of fear; "virtue" fear-of-God cases (i.e., cases in which fear-of-God is understood as a virtue [e.g., "For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him" Ps 103:11]) appear at times to connote the more abstract phenomena associated with Israel's worship, yet never fail to denote the phenomenon of being afraid. An especially close look at the fear-of-God texts of Ecclesiastes will help to demonstrate this.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Es gibt unter Gelehrten viele verschiedene Ansichten über die Bedeutung von Gottesfurcht im AT, und diese verschiedenen Ansichten finden ihren Ausdruck in den verschiedenen Übersetzungen des Begriffs in den vielen Bibelversionen. Viele meinen, das Wesen der Gottesfurcht verändere sich in dem Grad, in dem sich die Religion Israels veränderte. Diese vorliegende Arbeit geht davon aus, dass die Gottesfurcht, wie sie im Alten Testament verwendet wird, näher mit der Emotion (der Furcht) verbunden ist, als viele Vertreter der historisch-kritischen Schule glauben möchten. Während der Begriff zeitweise zur Beschreibung des Phänomens Religion (z.B. Ehrfurcht, Ehre, Anbetung, usw.) herangezogen wird, liegt die Hauptbedeutung des besprochenen Phänomens darin, dass man sich fürchtet. Um diese Theorie zu untermauern, müssen einige Werke, die die Geschichte Israels zu rekonstruieren versuchen, hinterfragt werden – allen voran die einflussreiche formkritische Studie *Gottesfurcht im Alten Testament* von Joachim Becker. Die Arbeit geht davon aus, dass die Argumente Beckers für seine These, der Begriff Gottesfurcht habe sich in seiner Bedeutung geändert, keine befriedigende Antwort geben. Die Texte, die für die Betrachtung der Gottesfurcht in Frage kommen, sind in ihrem biblischen Kontext zu sehen (was historisch-kritische Betrachtungen nicht immer gemacht haben) und von einem konservativen hermeneutischen Blickwinkel zu deuten. Der semantische Befund zur Gottesfurcht ist ziemlich konstant im gesamten AT (und ebenso im NT) und ist von zwei Kategorien gekennzeichnet: Die „Ereignis"- („Event"-) Gottesfurcht (d.h. Narrative, in denen Akteure sich vor einem Furcht einflößendem Objekt ängstigen) zeigt, dass „Furcht" (normalerweise ירא) mit der Emotion Furcht verbunden ist, während die „Tugend"- („Virtue"-) Gottesfurcht (wo die Gottesfurcht als Tugend begriffen wird, z.B. in Ps 103:11 [„Denn so hoch der Himmel über der Erde ist, läßt er seine Gnade walten über die, so ihn fürchten"]) mehr abstrakte Bedeutungen haben kann, aber nie auf die Emotion Furcht verzichtet. Ein genauer Blick auf die Texte im Buch Prediger soll helfen, diese These zu untermauern.

INTRODUCTION

In his 1926 lecture "Religion in the Making" Alfred North Whitehead said: "If the modern world is to find God, it must find him through love and not through fear, with the help of John and not of Paul."[1] While this message was given to a unitarian congregation, it echoed a growing opinion in Europe and American that the uses of threats which engender fear were no longer an appropriate way to present the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This opinion was likely to some extent a reaction against Catholic and Protestant preaching that for centuries had concentrated heavily on judgment and hell. There was also the growing influence of higher criticism which tended to degrade the veracity of the biblical testimony of God—and, as a result, the threat of God. In recent years, post-modern views—which are more or less rooted in the epistemological assumptions of modernity—have continued to put a veil between the testimony of Scripture and its readers. The recent emergent church movement, for example, which claims to be taking Evangelicalism in an entirely new and fresh direction, in general tries very hard to downplay the disturbing elements of the Bible that address the subjects of God's wrath, judgment, and the place that God has prepared for those who reject his Son. Because of these movements in the last century or more, there is in the minds of many less to fear from God.

Many who are in agreement with this trend have made their case from Scripture; they have generally understood that if God is love, then he cannot be the God of wrath and judgment that the Bible often depicts. Therefore, the many texts that speak of the judging God of wrath must be interpreted in light of the overriding truth that God is love and that God would not bring harm to anyone. A by-product of this is to perceive in the many fear-of-God texts that depict fear as a *virtue* more of the refined phenomena that worshippers manifest in response to God's love, and not the actual emotion/feeling of fear that men and women feel when threatened.[2] But in my view, the Bible greatly resists this kind of interpretation—for in both the OT and the NT, there is a continuous tone of *warning* against disbelief and disobedience. And this tone is always heard in the atmosphere of God's love and his unwillingness that anyone should perish. In other words, the warning tone (which consists of many individual threats) is meant to serve as

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[1] Whitehead, 1926. The lecture was given at Boston's King's Chapel. (Part two "Religion and dogma," sec. "The quest for God.")

[2] Throughout the dissertation I will distinguish between "event" fear-of-God and "virtue" fear-of-God. The former is simply a narrative event of someone fearing before some kind of epiphany of God or a display of his power (e.g., Exod 20:18); the latter simply signifies a god-pleasing virtue of a man or a woman or a group (e.g., "a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised" [Prov 31:30b]), or indicates a positive value in general (e.g., "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge" [Prov 1:7a]).

an effective tool—among many other effective tools—of evangelism. Whitehead mentioned that the world would best find God's love through John and not Paul; but the difference between them that Whitehead suggests is misleading—for John, just like Paul, wrote of the blessings of God as well as his curses. The allegory, for example, of the vine and the branches is terrifying in its implications for those who do not bear fruit (John 15:1-17); in John's first epistle, he makes it clear that the one who hates his brother or sister will by no means have eternal life in God (3:15); and the book of Revelation is full of warnings against disbelief and disobedience: Christ will one day judge all human beings and condemn to the "lake of fire" anyone whose name is not found in the "book of life" (20:15). But despite this evidence plus much else in the NT, many today claim that there is nothing to fear from God.

The question that the current work attempts to answer is this: is there any significant evidence in the OT that the fear-of-God idea evolved from the emotion/feeling of fear to something more refined and abstract such that one would be justified in believing that the NT no longer signified any of the fear emotion/feeling in the virtue fear-of-God cases there? My answer (*my thesis*) is this: in all OT cases, in which a clear Hebrew word for "fear" is used to signify a virtue, the primary intended meaning (which does not exclude other meanings) is the fear emotion/feeling—and this feature holds true from the earliest parts of the OT to the latest. While virtue fear-of-God may to a significant degree signify various states of the heart/mind/soul as well as god-pleasing actions that are manifested in a right relationship with God, the fear emotion/feeling is always assumed to undergird them all and to be the primary virtue that is understood by the use of the expression. Whatever other relational or behavioral phenomena that virtue fear-of-God might *connote*, it never fails to *denote* the phenomenon of being afraid.[3]

In order to justify the validity of this thesis, the following procedures are now undertaken: first, the opinions of others who have thought about the subject will be considered; views from the pre-critical era will be examined followed by views from the critical era. There will be an especially rigorous interaction with the critical-era work of J. Becker. This is necessary because of the great influence of his *Gottesfurcht im Alten Testament*. Second, I will consider all of the OT fear-of-God texts that use ירא (and many that use other words as well) and present—especially with the virtue fear-of-God cases— what their linguistic and contextual features reveal about a possible evolution in the concept. In order to more graphically highlight some of the reasons that indicate that fear remains in OT fear-of-God, I will present a closer examination of the fear-of-God passages in the book of Ecclesiastes. Finally, there will be a brief consideration of the NT

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[3] The use here of "connote" and "denote" are borrowed from Clines, 2003, who used them in his own fear-of-God study of Job 28:28.

to see if the virtue of the fear emotion/feeling expressed before God is really weakened or altogether absent. If fear remains there, then this will lend some credibility to the notion that fear-of-God did not significantly evolve in meaning in the OT. But before getting started, a few words are in order about my method and general assumptions.

METHOD

Assumptions

My method for investigating fear-of-God in the OT is conservative and trusting. When I say "conservative," I mean that my method reflects a very high regard for the Bible and a belief that God has provided words that speak truthfully—both historically and theologically. When I say "trusting," I mean that I have committed this work to God and trust that his Word is fully able to deliver through the written form of verbal communication his will for human beings—including his will regarding the emotions and feelings that men and women ought to exhibit when in relationship with him. I trust that God has lovingly spoken to his earthly children and has not left them alone and allowed them to only have their hopes set upon the schemes of human beings. With this as a methodological foundation, I cannot agree with many of the basic tenets of higher criticism. I believe that all methods built upon this epistemologically skeptical foundation are extremely limited in their ability to discern the deepest Scriptural truths—if just for the reason that they are disallowed by that foundation to state any *propositions* about the "invisible God" (Col 1:15) or about his will for human beings. J. Barton—very much a higher critic himself—feels this stricture, and, in view of the massive amount of higher critical study that has raised far more questions than it answered, confesses that the search for the right method of studying the Bible will never end.[4] But a mission that begins with

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[4] Barton, 1996, 5, writes, "The primary thesis is that much harm has been done in biblical studies by insisting that there is, somewhere, a 'correct' method which, if only we could find it, would unlock the mysteries of the text. From the quest for this method flow many evils: for example, the tendency of each newly-discovered method to excommunicate its predecessors (never clearer than with the latest, canon criticism), and the tendency to denigrate the 'ordinary' reader as 'non-critical'. I try to argue—not in any one place, but wherever the issue arises—that all of the methods being examined have something in them, but none of them is the 'correct' method which scholars are seeking. This can be done at a simple level, by showing how each in turn falls short of perfection; but my argument goes further than this. I believe that the quest for a correct method is, not just in practice but inherently, incapable of succeeding. The pursuit of method assimilates reading a text to the procedures of technology: it tries to process the text, rather than to read it. Instead, I propose that we should see each of our 'methods' as a codification of intuitions about the text which may occur to intelligent readers. Such intuitions can well arrive at truth; but it will not be the kind of truth familiar in the natural sciences. Reading the Old Testament, with whatever aim in view, belongs to the humanities and cannot operate with an idea

the belief that the mission will never be fulfilled is surely "meaningless" and a "chasing after the wind" (Eccl 2:11); this is invariably the outcome when one uses Bible study methods that build upon higher criticism and its assumptions.[5] In fact, the employment of them as tools to find ultimate meaning about God, life, and the world was just what Qoheleth warned against: for he concentrated his pursuit of understanding and happiness on things "under the sun," but found it all הבל. His suggested solution—which seemed to be almost a concession when all else had failed—was one that "goads" our eyes off the things that are "fading away" (i.e., away from the *visible* things of the world) and toward the (*invisible*) eternal God who alone provides meaning and purpose to the lives of human beings. For Qoheleth, it all came down to faith. His way of saying this was: "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man" (NIV). Qoheleth had faith that God *is* ("fear *God*!") and that God had spoken clearly enough for men and women to know his will for their lives ("keep his commandments!"). A conservative and

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of watertight, correct method." I believe Barton is right in that he has seen the methods that have been created and used to study the Bible fall "short of perfection"; but even though he suggests that OT studies should be undertaken more with a humanities mindset, the foundation that he assumes to be the starting point remains at heart scientific (i.e., empiricist)—so a conservative method like my own is not seriously considered. (In Barton, 1998, 17, he insists that—given the current state of biblical studies—"the cure is more criticism, not less.") In reality, Barton is way off the mark when he suggests that the critical methods approach "perfection"; I will concede that conservative methods approach perfection *asymptotically* (i.e., [mathematically speaking] always approaches, but never arrives), but critical methods cannot be said to do the same because the more they are applied, the more they lead the exegete who employs them from the truth. In other words, critical methods cause one to *diverge* from a right understanding of God's message in the Bible. Young expresses a similar thought in his introduction to Calvin's commentary on Isaiah (Calvin, 1948, ix): "One who can look upon the prophecy of Isaiah as nothing more than a product of the religious genius of the ancient Hebrews has thereby excluded any possibility of ever arriving at a correct interpretation. For the prophet claims that his message has come from God, and the earnest interpreter must take into account this psychological conviction upon the prophet's part. To ignore this conviction—as is done in so much modern literature upon the subject—and to place the prophecy on a parallelism with other religious literature of antiquity; to regard it, in other words, as nothing more than the fruit of the reflection of a deeply religious mind, is to shut oneself out entirely from obtaining a proper understanding." On the other hand, conservative "pre-critical" methods that assume the Bible to be reliable and understandable cause one to *approach* the truth. When I say that conservative methods "approach" the truth, this is not at all a confession of relativism based upon epistemological skepticism, but a simple taking into account the fallen-ness and imperfection of spirit-filled conservative exegetes; as Paul admitted about those of us who believe, we "see in a mirror, dimly" (1 Cor 13:12). Regarding the fear-of-God topic, a conservative reading of the pertinent passages brings the strong sense that God's holiness vis-à-vis man's un-holiness gives men and women good reason to experience the emotion/feeling of fear before God; but the critical opinion (most exhaustively expressed by Becker—see below) moves the meaning of fear-of-God steadily away from the emotion/feeling of fear because of incorrect epistemology that then forces an incorrect theology and anthropology.

[5] See FN 157 concerning Rylaarsdam's remarks about higher criticism's assumptions.

trusting approach to the Scripture can get one past the impasse that critical methods create because it comes from a position of faith and trust: faith that God is and trust that God has lovingly revealed his will for human beings. Biblical hermeneutics might be considered a combination of science (in the sense of careful and methodical inquiry) and art, but it is above all, as Osborne points out, a *spiritual* endeavor.[6]

True understanding—as far as God allows it—of God and his Word only comes to those who "tremble" at his Word; that is, those who think highly enough of God to trust that he has provided a reliable and readable Word for his children on earth. Those who come before him humbly and reverently—indeed, with even some fear—will be blessed by God and given special insight.[7] The Bible student who from the outset admits his or her own contingency before the eternal and omnipotent God is one who will understand his or her perilous situation: "[we] are not [our] own" (1 Cor 6:19); we did not choose to come into this world and our destination after this world is not ultimately up to us. Therefore, God is to be feared.

To study the Bible one must come from some starting point. Many who employ the modern methods and the post-modern methods that flow out of higher criticism's epistemological base, however, usually do not plainly set out their assumptions at the outset.[8] As a result, a certain circularity in reasoning can often be perceived.[9] The form-

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[6] Osborne, 1991, 5, calls biblical hermeneutics, first, a science in that "it provides a logical, orderly classification of the laws of interpretation" (I do not think that Osborne here accepts the rigid empiricist epistemology that of often assumed to undergird "science"). Second, hermeneutics is an art, "for it is an acquired skill demanding both imagination and an ability to apply the 'laws' to selected passages or books." Finally—and most important for Osborn— "hermeneutics when utilized to interpret Scripture is a spiritual act, depending upon the leading of the Holy Spirit. Modern scholars too often ignore the sacred dimension and approach the Bible purely as literature, considering the sacral aspect to be almost a genre. Yet human efforts can never properly divine the true message of the Word of God."

[7] This "insight" is sometimes called "illumination." Klein writes, "For his part, God provides the resource for such obedient understanding of his truth: the illumination of the Holy Spirit. A corollary of the requirement of faith is the regeneration of the Holy Spirit. That is, once people have committed their lives in faith to Jesus as Lord, the Bible speaks of a work that God performs in them. This internal operation enable believers to perceive spiritual truth, an ability unavailable to unbelievers (cf. 1 Cor 2:6-16; 2 Cor 3:15-18). This illuminating work of the Spirit does not circumvent nor allow us to dispense with the principles of hermeneutics and the techniques of exegesis. It does mean that a dynamic comprehension of the significance of Scripture and its application to life belongs uniquely to those indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Though scholars possess an arsenal of methods and techniques with which to decipher the meaning of the biblical texts, interpretation falls short of its true potential without the illumination of the Spirit. Neither methodology nor the Spirit operates in isolation from the other."

[8] Barr, 1982, 9, Barr accuses the conservative scholar "when talking outside [his or her] fundamentalist constituency" of the same: "I do not say that he shares the same presuppositions [of the critical scholar], for he very likely does not: but as a rule he conceals his presuppositions,

critical work of J. Becker (which will be reviewed at length below) is no exception: for him, a literary form (for example, the Deuteronomistic form) contains fear-of-God instances that have certain meanings. These meanings are justified to some extent by the fact that these fear-of-God cases occur in certain linguistic forms (verb, noun, adjective, etc.). But because these linguistic forms are mainly run-of-the-mill forms that—at least at first glance—would not seem to justify any significant semantic difference, the reader is left with the sense that the only reason that the linguistic form justifies any change in meaning is simply because it is found in a certain OT literary form. In other words, a certain fear-of-God case in a certain literary form will have a certain meaning; why? Answer: because it occurs in a certain linguistic form. But why should an unremarkable linguistic form make any difference? Answer: because it occurs in the literary form. The reader who is unfamiliar with basic higher-critical assumptions will sense the circularity that comes about when *the most influential factor* in the writer's reasoning process is not made plain. Unspoken—yet operating in the background—is the form-critical assumption (that is shared by all higher criticisms) that Israelite religion evolved from primitive fear

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for he knows very well that, if he sets them in the forefront, he will only depreciate the value of his own scholarly work." Barr has a valid point here: there are not a few conservative scholars who think of themselves as being evangelical and, at the same time, as being a fully-legitimate part of the "academy" (that is, the wider [and much bigger—although it represents a much smaller percentage of the worldwide church] academic world that generally disregards scholarly work that assumes supernatural causation). It is my understanding that the biblical scholar cannot *legitimately* operate in both worlds at the same time: from the ground up these worlds are too different. There is, so to speak, no "middle ground." When an evangelical undertakes biblical study with one of the methods of higher criticism, he or she tacitly admits the validity of the underlying assumptions of the method and therefore accidentally admits the non-validity of his or her own evangelical position. An evangelical can certainly have something to say "when talking outside his own fundamentalist constituency," but he ought to do so honestly—and let the cards fall where they may.

[9] This point is admitted by Barton, 1996, 5: "I try to show how each method, however modestly it is applied, always brings in its wake some kind of circularity in argument." Because of this subjectivity, Barton says that biblical criticism should be understood as "non-scientific and needs to be evaluated with the tools proper to the humanities, not the sciences" (6). This last point is a step in the right direction, but to leave theology under the humanities tacitly still puts man on top. There needs to be an additional step, and that is to once again make theology a general field of study in its own right—not subjected to the limitations of science and humanities. But this call by Barton toward the "non-scientific" is not at all like he is suggesting that the "scientific" (i.e., epistemologically empirical) foundation of higher criticism should be scrapped; that remains firmly in place. What he does mean is that we should be "non-scientific" enough to live with the reasoning circularity that is inherent in higher-critical methods. In other words, we should not be *critical* of circular reasoning. Therefore, higher criticism's permanence is assured, because—according to Barton's suggested criteria—it can only be judged according to taste and not according to truth.

of the natural elements to refined worship of their "posited" God.[10] The literary form that is used by Becker is not just a simple literary *genre* (poetry, wisdom, etc.); in reality his idea of genre includes significant changes to the history and to the works and words of God that the OT testifies about. Basic to form criticism is the assumption that the religion evolved—and this assumption is really what provides the main interpretational force in Becker's monograph; if the religion evolved, then the concept of fear-of-God must have also evolved.[11]

This evolutionary theory—as understood by the form critics—is clearly built upon philosophies that contain, as Bartholomew points out, an "ethos of suspicion towards Christianity."[12] Modern science—of which higher criticism is a part—is not only epistemologically blind to God, but consciously seeks to exclude God: as Dietrich and Link confess, "Die Wissenschaft braucht [Gott] nicht mehr."[13] Crenshaw confirms this when he admits that higher biblical criticism is one of the factors (along with Darwinian biology, Freudian metapsychology, Marxist ideology, etc.) that has resulted in an "emptying of the universe" of the existence of God.[14] This desire of higher criticism to empty the supernatural out of religion is clearly understood—and supported—by the Committee for the Scientific Examination of Religion:

> The methods developed for the study of religion in the nineteenth century were "scientific" in the strict sense. They were based on the modern understanding of genesis and change, reproducible cause and effect, and inductive and empirical standards of proof. There was a search for scientific explanations that would interpret both biological and moral life in terms of evolution. In a nutshell, scientific explanations began to replace religious explanations. Belief in the miraculous was seriously weakened by the revolution in historical *criticism*, a term that would later come to be applied to any canon of literature, religious or secular.
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> The historical school of criticism, which began in Germany in the early nineteenth century (but with strong eighteenth-century antecedents), regarded the Bible as a "human" work—a work of the religious imagination. It showed,

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[10] Rudolf Otto—whose ideas about "God" are appropriated by Becker—used "posited" to indicate that the reality of God is not objective but subjective (see my p. 45 and Otto, 1958, 113.)

[11] I do not criticize here the idea of the evolution of the Israelite religion *per se*, but the kind of evolution that is purported to have occurred by the form critics. The religion of YHWH of course evolved, for example, from a foundational covenant with Abraham to the religion of an entire nation based upon the complex laws and the covenants given by God through Moses. The biblical text depicts God developing his covenant people as he saw fit; on the other hand, form criticism in the main understands that the evolution of the Israelite religion (and all other religions) occurred through human reactions to natural phenomena and through human agency. God as a supernatural agent of causation is epistemologically off-limits. Therefore, any evolution in the cult must be explained in terms of the psychological and sociological phenomena of human beings and not in terms of the will of God.

[12] Bartholomew, 1998, 86.

[13] Dietrich and Link, 2000, 9.

[14] Crenshaw, 2005, 25.

laboriously, that most of the books of the Bible—from Moses to John—were not written by the persons whose names they bear. The critics demonstrated with incredible deftness that the books of the Bible had been modified from earlier sources and that many of these sources lay outside the Jewish and Christian traditions.

Perhaps most challenging of all, historical criticism called into question not only the words and teachings of biblical personalities, but even their historical identity. Much of the Bible, on this view, was regarded as mythology, not history—valuable for what it reveals about the culture of a period of human history but not as a guide for ethics, science, and society.[15]

The higher-critics' skepticism regarding the miracles and the words of God that the biblical text records is normally not confessed up-front; perhaps they assume readers will already know about it. On the other hand, the omission may be a way to avoid legitimate debate over the appropriateness of their limitations on what is *reasonable* and what is fit to be classified as *knowledge*. Becker accomplished his OT fear-of-God study using the form-critical method and all the philosophical assumptions that undergird it. He, therefore, could not consider the fear-of-God emotion/feeling as one that was really exhibited by men and women before the true God who really did reveal himself in history. With the Bible being a "human" work (a "work of the religious imagination" as the Committee for the Scientific Examination of Religion understands it—see block quote just above), all Becker can do is theorize what fear-of-God might have meant to those who *imagined* God—whether primitive homo sapiens who trembled before thunderstorms and volcanoes, or the later devotees of YHWH who worshiped at the cultic center of Jerusalem. So there is no way with this method to get to a right evaluation of the fear emotion/feeling that one might have before God if God—as the Bible describes him—really does exist.

My starting point is the Bible.[16] I assume that it is a reliable testimony to how the creation came to be, God's actions in the creation, and his will for the creation.[17] The

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[15] CSER colloquium. Threat to enlightenment: The challenges to the historical-critical method, 2006, 17.

[16] In the name of truth and fairness to others, one should in study of the Bible admit one's presuppositions. Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, 1993, 100, write at length about the importance of being open about presuppositions and about what can be contained within those presuppositions. Drawing upon D. S. Ferguson's views on the subject (*Biblical Hermeneutics*—pg. 12), they present the four following categories: "(1) informational: the information one already possesses about a subject prior to approaching it; (2) attitudinal: the disposition one brings in approaching a topic, also termed prejudice, bias, or predisposition; (3) ideological: both generally, the way we view the total complex of reality (world view, frame of reference); and (4) methodological: the actual approach one takes in explaining a given subject. Possible approaches include scientific, historical, and inductive."

[17] In this dissertation I will not intentionally use any ambiguity that could be had in words or sentences. In other words, I will not play "language games" with my readers. When I say, for example, that the Bible is a "reliable testimony," I do not mean "reliable" to be taken in some

Bible, being God's special revelation for humankind, is God's Word. The Bible is not God, but it has the *authority* of God in that it came from God—and, therefore, men and women are obligated to know what the Bible says and to apply what it says to their lives.[18] With this belief that the Bible is God's Word, and with a willingness to come under its authority, then one can have confidence that God will provide the insight necessary to understand what it says. This starting point, however, is not at all arbitrary—for the Bible provides the answers to the greatest questions of men and women, far surpasses all the literary creations of human beings, gives God's Word that there is indeed life after death, and is the best seller—by far—of all time. As Peter well said when many were leaving Jesus, "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). What Peter saw in Christ was his majesty, his truth, his self-sacrifice, his words of unsurpassed wisdom and authority, his miracles, and his love. If Jesus is not the way, then we have no hope, for all other gods of other religions (if they indeed profess a god or gods) are practically dust by comparison.

To make the truths in the Bible one's foundation for studying the Bible is to acknowledge that one cannot stand outside the universe to peer in and judge the universe and its creator. I am always, in reality, in the universe and always a part of its contingency. Even if I am the wisest man in the world, no matter how much of the world I put in my crucible for observation, there is always more that is behind me—unseen and unknown. This means that I cannot create a foundation that explains *all* reality; the foundation upon which I rest my ultimate ideas and hopes and fears must be, by definition, a reality that is not of myself, but of the creator-God. Therefore, it is simply a matter of looking for this reality, identifying this reality, and laying this reality in as a foundation to one's life. The God of the Bible *must* be this reality, for no one or nothing else compares. But for "theologians" and others to hold to philosophical assumptions that

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post-modern sense of "reliable for me" or "reliable for the church"; instead, I mean that it is "reliable" because it is *truthful* in its representation of testimony and historical events—including events of God and prophets speaking words that foretell the future. I might also define how I am using the word "truthful," but I do not think that is necessary; for normal people (who speak, in this case, English), the meaning of the term is self evident.

[18] The first article of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics (produced by conservative/evangelical scholars—see *Explaining hermeneutics: A commentary on the Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics*, 1983) says: "We affirm that the normative authority of Holy Scripture is the authority of God Himself, and is attested by Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Church. We deny the legitimacy of separating the authority of Christ from the authority of Scripture, or of opposing the one to the other." This Evangelical statement stands in stark contrast with Hermann Gunkel (upon whom Becker builds his fear-of-God work): "Thus the opinion that the Old Testament is a safe guide to true religion and morality cannot any longer be maintained." In Gunkel's opinion, this is so because the OT is simply a "roguish piece of [Hebrew] folk-lore" (Gunkel, 1928, 16, 17).

necessarily exclude God (and his right to intervene in the occurrences of nature that he himself ordained) is the greatest folly; in this case, the only ultimate reality that can ever be had will be something *necessarily* created by humans; but this gives no hope at all. So much of the willingness to search for the *true* ultimate foundation is based upon the understanding that God is good and that he will provide a true and understandable guide for his children. When a person so inclined finds the Bible, he or she accepts it with joy, and considers the words to be faithful and true. In other words, that person considers the Bible to be innocent, holy, and pure—that is, a reflection of God's holy perfection and of God's ability to provide and preserve information that is free from untruth and anything evil.[19] His Word "will stand forever" (Isa 40:8) and "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" (Matt 24:35). So there are good reasons to expect a faithful Word from God and to find that Word in the book that we call the Bible. As for me, I will assume the *innocence* of the Bible—until proven otherwise—and continue to use it as the foundation by which I understand all of reality, including fear-of-God.[20]

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[19] Not only the Bible is considered to be good, but God—as described in the Bible—is considered to be perfect, holy, and always just. The tendency for some to call the goodness of God into question is not something I will do. When, for example, Crenshaw writes, "a cruel streak exists in the biblical depiction of God," and goes on to call God's actions as depicted in the OT "fiendish," "bestial," "monstrous," "harsh," "savage," "immoral," and "evil," (see Crenshaw, 2005, 178, 179), I understand this opinion to be a great mischaracterization of God as well as a misunderstanding of the basic biblically-based doctrines of God and man that show that God has the full right to judge humans, humans are guilty of sin and ought to be judged, and God has the best interest of humans always in mind—for he takes "no pleasure in the death of the wicked" (Ezek 33:11). This is not to say that I do not find myself perplexed and distressed occasionally by the actions of God as described in the Bible or by what God allows in everyday life; but I give him the benefit of the doubt, knowing that—even though I cannot understand his ways in my very limited view—he is always working everything out for the good. If the Lord gives, he is not evil if he decides to take away; either way, one should say—as did Job—"blessed be the name of the LORD" (Job 1:21).

[20] Walter Kaiser, 1980, 7, has the same view regarding the presumption of innocence of the Bible: "For our part we believe all texts should be innocent of all charges of artificiality until they are proven guilty by clear external witnesses. The text should first be dealt with on its own terms. All editorial impositions designated by modernity (derived not from real sources—to which evangelicals have no objection—but rather deduced from broad philosophical and sociological impositions over the text) which can be credited with atomizing the text and deleting the connectors allegedly assigned to pious or misguided redactors must be excluded from the discipline until validated by evidence. Biblical theology will always remain an endangered species until the heavy-handed methodology of imaginary source criticism, history of tradition, and certain types of form criticism are arrested." Whether one is coming from a critical perspective or a perspective of faith, Kaiser goes on to say that one should be careful to not read into the biblical text one's particular "axe to grind"; instead, "all criteria should approach the issue in a similar fashion to the American system of jurisprudence: a text is innocent until proven guilty by known data provided by sources whose truthfulness on those points can be demonstrated or which share the same general area of contemporaneity as the texts under investigation and whose performance

Hermeneutical issues will only be discussed briefly here and in general. One can consult the numerous conservative sources that are available on the subject.[21] In view of what has been said just above, I believe God has made the Bible highly *readable*. Once again, this is a reflection of his love and his willingness to transmit an understandable Word to the human beings whom he created. The Bible can be understood because it has clarity and because God has given common sense to men and women. "Clarity" and "common sense" are important concepts, so a few words should be said regarding both. First, the doctrine of "clarity" (or "perspicuity") which was strongly emphasized by the reformers simply claims that the Bible is understandable—especially in regards to its main message of salvation (see, e.g., Deut 6:6-7 [teachable to children]; Ps 19:7 [makes wise the simple]; 119:130 [gives light to the simple]; Matt 12:3-5; 19:14; 22:31 [Jesus assumed people should have known the Scriptures]; John 3:10 [Nicodemus should have known the Scriptures]; and Heb 2:3-4 [the Gospel was clearly announced]). There are, of course, many parts of Scripture that are challenging: God communicates through "riddles" (e.g., Judg 14:14; Ezek 17:2-24; John 3:3-9; see Num 12:8; Prov 1:6) and dreams (e.g., Gen 28:12; 31:10-12; 37:5-11; 1 Kings 3:5-15; Dan 7; Matt 1:20-21; 2:19; see Num 12:6; Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17); his ways are, as Qoheleth says, "deep, very deep"

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record of producing reliable data has been good" (28). It might be noted here that both critics and conservatives appeal to "evidence"—so evidence *per se* is not the issue; rather, the epistemology that determines what is allowable for evidence is the issue. In the conservative view, the epistemological base (and, in many cases, the worldview) of higher-critical scholars precludes an honest validation of the evidence; on the other hand, the consideration and the handling of the evidence which accords most accurately to the way things really are is best enabled by an epistemology that allows God to be *known* through the evidences of reason, subjective states of the heart/soul, and the order (i.e., the design) that characterizes the physical universe. In a word, the epistemology of the higher critic is simply too skeptical, and it prompts views towards the biblical text that are very different than that of a conservative. To illustrate this, one can contrast what *Otto* Kaiser, 1977, says below (the subject being the reliability of the biblical ascription of certain words to certain OT prophets) with what *Walter* Kaiser has already said above. O. Kaiser writes: "Establishing which individual sayings are to be ascribed to each particular prophet depends on a careful delimitation of the units with application of strict criteria about literary types, a comparative investigation of vocabulary, style and ideas, and not least of the general historical picture of the period. In view of the situation just sketched, it is methodologically justified to work with the postulate that *it is not the inauthenticity but the authenticity of the sayings ascribed to the prophets that needs to be proved*" (pp. 208, 209, emphasis mine). For O. Kaiser, the biblical historical testimony is false unless proven true; for W. Kaiser, it is true unless proven false. I will side with W. Kaiser because it is the *fair* thing to do.

[21] For example, Fee and Stuart, 2003, Goldsworthy, 2007, Hartill, 1960, Hendricks and Hendricks, 2007, Kaiser and Silva, 1994, Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, 1993, Maier, 1994, Osborne, 1991, Ramm, 1998, Zuck, 1991.

(Eccl 7:24); how/when prophecies are fulfilled is sometimes difficult to know (that is why the Ethiopian Eunuch [Acts 8:26-39] needed help); Jesus often spoke figuratively (and even the apostles needed him to interpret—see Matt 13:33-36; John 16:25-30); Paul's letters were, according to Peter, "hard to understand" (2 Pet 3:16); and Paul exclaimed, "who has known the mind of the Lord" (Rom 11:33-35). In addition to challenging issues within the Bible, there also have been the challenges of language and culture: translation from source language to target language is imperfect and the understanding of how a biblical teaching to one culture applies to another culture is imperfect as well.[22] But the phenomenon of fear-of-God flows in the main out of the big-picture categories of the Bible that are literarily and theologically easy to apprehend—and these categories confirm what is already known by human beings through the general revelation: God's "eternal power" and "divine nature" are made "plain" to them (Rom 1:19-20); they know who they are in comparison—that is, weak and temporal creatures (implicit in Rom 1:18-20); they know that they are sinful and are therefore guilty before God (Rom 1:32); they know that there is a problem and that God (who they know to be good) has a solution to this problem—but most, nevertheless, reject this solution (Rom 2:8) and incur God's "wrath and fury" as a result. Jesus Christ is the solution and he is only known through the clear presentation of the gospel in the NT. The "knowability of the literal sense" of the gospel is achievable because God has presented the gospel in an easy to read and understandable way:[23] Jesus is the son of God, Jesus died for sinners, and faith in Jesus brings rescue from God's condemnation; this is the *perspicuous* gospel message. When one knows that the "solution" came at such a high cost to God, then one ought to be aware at the deepest level of the "fearful prospect of judgment" and the "fire of fury that will consume [God's] adversaries" (Heb 10:27). That is, in view of the clear message that God is, that God sent his Son to redeem, and that God will judge finally those who reject his Son, one is a fool to not fear God—for the consequences of disbelief are so horrible. The question of perspicuity must be considered in view of God's love and God's purpose of providing the Bible in the first place: God's Word is a "lamp unto [our] feet"; God sent his "only Son" into the world not to confuse or to condemn the world, but "in order that the world might be saved through him" (John 3:16, 17). The purpose of Scripture is to provide information so that men and women can know God and know his will for their

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[22] So, as Berkouwer, 1975, 267-268, points out, the Reformation/Catholic distinction is somewhat inaccurate; interpretation and exegesis are clearly understood from both sides to be necessary. The need to explain—even in Reformation theology—is "deeply felt" (270).

[23] Vanhoozer, 1998, 314.

lives. Because it illumines the correct path—and not darkens it—inherent in the Bible is a clarity which reflects the love that the creator has for his children.[24]

While the Bible text in the main has the quality of "clarity," it still could not be understood unless its readers had Spirit-led "common sense." This is a God-given characteristic that gives people the ability to *know* the way things really are—both in the physical and the metaphysical realms. That people can predictably interact with other entities in the world because they have sufficient knowledge about those entities seems obvious to me; but I also draw here upon the thoughts of T. Reid who wrote at length about the knowability of many phenomena that had been decreed during the Enlightenment to be unknowable. Reid argued that one must factor into one's epistemology not only what logically/rationally appears to be the case, but also what appears to be the case in the experiences of everyday life. If the former is in conflict with the latter, then the latter should take precedence; but those thinkers who put reason over common sense "shew the acuteness of the sophist at the expense of disgracing reason and human nature …."[25] Restraint should be exercised in making grand assertions of the limits of what can be known if they run counter to the grain of what we take to be knowable in day-to-day experience. The world might not be the same as one's sense impression of it, but that does not preclude one from having cause/effect interactions with things in the world or from really knowing things in the world. If we give up on this, then, according to Reid, we are hopelessly alone: "upon this [skeptical] hypothesis, the whole universe about me, bodies and spirits, sun, moon, stars, and earth, friends and relations, all things without exception, which I imagined to have a permanent existence, whether I thought of them or not, vanish at once."[26] If this is the case, says Reid, "we are deceived

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[24] In the foregoing I have considered the clarity question from the human perspective of choice and accountability. There is, of course, the reality of God's sovereignty and the necessity of the quickening of the Holy Spirit (who gives "internal clarity" as Luther called it—see Ibid., 316) to draw people to God in the first place (see 1 Cor 2:14; 2 Cor 3:14-16; 4:3-4, 6; Heb 5:14; James 1:5-6). The Bible's words, as Calvin, 1972, said, "will not obtain full credit in the hearts of men, until they are sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit" (first book, chap. 7, sec. 4). And even then, as Luther points out, plumbing the depths of Scripture is a lifelong process: "(W)e must ever remain scholars here; we cannot sound the depth of one single verse in Scripture; we get hold but of the A, B, C, and that imperfectly" (Luther, 1868, sec. viii). God's sovereign election of men and women mysteriously occurs according to his sovereignty; but this in no way diminishes human responsibility nor diminishes the appropriateness of fearing before the One who is infinitely more powerful and who will judge human beings in the end (see Grudem, 1994, 107).

[25] Reid, 1999, 102.

[26] Ibid., 96. Reid is here offering what would be the case if Hume's empiricism were taken to its logical limit. This empiricism, according to Reid, leaned its "whole weight" upon the very ancient hypothesis that "nothing is perceived but what is in the mind which perceives it: That we

by Him that made us, and there is no remedy"[27] But this cannot be the case, for God is love and has graciously provided the senses in order that men and women know how things really are about them. The senses have a *telos*—and that is to *accurately* describe what is sensed. The final *telos* of the senses and the human mind is to allow one to know God. The awareness of God is innate in all human beings; therefore, says Reid, "the unjust *live by faith* as well as the *just*" (i.e., both believe that God is).[28]

This is not to say that a man or woman with plenty of common sense but with very little Bible education will be able to fully understand fine points of theological doctrine or know, for example, much about near eastern history during Bible times; but most sincere students of the Bible—quite apart from their education level—can easily understand many of the larger-scale realities that the Bible teaches. This is mainly because the Bible's words are—in the main—predictable in their meaning. Of course, words are arbitrary signs that somehow come to be in groups by which members of the group can communicate. Words can and usually do evolve in meaning over time, and their forms change too. There is also the phenomenon of a word's meaning being to some extent dependent upon many other components within the structure of the language. But this does not make language—written or oral—unintelligible; in fact, once a language is learned, real communication becomes easy, and great and complicated missions can be undertaken by a group and success achieved because group members are able to communicate effectively despite the imperfection of that communication. This applies also to communication that is accomplished at one time and recorded for another group at a later time. If communication across the expanse of time was mainly unreliable, then biographies, histories, land deeds, law codes, and state constitutions would have little or no usefulness—and civilization as it is known would not exist. But reliable communication through many mediums which carry information across small and great expanses of space and time does occur; accurate communication of very detailed information from one language to another occurs in mass every minute of every day. And even if one group tries to encrypt their information so that it cannot be understood by others, the code for that encryption can be broken by another group and the meaning fully apprehended.[29] If the full meaning of an encrypted text can be understood, how much more readily will an unencrypted text—even if in a foreign language—be understood.

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do not really perceive things that are external, but only certain images and pictures of them imprinted upon the mind, which are called *impressions* and *ideas*."

[27] Reid, 1997, xxi (taken from Brookes's quote of Reid in the book's introduction).

[28] Reid, 1999, 1.

[29] For example, in World War Two the extremely complex encryption of Axis military communications was decrypted by the Allies and the information then gathered and used to their advantage.

While it is true that the Bible does have parts that are in one way or another "encrypted" (e.g., OT typology that looks forward to Christ, irony and humor in OT narratives, views about the monarchy and/or Jerusalem cult that might be read "between the lines," prophecies, parables, etc.), and the task of decryption is a challenging task ("he has ears, let him hear" [Matt 13:9 NIV]), the main lines of theology and anthropology are, nevertheless, easy to discern by a man or women who takes the time to read and the effort to understand: God is the omnipotent creator-God who made men and women out of the dust of the earth, men and women are contingent beings who are absolutely dependent upon God, and they are accountable to him to live their lives according to his will; therefore, "men should fear before him" (Eccl 3:14 NKJV).[30]

Biblical hermeneutics—and hermeneutics undertaken in the search for meaning of all types of information systems—should be accomplished with the acknowledgment that language is, in the main, reliable and predictable. God has given language as a gift to his earthly creatures so that they can effectively communicate and survive. Words—at least for humans—are central to this effective communication; a given word has a meaning or meanings that can be discerned and recorded, and although contextual factors can perhaps suggest various semantic peculiarities, a word will tend to be semantically anchored at usually one, but often two or three points. If this were not so, it would be practically impossible to produce lexicons and dictionaries. This understanding is vital to effective biblical hermeneutics; the consideration of the *normal* meaning(s) of words is taken very seriously, and those words are assumed to clearly communicate unless solid evidence to the contrary is found. Concerning this, Krause, et al, write, "The centrality of words in language communication underscores the importance of the lexical principle of hermeneutics: *The correct interpretation of Scripture is the meaning required by the normal meaning of the words in the context in which they occur*."[31] With this predictability of words understood, Goldingay with good justification believes that the interpretation of Scripture "is in one sense a quite straightforward enterprise, one that

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[30] The 23rd article of the Chicago Statement of Biblical Hermeneutics says: "We affirm the clarity of Scripture and specifically of its message about salvation from sin. We deny that all passages of Scripture are equally clear or have equal bearing on the message of redemption." Norman Geisler comments: "Traditionally this teaching is called the 'perspicuity' of Scripture. By this is meant that the central message of Scripture is clear, especially what the Bible says about salvation from sin. The Denial disassociates this claim from the belief that everything in Scripture is clear or that all teachings are equally clear or equally relevant to the Bible's central saving message. It is obvious to any honest interpreter that the meaning of some passages of Scripture is obscure. It is equally evident that the truth of some passages is not directly relevant to the overall plan of salvation" (*Explaining hermeneutics: A commentary on the Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics*, 1983).

[31] Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, 1993, 183 (emphasis theirs).

ordinary people accomplish (courtesy of the labor of translators) as effortlessly as they understand newspapers, television, or each other."[32] This is a good point which makes sense in view of God's love: God provides his will for human lives through a medium that can be understood through common hermeneutical principles so that common men and women can know his will and come into the kind of relationship that God desires. In other words, the linguistic relativism that has been asserted to exist does not much affect the men and women "on the street"; the words they send and receive enable them to get on just fine (usually) with their day's activities. Likewise, they can sit down and read their Bibles and pick up quite easily much of what God intends to teach there.[33]

One of the assertions of the higher critics is that specific genres require highly specialized treatment. To properly handle a certain genre, one must first master a vast

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[32] Goldingay, 1995, 3.

[33] Barton, 1996, 24, sees the Pentateuch as "ambiguous and incoherent" and says that a single writer of the Pentateuch—if single authorship were really the case—would have been "mentally incoherent or disturbed." He focuses on the occasional peculiarity of the text (e.g., the irregularity in how God is addressed, double and differing narratives, etc.) at the expense of the grand and clearly understandable narrative. Because the Pentateuch (and much of the rest of the Bible) is "ambiguous and incoherent," an "army of specialists" is needed for its proper interpretation. Welker, 2003, 376, points out this phenomenon: "Finally, suppose one points out that in reading the biblical traditions we must take note of the fact that they have developed over a period of more than a thousand years? In view of this fact, to speak of the external and internal clarity of Scripture, or to say that Scripture interprets itself, can appear to be mockery. Readers find themselves referred to an army of specialists—in theology, biblical exegesis, and historical and cultural disciplines—whose help they will need if they are to deal appropriately with sacred Scripture. It seems that the self-interpretation of Scripture and the principle 'Scripture alone' are now out of the question." In my view, this "army of specialists" has become a new priesthood that stands between God and the common man/woman—much to the latter's loss. Many schools of theology and churches force their students and parishioners to be subject to the opinions of this army (most of them very critical of the Bible) before they can study the Word of God as-it-is. According to Childs, 1972, 710, this results in an "unparalleled ignorance of the Bible": "Again, historical criticism was to free the Word of God from the tyranny of tradition, but could it be that a new form of tyranny has emerged? We have turned out generations of students whom we have fully convinced regarding the necessity of the critical method. Yet we often leave them paralyzed before our massive learning, warriors of the Gospel cramped in Saul's armor who have been robbed of their freedom. One often reads in the textbooks that the medieval church deprived the people of the Bible by claiming the sole right of proper interpretation. One now wonders whether the Bible has become the private bailiwick of technical scholars who make a similar claim. Finally, has it ever struck you as strange that ours is an age of the most beautifully illustrated maps of Palestine ever, of a whole range of brilliant new visual aids, of commentaries without end, and yet at the same time of almost unparalleled ignorance of the Bible? Far from automatically bringing the Bible closer to the average man, the critical method flounders helplessly in our secularized churches before a growing sense of alienation. Indeed, our well-educated modern congregations can tell you that the Bible is filled with myth, but they have ceased to understand its language of faith."

amount of form-critical scholarly output—only then can one have a hope to be "competent" in the genre's interpretation.[34] I question if switching gears from one genre to the next is really such a complicated process; discernment of literary forms usually happens quite naturally; that is, a man or woman who is reading the Bible typically recognizes, for example, narrative and automatically adjusts to the literary laws in play in narrative literature. When that same person suddenly comes to a song within the narrative (especially if it is introduced as a song) then the reader naturally knows that the emphasis has shifted from telling a story to praising God. Even with its various literary genres, the Bible is still generally understandable; but this is especially the case when the reader understands first the genre of the Bible as a whole: when the reader comes to the Bible knowing from the start that it is authoritative Scripture, then he or she is able to most excellently understand the parts within the whole. It is not much different, for example, with an aircraft operations manual: when a 747 pilot reads his or her manual, he or she reads it not in any way he or she likes—but as a certain "genre" of information; in this case the genre of *authoritative operating guide for the 747*. The pilot will read the various subgenres within the manual (e.g., emergency procedures, normal checklists, flight system descriptions, etc.) in light of the overarching genre understanding. If the pilot mistakenly identifies the aircraft flight manual, for example, as "comics" or "poetry," then the pilot—not considering it authoritative for the operation of the aircraft—will misinterpret and misapply the information in the manual, and hundreds of people will perish in the predictable conflagration that follows. The main point to be taken from this analogy is this: one *can* read any piece of literature (including an aircraft flight manual or the Bible) anyway one wants; but one *should* read a piece of literature in accordance with what it was designed to be read as—for this is the only way to get at the deepest and truest meaning of the text (i.e., the meaning intended by the authority who wrote it), and is the only way to avoid disaster if people's health and happiness are somehow dependent upon the right understanding of the literature (which I think is the case with both an aircraft flight manual as well as the Bible). Scholars of aviation do not profess multiple ways to read an aircraft flight manual, nor do they say that the one right method for reading it will never be found; instead, they would acknowledge that the manual has binding authority upon the pilot to fly the aircraft according to the literal and common-sense meaning of the words, sentences, and paragraphs in the manual—so that the transportation of passengers occurs in a safe and efficient manner. To do otherwise would guarantee disaster. The effects of reading the Bible incorrectly, however, come slower, and the effects in the afterlife—while clearly warned about *in* the Bible—are unobservable *outside* of the Bible. So, many scholars treat the book as if it had no

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[34] See Barton's comments regarding "literary competence" (Barton, 1996, 19).

authority behind it and as if there really were no consequences that flow out of how one reads the book and how one applies it to his or her life. But both an aircraft operating manual as well as the Bible has many warnings within telling the reader that there is an approved and authoritative way of reading it—and one disregards this authoritative way at one's peril.

Not only are the words of the biblical text generally understandable, but the general contexts of most biblical texts are also understandable and critically important for effective interpretation. One should read the individual texts in light of the largest biblical context of God's salvation plan for humankind: while the Bible certainly has several large-scale themes that run through it (e.g., the coming of the kingdom, promise, etc.), the salvation question (at least from an evangelical perspective) is the topic that weighs most heavily upon men and women and that the Bible from the beginning to the end progressively answers. This main theme is intimately bound up with how the Bible should be read—that is, the Bible ought to be read as an authoritative, God-given rule book for human conduct because the eternal destinies of human beings are at stake. To understand first that the Bible is this genre is at the same time to see one's dire need and to know that the Bible has the solution—especially, the solution to the universal problem of death. The Bible must be read in this light in order for any hope to be had for its proper understanding.

In light of God's love and order, it is to be expected that his Word fits together; the parts fit in with the whole in an orderly and wonderful way that only God could arrange. The individual texts can be read in light of God's overall redemption plan as well as the reestablishment of his reign over the universe in which all people will one day bow and cry out, "blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD" (Matt 23:39 NIV). The parts of the Bible are read in view of the whole and the whole in view of the parts because the whole and the parts are all ordered to the same ultimate end—the salvation of human souls. This ordering towards a grand end is no surprise in view of the order within the creation—something that Hodge notices as he asserts that, as science is bound by the order of nature, theology is bound by the order of God's Word:

> The parts of any organic whole have a natural relation which cannot with impunity be ignored or changed. The parts of a watch, or of any other piece of mechanism, must be normally arranged, or it will be in confusion and worthless. All the parts of a plant or animal are disposed to answer a given end, and are mutually dependent. We cannot put the roots of a tree in the place of the branches, or the teeth of an animal in the place of its feet. So the facts of science arrange themselves. They are not arranged by the naturalist. His business is simply to ascertain what the arrangement given in the nature of the facts is.… The same is obviously true with regard to the facts or truths of the Bible. They cannot be held in isolation, nor will they admit of any and every arrangement the theologian may choose to assign them. They bear a natural relation to each other, which cannot be overlooked or perverted

without the facts themselves being perverted.… It is important that the theologian should know his place. He is not master of the situation. He can no more construct a system of theology to suit his fancy than the astronomer can adjust the mechanism of the heavens according to his own good pleasure. As the facts of astronomy arrange themselves in a certain order, and will admit of no other, so it is with the facts of theology. Theology, therefore, is the exhibition of the facts of Scripture in their proper order and relation, with the principles or general truths involved in the facts themselves and which pervade and harmonize the whole.[35]

An important aspect of this unity and irreducibility is the fact that God progressively revealed his salvation plan and will for mankind through time. God brought the Savior into the world (NT) through the Israelite nation (OT); one led to the other, so they are not equal halves. Christ is the fulfillment of the law and the law is unfulfilled without Christ. Therefore, the OT cannot be read as if it were a complete presentation of God's salvation plan. This is why Sailhamer believes OT biblical theology is not "complete in itself":

> The first implication is that the study of OT theology is not complete in itself. By acknowledging its place alongside a New Testament, OT theology confesses that its scope is not narrowly circumscribed around its own canonical borders. Its line of sight extends beyond itself to something more—the New Testament. OT theology anticipates the study of NT theology and there is no possibility of working without this anticipation. To fail to see this is to run the risk of being blind to our most basic assumptions. OT theology can only be complete as the first part of a biblical theology, one that includes both an Old and a New Testament theology in a final integrated whole.[36]

When the reader reads the OT with the NT in mind, he or she knows the "rest of the story" and, therefore, the *telos* toward which God drove the Israelites: Christ and eternal life—both ideas that were yet incomplete in the OT. And fear-of-God has something to do with how the eternal life will go; in other words, considering OT fear-of-God in light of the NT makes the reader extremely aware that what was perhaps only suspected in the OT is really true: the stakes are frightfully high.

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[35] Hodge, 1940, intro., chap. two, part one (pp. 18, 19). Goldingay, 1995, 61, writes concerning the biblical unity: "The nature of the Bible as a witnessing tradition suggests that the various individual stories it tells need to be understood as part of one macro-story. Episodes within one long narrative have to be interpreted in the light of the narrative as a whole: accounts of creation in the light of accounts of deliverance and vice versa, accounts of cross in the light of accounts of resurrection and vice versa. Luke's story of Jesus has to be read in the context of Luke's story of the spread of the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome, and vice versa. That much would be true of any narrative. But something further emerges from the awareness that one story runs through the Bible as a whole. Different witnesses tell us of the exodus from Egypt and the occupation of Canaan, of the triumphs under David and Solomon, of the exile and the restoration, of the oppression by Seleucids and again by the Romans, of the Christ event and the beginning of the work of the Spirit in the church. Their witness is set in the context of an account of the unwitnessed Beginning of this history at creation and its not yet witnessed End in the new Jerusalem. The story accumulates throughout biblical times."

[36] Sailhamer, 1995, 23.

Biblical context necessarily includes the context of history—for the events of the Bible are, in the main, real events that happened in history.[37] There has been much debate about whether history should have any place in the practice of biblical theology; but one cannot escape history: we live in history at this moment in time, and the events in the Bible had their moment in time. If they did not, then "we are to be pitied more that all men" (1 Cor 15:19 NIV) and we had better look for something different. This history that Bible students cannot escape from considering, however, is not the history as postulated along higher critical lines; in fact, the main lines of this critical history in many ways looks much different than the history that is attested to in the Bible. The Bible student should instead concern himself or herself with the historical context inasmuch as it is supplied within the biblical text. The question is not *if* history should be taken seriously; what is important is *how* history is taken seriously.[38] If the "history" to be considered to a significant extent turns the biblical narratives into "stories" and "myths" and "sagas" that were created in order to justify the location of the cult or to provide an explanation for the exile, then it should be forgone in deference to the idea that God is graciously able to provide accurate history.

The consideration of history is very important to this dissertation because the biblical idea of fear-of-God flows out of one of two very distinct historical accounts (that cannot both be true at the same time): the account that is generally foundational to the various higher criticisms postulates that the Israelites (and, later, "Jews") to a significant extent created their religion; the account generally assumed to be valid by conservatives maintains that the writers of the Bible recorded events in which God really did speak to his people in order to move them towards certain ends. These are radically different starting points and will yield radically different results when they are assumed in the task of interpreting the Bible.[39] Because I assume the conservative account, I understand

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[37] I tend to see as historical any narrative account that occurs within a context that gives no indication that it should be taken otherwise. If a parable of Jesus is read in isolation, one might think it to be historical; but the context clearly shows that most of the parables were told as non-historical stories to teach some kind of moral or spiritual lesson.

[38] Bartholomew, 1998, 89.

[39] A significant part of this work will be devoted to pointing out the weaknesses of the form criticism-based fear-of-God study of J. Becker. This criticism will mainly stem from my perception that Becker cannot come to a right understanding of what it means for real people—really created in God's image—to fear before the real God who created human beings and (as recorded in the Bible) really revealed himself to them; this is because Becker's work builds upon the form-critical ideas of H. Gunkel, and Gunkel believed that "science" had conclusively shown the world that the OT was simply a work of men and not a work of God. "For a century and a half scholars have been busy," writes Gunkel, "first groping uncertainly, then progressing with increasing confidence, till they have now worked out a clear conception of what the Old Testament is. Among the scholars who have helped to achieve this result Julius Wellhausen will

that—while God's revelation and God's cult community did in a sense evolve over time—the general big-picture reality between God and humans did not evolve; throughout the OT and NT histories, God is still God, humans are still sinful and under condemnation, and the only way to escape God's judgment is to "[call] on the name of the LORD" (Joel 2:32)/"[call] on the name of the Lord" (Acts 2:21). Those who do not do this or do it without their whole heart have reason to fear the "consuming-fire" God (Isa 30:27). But if many of the critics are right and the religion of the Jews and the religion of the Christians had their origins in the minds of humans and not in the will of God, then fear-of-God will tend to be interpreted apart from the notion that there really is a living God out there who can "destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt 10:28)—and the fear emotion/feeling will tend to be reduced as a result.

FEAR TERMINOLOGY

Before proceeding, the English word "fear" and related words should be considered and perhaps even a bit artificially defined in order that we have a semantic anchor for the investigation to follow. In addition, a brief look at the lexical meaning of יָרֵא (*yorē ʾ*) will be presented.

Use of English Fear Words

The English terms that will be mainly dealt with are:

Fear: "An unpleasant emotional state characterized by anticipation of pain or great distress and accompanied by heightened autonomic activity especially involving the nervous system; agitated foreboding often of some real or specific peril …. A condition between anxiety and terror either natural and well-grounded or unreasoned and blind …. Profound reverence and awe."[40].

Terror: "Intense fright or apprehension: stark fear."

Dread: "great fear especially in the face of impending evil: fearful apprehension of danger: anticipatory terror …. Translation of Danish and German angst."

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always be named with honour. Old Testament scholarship, by means of great acumen, patient detailed investigation, and a power of intuition amounting to genius, has sketched a splendid picture of the history of the people of Israel, its religion and its literature. In so doing it has definitively given up the *old* conception of Inspiration. To Old Testament Science the Bible is in the first instance a book produced by human means in human ways. Science has brought it down from heaven and set it up in the midst of the earth" (Gunkel, 1928, 18, 19). Gunkel puts this idea most succinctly when he writes: "Ultimately naïve religion was invaded by a rational reflection which finally destroyed it" (Gunkel, 1928, 113).

[40] All these English definitions are from Merriam-Webster's unabridged dictionary, 2003.

Anxiety: "A state of being anxious or of experiencing a strong or dominating blend of uncertainty, agitation or dread, and brooding fear about some contingency … A strong concern about some imminent development or a strong desire, mixed with doubt and fear, for some event or issue."

Awe: "fear mixed with dread, veneration, reverence, or wonder: as … profound and reverent fear inspired by deity … abashed reverence and fear inspired by authority or power … veneration and latent fear inspired by something sacred, mysterious, or morally impressive."

Reverence: "honor or respect felt or manifested: deference duly paid or expressed …. Profound respect mingled with love and awe (as for a holy or exalted being or place or thing)."

One can immediately see a problem here: the words are defined in terms of each other. That is, fear, for example, is described as "apprehension or dread" while dread is described as "great fear." In order to have a set of clear working terms for the purposes of what follows and avoid the confusion of circularity, I will—somewhat artificially—define each word and also give its approximate German equivalent. Thus defined, I think the words will actually be quite close to current *common* use in English:[41]

Fear (German: *Furcht*): When this term is used, I am speaking of the emotion/feeling of being fearful in general. Fear is—as described by Webster's above—"an unpleasant emotional state characterized by anticipation of pain or great distress and accompanied by heightened autonomic activity especially involving the nervous system." It is that "unpleasant" emotion/feeling that rises in a person in proportion to the awareness of some threat, whether real or imagined.

Anxiety (German: *Besorgnis*): A low to medium level of the emotion/feeling of fear that does not have an object. Anxiety can be experienced over a short, medium, or long period of time.

Dread (German: *Angst*): A medium to high level of the emotion/feeling of fear that may or may not have an object.[42] The emotion/feeling is experienced over an extended period of time and can include a general sense of doom, hopelessness, and despair.

Terror (German: *Terror*): An extremely high level of the emotion/feeling of fear before a real and imminent threat for a short period of time.

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[41] I realize that these words only crudely denote actual psychological states—which are in reality unique from person to person and always a mix of many thoughts, emotions, and feelings.

[42] According to Drosdowski, 1976, *Angst* does not have an object. On the other hand, according to Ringel, 1993, Psychology does allow for *Angst* to have a real object.

Awe (German: *Ehrfurcht*): Emotion/feeling of wonder and amazement before some *awesome* object. Awe *may* have a component of low-level to high-level fear.

Reverence (German: *Verehrung*): Emotion/feeling of adoration, honor, respect, and/or submission before one who is adorable, honorable, and respectable. Reverence *may* have a component of low-level to medium-level fear.

Important to notice here is that fear is a term that signifies the fear emotion/feeling itself. Terror, dread, and anxiety indicate certain levels of fear. On the other hand, awe and reverence are at base stand-alone emotions/feelings that might or might not have an element of fear within them. This depends on the circumstances. If a person is awed by a beautiful painting, there is no fear because there is nothing to fear. But if a person is awed by a powerful supernatural being, then a feeling of fear might arise because of a perceived threat to safety. While these definitions admittedly oversimplify all the shades of meaning in these words, this somewhat artificial rendering will probably help more than hinder the investigation to follow.

In English use, when a person uses the word "fear," he or she could be referring to terror, dread, or anxiety (as defined just above). If a man says that his wife fears her neighbor's pet parrot, one can reasonably assume that the intensity of fear is most likely low. She is somewhat "anxious" around parrots because they are noisy and sometimes peck. But if a woman mentioned that her husband feared the mountain lion just before it attacked, she would most likely be referring to a very high fear level—perhaps even "terror." *Only knowledge of the context* give us a good idea in each case what emotion/feeling the person was experiencing. ירא (LXX φοβέω) in the OT is also, like "fear," used in a very general way. Other than the basic meaning of the word (the fear emotion/feeling) and occasional intensifiers that accompany it (e.g., גדול, מאד [when combined with ירא mean "great fear]), only the context can indicate what ירא means. In addition to indicating terror and dread and anxiety, ירא, however, can also indicate other mind/heart states such as awe and reverence. In common English use, "fear" is only rarely used to refer to awe and/or reverence (probably more so in the past); but in the Bible, many translators continue to use "fear" occasionally where ירא appears to connote some kind of awe and/or reverence. So in general, we are fortunate to have an English word ("fear") that corresponds quite closely to how ירא is used in the Bible.

Initial Lexical Definitions for ירא

By far, the most common root for fear in the OT is ירא. Its various forms are, according to Stähli, as follows:[43]

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[43] Stähli, 1971, uses Becker's fear-of-God ideas as the basis of his article—and that is problematic: the history-of-religions assumption that religion evolved strongly appears to be taken

יָרֵא (Qal): **1.** Fear before men, events, or things: basic meaning of "one is afraid." ירא may have no object (absolute use—e.g., Gen 31:31), take an accusative object (Gen 32:12), or use the prepositions מן (Deut 1:29) מפני (Josh 11:6) or מלפני (1 Sam 18:12) plus an object to denote fear *before* something/someone that/who evokes fear. **2.** Fear before God: indicates "numinous"[44] fear (*erschauern*—shiver, shudder]), is used absolutely (Gen 28:17), with an accusative object (Exod 14:31), or with מן (Lev 19:14) מפני (Exod 9:30) or מלפני (Eccl 3:14) plus God as the fear object in order to denote fear and/or awe *before* God. The numinous fear "ground-tone" remains in all fear-of-God uses.[45] "Do not fear!" appears mostly in theological contexts (approx. 60x), but occasionally in "profane" ones (approx. 15x). Deuteronomy and Deuteronomistic Historian (Dtr.) sections of the OT have a very tight connection between fear and keeping God's commandments (covenant formula—e.g., Deut 4:10). In the wisdom books, fear usually has the object "God" (Job 1:9; Eccl 5:6; 12:13) and when depicted as a virtue, can mean "righteous" or "honest"—although in Ecclesiastes, the distance between humans and God indicates a more "numinous" fear.[46]

נוֹרָא (Niphal participle used mostly as an adjective): **1.** Fearful quality of men, events, or things: basic meaning—"dreadful," "terrible" (*Furchtbar*). It can characterize the desert (Isa 21:1), ice (Ezek 1:22), and the war deeds of kings (Ps 45:5). **2.** Fearful quality of God: over thirty uses denote the awful, dreadful, terrible (*Furchtbar*) attributes of God (Exod 15:11), his deeds (Exod 34:10), his name (Deut 28:58), and his judgment day (Mal 3:23). The primitive numinous fear is present in all of these. Even though נוֹרָא has hardly any pre-exilic uses, it would be inappropriate to consider its form a late development.

יָרֵא (Verbal adjective): a typical form used for fear-of-God in the Psalms—quite often in the plural and in construct relation with YHWH (ירְאֵי יהוה) where it takes on a

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for granted by Becker—and that in turn precipitates an evolutionary view of biblical fear-of-God as well. Stähli takes up Becker's results without question.

[44] "Numinous" is a term created by Rudolf Otto (Otto, 1958). Many articles and monographs employ it as another designation for God. But, after reviewing Otto's book, I will argue below that the term only designates the emotion/feeling of the subject. For the purposes of this brief lexical study on ירא, however, I will assume that Stähli has God in mind when he uses "numinous."

[45] This idea that the fear-emotion "*Grundton*" is never completely out of the picture in the various fear-of-God uses is originally from J. Becker (Becker, 1965, 80). Stähli's/Becker's opinion here supports my thesis that the fear emotion is a component of all OT event and virtue fear-of-God cases.

[46] That God is far away to Qoheleth is a widely held view. But Qoheleth's several uses of מלפני in the fear-of-God context would seem to bring God closer—especially if he thinks of himself and of God throughout his work as royalty before whom humans stand and are judged (compare Gen 4:16 with Gen 47:10).

substantive meaning (*Jahwefürchtigen*—God-fearers).[47] In earlier Psalms, יראי יהוה tends to identify those in the cult who honor God (Ps 22:24, 26). Later Psalms designate those who are faithful to JHWH and are pious (Ps 25:14). Going along with Becker, Stähli understands that these construct plural uses in the Psalms are "*genitivus possessives*."[48] On the other hand, the singular construct uses of יְרֵא + YHWH or "God" found in the wisdom books (Job 1:1, 8; 2:3; Prov 14:2; Eccl 7:18) are "*genitivus objectivus*."[49]

יִרְאָה (Feminine noun): occurs primarily in wisdom books, especially in Proverbs 1-9 where the noun occurs in construct with YHWH. It is synonymous with דַּעַת, "knowledge" (יראת יהוה ראשית דעת, "the fear of YHWH is the beginning of knowledge"—Prov 1:7; see also, 1:29; 2:5; 9:10; 15:33).

מוֹרָא (Masculine noun): **l.** When used non-theologically, the term without exception has full force of the numinous fear (*Schrecken*—fright). It characterizes the fear that animals experience before humans (Gen 9:2) as well as the fear before Israel that the Canaanites would experience when the Israelites entered the land (Deut 11:25). **2.** מוֹרָא is used theologically in Deuteronomy to designate the fear-instilling deeds of God that occurred as part of the exodus (Deut 4:34; 26:8; 34:12).

As can be seen, Stähli understands that ירא and its derivatives can denote a wide range of emotions and feelings. This semantic elasticity will be questioned, however, later on in this work. I now turn to consider several pre-critical era commentators who in general kept fear-of-God much more centered on the emotion/feeling of fear than did later commentators.

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[47] I will argue later in this chapter that this form is for all intents and purposes operating as a participle (see my section "Becker's Psalms Literary Form," beginning at p. 95).

[48] That is, "the fearful of God" means "the fearers who are owned by God."

[49] That is, "the fearful one of God" means "the one who fears God." This shift that Stähli suggests here (based upon Becker) from God-as-possessor (of "the fearing ones") to God-as-object (of "the fearing one's" fear) will be argued against in the section on Becker in chapter one. To make such a great semantic shift based only upon a number shift (plural to singular) is unlikely. Eccl 8:12a—a *plural* use of the verbal adjective in construct with "God"—would also be problematic in this scenario; the sentence does not at all make sense if this is a "genitive-possessive."

CHAPTER ONE

FEAR OF GOD ACCORDING TO COMMENTATORS

In this section, I will describe and comment upon the views of a number of fear-of-God commentators from both the pre-critical and critical periods. The lengthiest works accomplished to date on the subject are from the critical period; nothing comes close to the length and the influence of J. Becker's *Gottesfurcht im Alten Testament*—so his work will be considered in some detail. Nevertheless, others from an earlier age had their own insights and, as will be seen, had the ability to probe deeper into the *biblical* meaning of fear-of-God than those who came later.

PRE-CRITICAL ERA

Of course, when considering those who commented upon the fear-of-God theme one should go first to the NT—which turns out to be very fertile ground for the subject (although, even here as in the OT, there is no exposition on the theme *per se*; that comes only later in the church age).[50] Because the NT fear-of-God concept will be considered later (in chapter three), I will instead begin after the apostolic era and highlight a number of those who saw fit to remark upon the subject.

The Shepherd of Hermas

Not only does Hermas in this second century work quote from Ecclesiastes 12:13a, but also comments briefly about what it means to "fear the Lord."[51] In the apocalyptic/didactic vision, the angelic visitor ("the shepherd") tells Hermas:

> "Fear," said he, "the Lord, and keep His commandments. For if you keep the commandments of God, you will be powerful in every action, and every one of your actions will be incomparable. For, fearing the Lord, you will do all things well. This is the fear which you ought to have, that you may be saved. But fear not the devil;

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[50] The case will be developed later that the NT continues and perhaps intensifies the component of the fear emotion/feeling. This is hinted at by Becker, 1965, 58, when he says, "Es ist jedoch zu bedenken, dass auch das NT durchaus die numinose Furcht kennt und schätzt." He lists the following example of NT numinous fear: Matt 9:8 (Luke 5:26); Matt 14:26 (Mark 6:50); Matt 17:6 (Mark 6:9; Luke 9:34); Matt 28:4; Mark 4:41 (Luke 8:25); Mark 5:15 (Luke 8:35); Mark 16:8; Luke 1:12, 65; 2:9; 5:10; 7:16; 8:37; 24:5, 37; Acts 2:43; 5:5; 5:11; 10:4; 19:17; Phil 2:12; Heb 12:28-29.

[51] Hermas lived in or near Rome and was thought by Origen to be the Hermas that the apostle Paul mentions in Rom 16:14. Most view the work as coming from a later hand (or hands) from the first part of the second century AD. This apocalyptic vision of Hermas was considered to be Scripture by Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen, and found its way into the fourth century Codex Sinaiticus—but eventually fell out of favor in the later decisions on canon (Osiek, 2000).

for, fearing the Lord, you will have dominion over the devil, for there is no power in him. But he in whom there is no power ought on no account to be an object of fear; but He in whom there is glorious power is truly to be feared. For every one that has power ought to be feared; but he who has not power is despised by all. Fear, therefore, the deeds of the devil, since they are wicked. For, fearing the Lord, you will not do these deeds, but will refrain from them. For fears are of two kinds: for if you do not wish to do that which is evil, fear the Lord, and you will not do it; but, again, if you wish to do that which is good, the fear of the Lord is strong, and great, and glorious. Fear, then, the Lord, and you will live to Him, and as many as fear Him and keep His commandments will live to God." "Why," said I, "sir, did you say in regard to those that keep His commandments, that they will live to God?" "Because," says he, "all creation fears the Lord, but all creation does not keep His commandments. They only who fear the Lord and keep His commandments have life with God; but as to those who keep not His commandments, there is no life in them."[52]

A number of features of this text are meaningful to the fear-of-God topic: first, the angel appears to understand that there is some mix between real fear and reverence/respect. The latter could be indicated if one were to take fear before someone who is powerful to be the opposite of the feeling generated before one who is not powerful and therefore "despised" (i.e., the opposite of "despised" is not fear, but "honored" or "revered"). On the other hand, more of the fear emotion is indicated when the angel says "all creation fears the Lord, but all creation does not keep His commandments." Certainly, all creation does not honor or reverence the Lord, but one could make a case that there is a low-grade fear that resides in the hearts of all men and women that has God as its object. Because the subject matter here is tied to salvation and to the "glorious power" of God, then real fearfulness (because eternal destiny is at stake) is warranted. But the angel appears inconsistent, for towards the top of the quote above, he says that one may be saved by fearing God, but later says that fear by itself is insufficient for salvation: "They only who fear the Lord *and* keep His commandments have life with God" (emphases mine). More than likely, the writer had in mind this requirement to keep God's law in both cases (unless he uses fear in different ways—but that is unlikely). Second, the angel says that God has "glorious power," and that alone warrants fear before him. When fear is displayed toward God, then that fear becomes "strong and great and glorious." The angel seems to imply that one's fear of God allows one to partake in God's "glorious power." Whatever the case, fear is justified before a "great and glorious" power like God.[53] Third,

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[52] Roberts and Donaldson, 1989, 24, 25. The quote from Ecclesiastes in the Greek is: Φοβηθητι φησι τον κυριον και θυλασσε τας εντολας αυτου (Gebhardt, Harnack, and Zahn, 1906, 155).

[53] The phenomenon of fear before great power will be discussed in the excursus on Ecclesiastes in chapter two.

the subjects of judgment, salvation, and fear-of-God are closely related.[54] The angel makes explicit what I think Qoheleth implies: fear of God and obedience are prerequisites for entrance into his kingdom. Fear-of-God, therefore, is intimately related to the subject of eternal destination: either one goes to heaven or one goes to hell, and the consideration of these possibilities should evoke some element of fearfulness.

One other subject that the angel mentions prefigures what Augustine and Thomas will say later as well as alerts one to the reality of *common fear and saving fear*: "For fears are of two kinds: for if you do not wish to do that which is evil, fear the Lord, and you will not do it; but, again, if you wish to do that which is good, the fear of the Lord is strong, and great, and glorious." It could be that the angel's first kind of fear is the less excellent *fear of retribution* that makes a person *afraid* to do evil. This fear has an advantage—as Augustine and Thomas will argue later—and is a necessary component of the relationship between sinful humans and the holy God. But the second kind of fear builds on the first and is more "great, and glorious." This fear prompts men and women to avoid sin because they do not want to disappoint their Lord. The first kind is motivated by threat of punishment; the second kind is generated by love.

Tertullian

In *The Soul's Testimony* Tertullian (c. 155-c. 220)[55] wrote about the fundamental emotional characteristics of the soul and how they indicate that God exists. The emotion of fear—especially the fear of death—is central to Tertullian's thesis in that it gives evidence that there is something in death to fear. If death is the annihilation of the soul, then there is nothing to fear. Yet, the soul does fear (and this is universally true) because every soul is endowed by its creator with the knowledge of the creator and the knowledge of judgment. The knowledge humans have is reason to fear; but this fear is also proof that there really is something to fear after death—that is, God's anger. Tertullian writes that the soul

> doubtless knows its giver; and if it knows Him, it undoubtedly fears Him too, and especially as having been by Him endowed so amply. Has it no fear of Him whose favour it is so desirous to possess, and whose anger it is so anxious to avoid? Whence, then, the soul's natural fear of God, if God cannot be angry? How is there

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[54] The connection of judgment and Ecclesiastes is also seen in the allegedly first century (but probably late fourth century according to many scholars [Jefford, 1992, 312, 313.]) *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* where the second half of 12:13 is quoted: "Nor is a resurrection only declared for the martyrs, but for all men, righteous and unrighteous, godly and ungodly, that every one may receive according to his desert. For God, says the Scripture, 'will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.'" (Roberts and Donaldson, 1989a, 440) The reference to the quote as "Scripture" is noteworthy.

[55] Brown, 1990, 91.

any dread of Him whom nothing offends? What is feared but anger? Whence comes anger, but from observing what is done? What leads to watchful oversight, but judgment in prospect? Whence is judgment, but from power? To whom does supreme authority and power belong, but to God alone?[56]

Several elements of this are worthy of note: first, the knowledge of God is universal. Second, the fear of God's punishment, according to Tertullian, is also universal (at least indirectly through the fear of death). Third, the knowledge of the threat of judgment and God's anger is based somewhat upon the soul's understanding of God's power and authority. Fourth, the two aspects of fear-of-God spoken of by the angel to Hermas just above are also indicated when Tertullian says: "Has [the soul] no fear of Him whose favour it is so desirous to possess, and whose anger it is so anxious to avoid?" Tertullian most likely saw these two fears (the fear of losing God's favour and the fear of being punished) as being two sides of the same coin, and therefore inseparable. Augustine will argue in the next section that the deepest desire of humans should be to make the basis of their relationship with God to be the fear of losing God's favour, not the fear of punishment. But because humans are hopelessly sinful in this life, there will always be some component of the latter.

Augustine

In his "Homily Nine on the First Epistle of John," Augustine makes a valuable contribution to the understanding of fear-of-God.[57] In this sermon, the text of main concern is 1 John 4:16-18:

> 4:16 So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. 4:17 Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. 4:18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love.

While the main thrust of his sermon is to highlight and encourage his flock to exercise love that "casts out fear," he spends the better part of it justifying the idea that fear will, in one form or another, nevertheless remain a part of the earthly Christian life. To account for this, Augustine first points out that not all men or women believe in a final judgment and, therefore, do not fear God (in contrast with Tertullian above). But people who do think about God and his judgment will inevitably begin to think about their sin, and fear of God's anger will come as a result. A person with this kind of fear does "not yet have boldness in the day of judgment."[58] But one should not despair about this, because this

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[56] Tertullian, 1989, chapter 2.
[57] Schaff, 1956, "Homily Nine on the First Epistle of John."
[58] Ibid., sec. 2.

fear is "the beginning of wisdom" (Prov 9:10a). This person has the motivation to begin the process of learning to obey Christ—that is, to love. A man at this point must "correct himself" and "mortify his members which are upon the earth" (Col 3:5).[59]

Once a person through this initial fear of punishment begins to submit to the will of God, he or she now begins to understand the goodness and mercy of God. As a result, a desire for God and a desire to please him (by loving his or her neighbors) begins to grow—and love, says Augustine, begins to drive out the fear of punishment:

> Fear, so to say, prepares a place for charity. But when once charity has begun to inhabit, the fear which prepared the place for it is cast out. For in proportion as this increases, that decreases: and the more this comes to be within, is the fear cast out. Greater charity, less fear; less charity, greater fear. But if no fear, there is no way for charity to come in.[60]

So the fear of punishment is a prerequisite for love ("charity"). I will argue from time to time throughout the dissertation that this kind of fear is based upon *knowledge* (i.e., true information) and is an *honest* (i.e., humble and authentic) response to the realities and potentialities of the human condition. It forces out competing beliefs that do not account for and have no reasonable way to solve the fear. The soul is then prepared to feel the need for and to accept the only solution to the fear, which is God's grace. This fear will continue to "goad" as long as a person has not reached "perfection in love."[61] Augustine believes this is a lifelong process. He likens the fear of punishment to a painful surgical process to remove "rottenness" from the body.[62] To avoid the surgery is to avoid pain in the short term; but to make death a certainty. He does not say that perfect love is achievable for the believer in this life. Therefore, the surgery must continue throughout life in order that love of God and love of neighbor might come in and a person might be saved:

> For if you be without fear, you can not be justified. It is a sentence pronounced by the Scriptures; "For he that is without fear, cannot be justified" (Sirach 1:28). Needs then must fear first enter in, that by it charity may come. Fear is the healing operation: charity, the sound condition. "But he that fears is not made perfect in love." Why? "Because fear has torment;" just as the cutting of the surgeon's knife has torment.[63]

Augustine believes that the way to perfection is to love God and to love other people like God first loved us—i.e., to love them when they are still enemies. This was the painful experience of Christ who loved mankind when they were yet evil and unlovable:

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[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid., sec. 4.

[61] Ibid., "Fear does goad: but fear not: charity enters in, and she heals the wound that fear inflicts."

[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid.

> If this then be the perfection unto which God invites us, that we love our enemies as He loved His; this is our boldness in the day of judgment, that "as He is, so are we also in this world:" because, as He loves His enemies in making His sun to rise upon good and bad, and in sending rain upon the just and unjust, so we, since we cannot bestow upon them sun and rain, bestow upon them our tears when we pray for them.[64]

By doing this, believers are conformed into Christ's image with the result that fear is driven out.

This fear that is driven out by love (i.e., fear-of-punishment) is valuable and a necessary step on the way to justification. But Augustine speaks at length about a more excellent fear. One is forced into perceiving two types of fear-of-God when one is faced with the fact that 1 John 4:17 teaches that fear-of-God should be done away with, yet Ps 19:9a teaches just the opposite: "the fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever." To account for this Augustine distinguishes between fear of God's punishment and the fear of falling out of fellowship with God (which is by far the more excellent). The former is more predominant early in the Christian life; the latter, however, begins to grow as the believer's love grows for his or her Lord. The man or woman increasingly understands God's goodness and grace and friendship, and therefore becomes increasingly anxious about losing them. Augustine calls this anxiousness "chaste fear":

> When once you have begun to desire the good, there shall be in you the chaste fear. What is the chaste fear? The fear lest you lose the good things themselves. Mark! It is one thing to fear God lest He cast you into hell with the devil, and another thing to fear God lest He forsake you. The fear by which you fear lest you be cast into hell with the devil, is not yet chaste; for it comes not from the love of God, but from the fear of punishment: but when you fear God lest His presence forsake you, you embrace Him, you long to enjoy God Himself.

The difference between these fears, says Augustine, is analogous to the fears experienced by two very different women—one who is unfaithful to her husband and fears only his punishment, and one who is faithful to her husband and loves him and only fears lest she lose him.

> The one says, I fear my husband, lest he should come: the other says, I fear my husband, lest he depart from me. The one says, I fear to be condemned: the other, I fear to be forsaken. Let the like have place in the mind of Christians, and you find a fear which love casts out, and another fear, chaste, enduring for ever.[65]

It should be noted that, up till now, all mentions of the fear-of-God have involved the fear emotion itself and not reverence, worship, or even awe. It has also not denoted a situational state—either righteousness, obedience to God's law, or active participation in the "cult" of YHWH and/or Christ (meanings that critical commentators will attempt to assign to fear-of-God). With the three works covered so far, fear-of-God is linked with

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[64] Ibid., sec. 3.
[65] Ibid., sec. 6.

judgment and the legitimate fear of punishment which acts, says Augustine, as a "goad" away from sin and toward righteousness and fellowship with God.[66] But there is a still more excellent fear (also, I think, based on knowledge: the knowledge of the human propensity to sin and potential of losing faith) that dreads losing God's favor and the fellowship and gifts that come with that favor.

Thomas Aquinas

Thomas's *Summa Theologica* contains a lengthy treatise on the fear-of-God theme called "The Gift of Fear."[67] Even though he goes into far more detail in this work than Augustine (building upon certain philosophical and logical constructs that he culls from Aristotle and others), his conclusions are nevertheless quite similar. The first question to settle for Thomas is whether God can be feared at all. The answer is yes: humans can and should fear both God and his punishment.[68] But some might argue that it is wrong to fear God on the basis of punishment, because punishment—being a deprivation of good—is evil. But Thomas says that while in a relative sense this is true, in an absolute sense God's punishment is not evil because it is ordered to an ultimate end—God's *telos*—and is therefore good.[69] The fears that Thomas discusses that concern the fear-of-God subject are "servile," "filial," and "initial."

"Servile" fear is based upon God's punishment and—as the name implies—denotes a fear that involuntarily drives a person away from the feared punishment and towards God. It is therefore not based upon freedom—and one could argue that it is evil (for servility is not of love). In response, Thomas points out that this fear-gift is from the Holy Spirit and is given in order to fulfill God's purpose for humans. This makes it good, for there is an ultimate good to which it is ordered.[70] One could also argue that a person who has servile fear is only looking out for him/herself and will respond selfishly and not on behalf of God. But self-love, says Thomas, is not necessarily evil. To be concerned about one's self and to take steps to avoid privation (e.g., the privation brought about through God's punishment) is not evil *per se*. Love can be shown to others as well as to the self. Nevertheless, servile (fear-of-punishment) fear that has *only* its own end in mind—despite

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[66] Ibid., sec. 4.

[67] Aquinas, 1981, "Question 19: of the Gift of Fear."

[68] Ibid., 1244, first article.

[69] Ibid., Thomas writes, "From Him there comes the evil of punishment, but this is evil not absolutely but relatively, and, absolutely speaking, is a good. Because, since a thing is said to be good through being ordered to an end, while evil implies lack of this order, that which excludes the order to the last end is altogether evil, and such is the evil of fault. On the other hand the evil of punishment is indeed an evil, in so far as it is the privation of some particular good, yet absolutely speaking, it is a good, in so far as it is ordained to the last end."

[70] Ibid., 1246, 1247, fourth article.

originating with the Spirit of God—cannot in the long run remain with charity. The fear of punishment is admissible into charity (as will be discussed in a moment); but the servility component (i.e., all being a matter of coercion and not freedom in the process of becoming closer to God) of servile fear will diminish as charity increases.[71] In this respect, servile fear is the same as Augustine's "fear of punishment." It is used by God, but it is a poor kind of fear compared to the "chaste" fear that should replace it. But Thomas understands that servile fear has the possibility of having not man as its end, but God. Someone can fear God's punishment not because it deprives them of, for example, physical property, food, or comfort, but because that person knows and is distressed by the fact that God is grieved and disappointed. If this is the case, then servile fear can exist with charity, but is not charity itself.[72] This dividing of servile fear into two species is a distinction that Augustine does not make. The servile fear species that has God as its ultimate end seems to lie somewhere in between Augustine's fear-of-punishment and chaste fear (and in between Thomas's first species of servile fear [i.e., man, not God, as end] and his filial fear).

Thomas goes on to speak about the more excellent "filial" fear which he says is all but the same as Augustine's chaste fear.[73] This fear—one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit according to Isa 11:2, 3a—has punishment no longer as its focus, but the fear of losing fellowship with God. This fear wants to please God (it therefore has God's purpose [or "end" or "*telos*"] first in mind) and is only fearful of the loss of the close relationship should the person do what is always the possibility, i.e., to sin.[74] But it should nevertheless be noted that even filial fear cannot be completely detached from God's punishment; loss of fellowship is part of the punishment that God gives as a result of sin. To fear and grieve because one has sinned and grown apart from God is very close to fearing and grieving over the punishment.[75] This is a far cry from the species of servile fear that cares not about God, but is only fearful of the punishment-caused loss of its own comfort and wealth. Even so, Thomas sees both servile fear (of both species) and filial fear as being a part of the "beginning of wisdom":

> For servile fear is like a principle disposing a man to wisdom from without, in so far as he refrains from sin through fear of punishment, and is thus fashioned for the effect of wisdom, according to Ecclus 1:27, *The fear of the Lord driveth out sin*. On the other hand, chaste or filial fear is the beginning of wisdom, as being the first effect of wisdom. For since the regulation of human conduct by the Divine law belongs in wisdom, in order to make a beginning, man must first of all fear God and

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[71] Ibid., 1248, sixth article.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Ibid., 1245, second article.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid., 1248, sixth article.

submit himself to Him: for the result will be that in all things he will be ruled by God.[76]

Thomas's "initial fear" is the fear experienced by "beginners"—i.e., new Christians. "Initial fear is a mean between servile and filial fear."[77] In this way, Thomas appears to be talking about the same thing as his second species of servile fear (that has its focus on God's *telos*). This species of servile fear, however, retains its servility component and is not, therefore, the *substance* of filial fear. But initial fear, although having a *component* of fear-of-punishment (servile fear), is of the *substance* of filial fear—albeit imperfectly. So "initial fear is a mean between servile and filial fear, not as between two things of the same genus, but as the imperfect is a mean between a perfect being and a non-being …."[78] The "perfect being" which Thomas refers to is filial fear (which is based upon love); conversely, the "non being" is servile fear (which is not based upon love). Initial fear is experienced by a new Christian who has true affection for Christ (and the filial fear of losing fellowship) as well as true fear of punishment (servile fear) because his or her understanding of God's love and justice is yet underdeveloped.[79]

Several items come to mind in consideration of Thomas's thoughts: first, throughout his article, Thomas is referring (in his three types of fear-of-God) to the unpleasant emotion of fear. Second, if he is right that servile, filial, and initial fears come from the Holy Spirit, then they are *good* in that they come from God and are used to do his will. Third, the three fears relate to justification in the following way: servile fear is based upon knowledge of God's power, authority, and judgment, as well as based upon the love-of-self; it goads a person to face reality and to make a decision to follow or not follow God. Filial fear is based upon love-of-God; because it fears losing the love relationship with God, it also acts as motivation to stay close to him. Initial fear is a combination of these two: it goads away from punishment (involuntarily) and presses (voluntarily) a believer into God. Initial fear (the part that fears losing God's love) and filial fear are both the *effects* of love—they are not the love itself.[80] In view of all this, it appears that none of these three fears can save. Saving faith (love) *builds upon* servile

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[76] Ibid., 1249, eighth article.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Ibid., 1240, ninth article. Regarding this, Thomas writes: "From the fact that love is the origin of fear, it does not follow that the fear of God is not a distinct habit from charity which is the love of God, since love is the origin of all the emotions, and yet we are perfected by different habits in respect of different emotions. Yet love is more of a virtue than fear is, because love regards good, to which virtue is principally directed by reason of its own nature, as was shown above (I-II, 55, 3,4); for which reason hope is also reckoned as a virtue; whereas fear principally regards evil, the avoidance of which it denotes, wherefore it is something less than a theological virtue."

fear and *both actuates and is supported* by filial fear. Initial fear is a combination of both. They are not of the same virtue substance as love/faith (see FN 40 just above) and, in my opinion, can not of themselves save. Finally, Thomas, like Augustine, believes that servile fear diminishes and filial fear increases as charity grows (is "perfected"). In the process of conversion and then sanctification, servile fear does not immediately disappear to be completely replaced by filial fear; God will use both in the life of the Christian depending on the circumstances and the state of the heart. But if the believer is maturing and growing in love, then the fear of punishment (servile) will decrease, and fear of losing God's fellowship (filial) will increase until the believer is "made perfect in love."[81]

<p style="text-align:center">Martin Luther</p>

Even thought Luther was the greatest reformer, he remained true to the orthodox views about God and human beings: God is the creator of all things, infinite, perfectly holy, and absolutely sovereign. Humans are creatures, finite, corrupt, and under God's authority; and without Christ, they are subject to God's wrath. Therefore, Luther understood that there was much to fear from God and that to have no fear of God and of his punishment was utter foolishness and folly. Perhaps more than others before him, however, he often perceived more than just fear in many of the OT virtue fear-of-God cases. While a number of characteristics are indicated, Luther often understood that "worship" was in view.[82] For example, in Luther's comments on Gen 22:12 he writes:

> [O]ne should … note in this passage that when Abraham is praised as one who fears and reveres God, the statement refers not only to his faith but also to his entire worship, to the tree with its fruits, inasmuch as for the Hebrews to fear God is the same as to worship God or to serve God, to love and honor God.[83]

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[81] Ibid., 1251, tenth article. According to Thomas, "filial fear must needs increase when charity increases, even as an effect increases with the increase of its cause. For the more one loves a man, the more one fears to offend him and to be separated from him. On the other hand servile fear, as regards its servility, is entirely cast out when charity comes, although the fear of punishment remains as to its substance, as stated above (Art. 6). This fear decreases as charity increases, chiefly as regards its act, since the more a man loves God, the less he fears punishment; first, because he thinks less of his own good, to which punishment is opposed; secondly, because, the faster he clings, the more confident he is of the reward, and, consequently the less fearful of punishment."

[82] Luther writes: "Everywhere there are testimonies of Holy Scripture that fear of God is worship of God. For just as the terms 'man' and 'risible' are interchangeable, as the dialecticians say, so are fear and worship of God" (Pelikan, 1964, 100).

[83] Ibid., 134. Interestingly, Luther is drawn to the possibility that מוֹרִיָּה ("Moriah") is based upon the verb יָרֵא: "Thus I gladly agree with those who believe that Moriah received its name from the Hebrew word which denotes 'to fear, worship, and revere God,' as though one called it in German *heyligstat*, a holy place, a house of God, because this place was the temple and house of God from the beginning of the world …." (Pelikan, 1964, 101)

<p style="text-align:center">35</p>

Luther comments likewise about Moses's admonishment of the Israelites to "fear the LORD": "It seems to be characteristic of this language to apply the term 'fear of God' to what we call worship of God or piety, or, in Greek, θεοσέβεια. Thus Moses here combines those two concepts: fear and keeping the Commandments."[84] The fear of the LORD that Jonah professed (Jonah 1:12) to the terrified sailors is said to be a "Hebraism" for "worship," and that this worship (in commenting on Eccl 3:14) is to "have God in view, to know that He looks at all our works, and to acknowledge Him as the Author of all things, both good and evil."[85] In other words, God is to be feared (i.e., worshipped) because he is sovereign and the lives of human beings are completely at his mercy.

In these instances of *defining* what fear-of-God (as used as a virtue) is, it almost sounds like Luther leaves the emotion/feeling of fear completely out; but how he in general *describes* the relationship between God and humanity clearly shows that he believes that real fear has its place in the lives of non-believers as well as believers. Sometimes his uplifting of fear as an entirely appropriate emotion/feeling toward God is seen in texts in which he defines fear-of-God differently. His discussion of the Gen 22 fear-of-God text just mentioned is an example. Just after claiming that fear-of-God is worship, he writes the following: "Where God is revealed in his Word, there worship Him, there exercise your reverence; then you are fearing where you should fear and tremble."[86] Luther also points out that when the angel said to Abraham "you fear God," Abraham, "thoroughly frightened, fell on his face, or at least listened on bended knees …."[87] This indicates that Luther understood that fearfulness before God was a good thing: to "fear and tremble" surely signifies the state of being afraid; and for the angel to say "you fear God" while Abraham exhibited the fear emotion/feeling demonstrates that being "frightened" has something very much to do with virtue fear-of-God.

In another Genesis passage (that does not mention fear-of-God directly), Luther discerns virtue fear-of-God in Joseph's response to the sexual advance of Potiphar's wife—and, conversely, fear-of-God is something the woman tragically lacks:

> Accordingly, the very saintly young man preaches to the raging woman …: "Far be it from me to sin against God! Woman, consider how great a sin it is to cast off reverence for and fear of God, and to offend Him for the sake of a trifling and momentary pleasure." But here no god avails. She gives no thought whatever to promises or threats of God; nor does she recall any rewards or punishments.[88]

It should be noticed here that "reverence for and fear of God" is a response of the heart and mind that should arise in consideration of God's "rewards and punishments." In other

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[84] Pelikan, 1960, 67.
[85] Pelikan, 1972, 55.
[86] Pelikan, 1964, 135.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Pelikan, 1965, 79.

words, it is the heighth of folly to disregard (i.e., to have no emotional awareness of) the pain and suffering that can come when God is angered and inflicts his punishment. The "threats" of God do not touch her emotions/feelings at all. That Luther has fearfulness in view here is confirmed by what he says next (once again, speaking hypothetical words of Joseph to Potiphar's wife):

> "You are the wife of my master. Have regard for him as you have regard for yourself. If you do not fear the wrath of God and do not think that you should pay attention to your salvation, at least search your conscience, and give thought to what the name and position of a wife require."[89]

It would seem—reading between Luther's lines—that Potiphar's wife would have had the "beginning of wisdom" and "the beginning of knowledge" if she had been afraid of the "wrath of God." But she had no fear and she therefore conducted herself like a fool.

This fear of God's "wrath" that would seem to be basic for all humans is, according to Luther, also the fear that is in view in Ps 76: 7, 8 (8, 9). It is a terrifying fear that God employs to force people away from sin:

> "For the fear of he Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov 1:7). For from then His wrath is in the heart of the penitent, because He causes His judgment to be preached, because of which they tremble and cease to do evil, and also because of the rumbling of an accusing conscience.[90]

This fear—such that people "tremble"—is also the fear-of-God that one should exhibit if one witnesses abominations in civil or church governance, and tolerates them; if this is the case, one should "rightly fear the wrath of God."[91] And the sum of Luther's teaching on the Ten Commandments is that one had better fear God lest that person find himself taking the brunt of God's anger and punishment:

> Thus He demands that all our works proceed from a heart which fears and regards God alone, and from such fear avoids everything that is contrary to His will, lest it should move Him to wrath; and, on the other hand, also trusts in Him alone, and from love to Him does all He wishes, because he speaks to us as friendly as a father, and offers us all grace and every good.[92]

Once again, fear-of-God is understood as dissuading one from sin, and the heart-attitude signified here is not worship, but fear—for fear is the most primal emotional safety mechanism ("the *beginning* of wisdom") that forces one away from what is dangerous. In the following quote, the emphasis upon young people's correction and discipline as well as Luther's earnest desire that they come to know the fear of the Lord strongly indicates that fear-of-God is to a significant extent this fear that dissuades one from doing evil:

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[89] Ibid., 80.

[90] Oswald, 1976, 9.

[91] Luther, 1915, 48 (from Luther's "Open Letter to The Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate" [1520]).

[92] Bente and Dau, 1921 (from Luther's "Large Catechism").

> This (I say) it is profitable and necessary always to teach to the young people, to admonish them and to remind them of it, that they may be brought up not only with blows and compulsion, like cattle, but in the fear and reverence of God. For where this is considered and laid to heart that these things are not human trifles, but the commandments of the Divine Majesty, who insists upon them with such earnestness, is angry with, and punishes those who despise them, and, on the other hand, abundantly rewards those who keep them, there will be a spontaneous impulse and a desire gladly to do the will of God.[93]

Like cattle fear the "blows and compulsion" of the farmer, Luther here believes that children should likewise fear the "blows and compulsion" of God when they "despise" his commandments.

Is Luther inconsistent in his portrayal of fear-of-God? This would certainly be so if Luther's understanding of what it means to "worship" was identical with the general understanding today. If "worship" is only *fear-less* adoration and praise, then Luther uses the fear-of-God idea in two radically different ways: sometimes fear-of-God means being afraid of God, and sometimes it means being in a posture of fear-less worship of God. If this is how it is with Luther, and his discussions accurately reflect the state of fear-of-God in the OT, then the interpretation of the many OT virtue fear-of-God passages would be especially difficult; there would be no way to tell if "fear" or "worship" is meant because most virtue fear-of-God texts do not include *local* contextual or linguistic/semantic features that point one way or the other. And, to make matters worse, the word "fear" (and *Furcht* and יראה and φοβος) would lose its semantic specificity (if fear-of-God in the OT can signify such widely divergent meanings), and there would then be no *general* OT word remaining to signify the state of being generally afraid before God. But I do not think that the meaning of "fear" in fear-of-God—as intended by the Hebrews and as interpreted by Luther—is semantically so unpredictable; the brief survey of Luther texts above as well as the general flow of Luther's thought clearly shows that the fear emotion/feeling before God—especially in view of the universal human propensity (believers included) to sin—was considered by him to be foundational for fruit-bearing Christian faith; and this faith includes the worship that Christians manifest before Christ. So, for Luther, fear-of-God is not either the fear emotion/feeling before God *or* fear-free worship; rather, it signifies the fear emotion/feeling alone or the fear emotion/feeling *plus* elements of what we would commonly consider today as "worship" (and possibly other elements such as "reverence," "awe," "honor," "obedience," etc.). In Luther's day, the high view of God, the acute awareness of the depravity of humans, the general poverty of life, and the proximity of death, all made for a general understanding in the church that some element of fearfulness before God was an entirely legitimate anchor for the Christian faith—indeed, it was the "beginning of wisdom" for it informs the experient of

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[93] Ibid.

danger and "goads" him or her away from danger and towards safety. At the same time, Luther more than many in his day perceived that virtue fear-of-God was used to stand for other heart, soul, and mind elements of the Israelite's religious experience.

John Calvin

Fear-of-God, according to Calvin, is a human emotion that must come in order for there to be any hope of conversion. He sees it as negative motivation—that is, fear-of-God is dread of punishment that motivates one to avoid that punishment. Calvin couches his fear-of-God discussion in the context of the saving process of repentance—repentance being defined as a turning away from one's self (one's own worldly desires—what he calls "concupiscence") to God.[94] The sword of the Holy Spirit—through whom faith comes—must, however, pierce a person first. Once the spirit begins to stir in a man's or woman's soul, there occurs a great distress in which the fear of God's judgment and sorrow over one's sins are mingled. This is the phenomenon that the prophets and apostles sought to provoke when they declared the people's sinfulness as well as the judgment that would occur because of it.[95] The repentance that God seeks must go down to the deepest part of the soul, such that a person becomes willing to mortify the entire flesh—i.e., to put off the old man and to put on the new.[96] But humans, says Calvin, are so steeped in their original corrupted state that it takes the jarring awareness and fear of judgment to even begin to move them towards repentance:

> Before the mind of the sinner can be inclined to repentance, he must be aroused by the thought of divine judgment; but when once the thought that God will one day ascend his tribunal to take an account of all words and actions has taken possession of his mind, it will not allow him to rest, or have one moment's peace, but will perpetually urge him to adopt a different plan of life, that he may be able to stand securely at that judgment-seat. Hence the Scripture, when exhorting to repentance, often introduces the subject of judgment, as in Jeremiah, "Lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings," (Jer. 4: 4.) Paul, in his discourse to the Athenians says, "The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: because he has appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness" (Acts 17: 30, 31.).… The stern threatening which God employs are extorted from him by our depraved dispositions. For while we are asleep it were in vain to allure us by soothing measures.[97]

This "stern threatening" results in distressing dread. But this dread should not be so intense that people are driven to utter despair, unable to look up. This would slip over into the Devil's domain in which, once he notices that a person is so distressed, he would

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[94] Calvin, 1972, book 3, chap. 3, sec. 5.

[95] Ibid., sec. 7.

[96] Ibid., sec. 6. Here, Calvin quotes Joel 2:13a: "Rend your hearts and not your clothing."

[97] Ibid., sec. 7.

plunge them "deeper and deeper into the abyss of sorrow, that they may never again rise."[98] But this is certainly not the goal of God.

Calvin understands that repentance (regeneration through putting off the old man and putting on the new) is a *process*. While it is true that a person is "born again" at a point in time, the phenomenon of repentance (turning away from sin [mortification of the flesh] and turning to God) lasts a lifetime. "This renewal," writes Calvin,

> is not accomplished in a moment, a day, or a year, but by uninterrupted, sometimes even by slow progress God abolishes the remains of carnal corruption in his elect, cleanses them from pollution, and consecrates them as his temples, restoring all their inclinations to real purity, so that during their whole lives they may practice repentance, and know that death is the only termination to this warfare.[99]

This is because humans are plagued with concupiscence. This lust after evil is not just an "infirmity" (as Augustine describes it), but is itself evil in every case because it causes people to love God imperfectly (i.e., with *less than their whole* heart, soul, mind, and strength).[100] Because perfection is unattainable in this life—either in avoiding sin or in loving God—"God assigns repentance as the goal towards which they must keep running during the whole course of their lives."[101]

In summary, Calvin puts high value on the fear-of-God that works negatively to pressure a person to commence the repentance process. Because men and women are so stiff-necked and heard-hearted, the fear of God's wrath must be used like hammer blows until pride is broken up and sufficient humility is instilled such that openness to God's free gift of grace is manifested. But because "sin is lurking at [the] door" and men and women must learn to "master it" (Gen 4:7b), the repentance process—spurred on by the fear of God's punishment—must be exercised throughout their lives until the Lord one day says "well done, good and faithful servant[s]!" (Matt 25:21, 23)

THE CRITICAL PERIOD (WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON JOACHIM BECKER)

The pre-critical fear-of-God thinkers just spoken of all assumed—based upon a high view of Scripture—that God created men and women, God brought about his salvation plan through Christ, and there would be a final judgment based upon the acceptance or rejection of Christ. God's commands in Scripture were taken to be the highest law and it made perfect sense that one should fear God and his judgment if one did not follow his commands. This clarity of the fear-of-God theme, however, did not remain; the theme lost its simplicity and innocence in the critical era. This was a

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[98] Ibid., sec. 15.
[99] Ibid., sec. 9.
[100] Ibid., sec. 11.
[101] Ibid., sec. 9.

consequence of the philosophical and theological paradigm shifts that occurred during and after the Enlightenment. Epistemological skepticism (mainly empiricism and idealism) forced theological study into more of a history-of-religions mindset. As a result, the emphasis shifted from the inspired Word of God to the uninspired creation of the Bible by men.[102] With this, fear-of-God went from being a subject of *theological* reflection to one of *scientific* study. A most noticeable by-product is this: the writers of the critical age—unlike those from the earlier age—do not present themselves as being within the world that necessarily must wrestle with the fear-of-God phenomenon; instead, the modern writers seem to *stand outside* of the world, as if peering in through a microscope, cataloguing all the discernable historical details, but leaving out the invisible factors of the heart. The critical era studies concentrate on how fear-of-God "evolved" from primitive cultures to refined monotheism in Israel; but how it applies to the readers (or the writers), and how it can help us move toward a saving relationship with God and Christ is practically of no concern. These characteristics of the critical period's fear-of-God studies will be seen as several of that period's main works are considered in this section.

Rudolf Otto

We begin with Rudolf Otto—the German thinker who wrote the highly influential *Das Heilige*—because, first, his term "numinous" is so widely used, and, second, because his idealism is reflected in a number of later important works that deal directly with the fear-of-God theme.[103] Otto does not in *Das Heilige* address fear-of-God *per se*, but tries to argue for and describe the irreducible *a priori* emotional religious phenomenon (what he calls the "numinous"). To be more precise, Otto argues for the numinous, but he confesses that he really cannot describe it—for it is at the absolute bottom (i.e. base/foundation) of the human psyche. It can only be described with imperfect analogies. Here, Otto borrows from Kant the idea of irreducible categories of the mind that make intelligible the sense impressions received from the exterior world.[104] Kant was willing to admit God into the fold of what could be *known*; but he based this upon the *a priori* moral imperatives that he believed to be in all persons, and not on historical observation or emotional experience. But Otto believed that religious emotion/feeling was sufficiently

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[102] Or, as Gunkel claims: "Science has brought [the Bible] down from heaven and set it up in the midst of the earth" (Gunkel, 1928, 19).

[103] The inclusion of excerpts from *Das Heilige* as a "foundational text of the newer protestant theology" (Härle, 2007, xxiv; called a "must read" for students to understand protestant theology [v]) is evidence of Otto's influence right up to the present day. See Almond, 1983, 353-355 for a discussion of Otto's turn to idealism.

[104] Otto, 1958, 112, 113.

powerful and compelling to also qualify as an *a priori* category (and, therefore, as *knowledge*). In this way, Otto makes more room for knowing God than Kant. But at the same time, Otto held on to most of Kant's (epistemological) skepticism about the *thing in itself*, and, more specifically, about the ability to know the truth of the Bible's historical claims to supernatural revelation.[105] Otto also did not put much stock into the Bible's historical credibility—far more important and reliable were what people *felt* about God. The written things of religion that were outside were not appropriate gauges of the truth of religion. The subjective experience was practically all that mattered. It followed, then, that the core feelings/emotions of each religion (i.e., the numinous) are true because they flow from the *a priori* category of divine awareness. In this deduction from epistemological skepticism to theological truths—as will be seen in the next few paragraphs—the God of the Bible fades away as an *objective* reality. The idea of the holy, however, is still there; but it is no longer applied to YHWH (as object of holiness), but to the numinous (the religious emotion/feeling) of the subject. Every religion's core numinous feeling, therefore, must be counted as valid. It follows, then, that Christianity cannot claim exclusive rights to the truth. It also follows that, with this level of subjectivity, the idea that God broke into human history and revealed himself from the outside cannot be maintained. God must come from the inside. God begins with men and women as they first fear their dangerous environment, imagine demons or gods within that environment, then—according to their cult and political and emotional needs—wind up with some kind of monotheism that best sooths their fears about earthly life as well as the afterlife. In other words, God is a human concept that develops as humans evolve. These results of Otto's thought are thoroughly revealed in his *Das Heilige*. I turn to this work now in order to argue that his numinous concept—of which fear is a significant component—is ultimately unsuitable for describing the feelings that one has before the God of the Bible.

The holy = the numinous = a feeling

In the fear-of-God literature after Otto, the term "numinous" is often used as another term for God.[106] But this does not accurately reflect what Otto really meant when he coined then employed this "special term" in *Das Heilige*.[107] The numinous was created

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[105] For a critique upon Kant's asserted unknowability of the thing-in-itself and the impact of this idea upon Christian doctrine, see Brenner, 2007.

[106] See, for example, Bamberger, 1929; Becker, 1965; Pfeiffer, 1965; Stähli, 1971; Loader, 2001; Wénin, 2005.

[107] Otto, 1958, 6, 7. Terrien, 1962, 258, expressed concern about how "numinous" should be employed. He perceives that the numinous's object of worship—the "*numen*"—is impersonal and is therefore unfit to denote the personal God of Israel. In view of this, "the concept of the

to stand for the idea of "the holy" minus any moral or rational aspects; but "the holy" of which he speaks is not God, but a subjective feeling that may or may not have God as an object. The numinous is "a state of mind" that is "irreducible to any other; and therefore, like every absolutely primary and elementary datum, while it admits of being discussed, it cannot be strictly defined."[108] Of primary importance is to note that Otto is using the term as equal to "the holy"—a term normally reserved (biblically speaking) for God or people and liturgical items that God pronounces as holy. But when one considers the ways that he attempts to fine tune what he means by "numinous," one wonders if the biblical God is altogether out of view: the numinous is at the "innermost core" of every religion; it is a "feeling-response," an "element," a "category of value," and "a state of mind"; the numinous is something that "stirs" in humans, yet "cannot be strictly defined"; it "cannot, strictly speaking, be taught" but only "evoked, awakened in the mind."[109] On first glance these properties do not appear to have anything to do with God, but everything to do with the human consciousness.

While it is true that Otto bases his term "numinous" on the Latin "*numen*" ("deity"), and he also speaks occasionally about the God of Israel or the God of Christianity, the best estimate of how he really thinks about "numinous" is to notice that he always *describes* the word in terms of human emotion/feeling, not of God. Furthermore, if there were any intention on Otto's part to have his readers understand that the object of the religious person's affections is God, then he would—if given the opportunity—designate the object as God or at least (in keeping with his numinous coming from *numen* idea), "*numen*." He does have this opportunity and does offer an object to the "feeling element"—but this "object" is surprising and baffling. In Otto's following quote, he is trying to argue that Schleiermacher's "feeling of dependence" (what Otto prefers to call "creature-feeling") is not the primary religious feeling, but is the

> effect of another feeling-element, which casts it like a shadow, but which in itself indubitably has immediate and primary reference to an object outside the self.
> Now this object is just what we have already spoken of as 'the numinous'. For the 'creature-feeling' and the sense of dependence to arise in the mind the 'numen' must be experienced as present, a *numen praesens*, as is in the case of

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'numinous' is to be seriously qualified whenever it is applied to Hebrew modes of theological thinking …." In a later article (Terrien, 1982, 99, 100), although Terrien initially says the numinous "refers to the spiritual powers, not necessarily personified," he nevertheless proceeds to speak of the numinous in terms of feeling. But he sees it as having had a decidedly negative impact on the development of OT and NT religion in that numinous fears (for example, of sexuality) caused the male leaders to react negatively by instituting laws that made many areas of sexual activity taboo and in general discriminated against women.

[108] Otto, 1958, 7.

[109] Ibid., 6, 7. One can discern here the impress of Buddhist influence which in general has the idea that "enlightenment" can only be experienced, not described.

Abraham. There must be felt a something 'numinous', something bearing the character of a 'numen', to which the mind turns spontaneously; or (which is the same thing in other words) these feelings can only arise in the mind as accompanying emotions when the category of 'the numinous' is called into play. The numinous is thus felt as objective and outside the self.[110]

Note here that the *numen* is not said to be the object of the mind, but the numinous is the object. The *numen* might be "experienced as present," but the operative word here is "experienced"; something might be experienced as an object of the mind, but it may or may not be an object that is objectively real. After thoroughly defining the numinous as the religious feeling, he goes on here to say that it is also the object of the feeling. Put another way, the numinous has as its object the numinous (in German [using Otto's spelling for "numinous"]: *das Numinose vor dem Numinosen*). But this borders on nonsense.

That the numinous is a subjective feeling is made clear by the parallel upon which he clarifies the term: as "ominous" comes from the word "omen," so he coins the word "numinous" to signify a feeling when one is aware of a *numen*.[111] "Ominous" and "numinous" are both (not completely different) feeling-reactions to—one would think—their respective "omen" and "*numen*" objects. But the above block-quote of Otto—which is his best opportunity in the whole book to make crystal clear the object of the numinous *a priori* feeling—says that *the object is the numinous.* One might attempt to defend him at this point by saying that, despite this first definition, he really intends for the numinous object to be God; but based upon what he has said here, his clear reliance upon the "feeling of dependence" idea of Schleiermacher, and his otherwise very tight reasoning, it can hardly be an accident that "numinous" is used here as *both* subject and object.[112]

That the object is confused with the subject is even more evident in the German of Otto's 1936 edition. There, the same block-quote (the text of the 1958 English edition differs substantially) from just above reads (skipping the first part that mentions the "feeling-element" that casts the dependence feeling "like a shadow" and perceives an object that is "outside the self"):

Das aber ist eben das *numinose* Objekt. Nur wo numen als praesens erlebt wird, wie im Falle Abrahams, oder wo ein Etwas numinosen Charakters gefühlte wird, also

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[110] Ibid., 11. The mention of Abraham refers to Gen 18:27 where Abraham confesses to the LORD that he is but "dust and ashes"—a response, according to Otto, that exhibits the feeling of "creature-consciousness."

[111] Ibid., 6, 7. In seeking to denote the non-moral and non-rational aspect of "the holy"— that is, its "unique original feeling-response"—Otto says, "For this purpose I adopt a word coined from the Latin *numen*. *Omen* has given us 'ominous', and there is no reason why from *numen* we should not similarly form a word 'numinous'."

[112] See Ibid., 8, 9, for his acceptance and modification of Schleiermacher's "feeling of dependence."

erst infolge [as a result of; owing to] einer Anwendung [use] der Kategorie des Numinosen auf ein wirkliches oder vermeintliches [presumed] Objekt kann als deren *Reflex* das Kreatur-gefühl im Gemüt entstehen [to arise].[113]

Several items in this German text are noteworthy (I will use only his German terms and their spelling for clarity): first, Otto clearly uses „*numinose*" in the first sentence as an adjective—it is not capitalized and not in the genitive case, or he would have written, „*Das aber ist eben das Objekt des Numinosens.*" The use of the adjective appears to mean that the „*Objekt*" has the property of „*numinose.*" But one would think that the object would *be* the „*Numen*"—especially if he were staying true to his parallel with (in the German) „*Omen*" (noun) and „*ominös*" (adjective). For as „*ominös* " gives the property of the feeling that has an „*Omen*" as its object, so should the „*numinose*" provide the property of the particular feeling that has the „*Numen*" as its object. Where Otto is going with the question of the religious feeling's object is perhaps indicated by the following fact: even though he cites the parallel just mentioned, he does not stick to the parallel. He adds something that he does not inform the reader of; that is, he uses "numinous" (I continue with the spelling in the English versions [as used later by most English commentators]) not only as an adjective, but also as a noun. This is easier seen in the German where the first letter of the noun is capitalized. By also giving "numinous" noun status (which he has the right to do, because the word is of his own creation), he is then able to employ it as an object (which he would not be able to do if he stuck purely to the "omen"/"ominous" parallel and used "numinous" as a pure adjective).

That there is no object—as one normally thinks of an object—in Otto's notion of the numinous is also implied through his declaration that the numinous can be added to one of the Kantian pure-reason (*a priori*) categories which do not rely on what comes through the senses to exist. But Otto does not stop there; he says that the numinous goes "back to something still deeper than the 'pure reason.'" He claims this is the "bottom or ground of the soul."[114] The numinous is so basic that, while it may be stirred to life by something taken in through the senses, the highest reality will only be realized when an object supervenes that the numinous alone creates. In the numinous experience are found

> beliefs and feelings qualitatively different from anything that 'natural' sense-perception is capable of giving us. They are themselves not perceptions at all, but peculiar interpretations and valuations, at first of perceptual data, and then—at a higher level—of *posited* objects and entities, which themselves no longer belong to the perceptual world, but are thought of as supplementing and transcending it. [italics mine][115]

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[113] Otto, 1936, 11.

[114] Otto, 1958, 112.

[115] Ibid., 113.

The key word here is "*posited*." When Otto gave his numinous ontological status by making it a noun, he now had something that could *posit* or *be posited*. But one wonders if any pure-reason Kantian category of the mind can posit or be posited as an object. Be that as it may, there can be no doubt that reality and religion are mainly apprehended by Otto from an idealist standpoint: the numinous experience *is* the object, is not "supernatural,"[116] but is nevertheless "holy." Consequently, worship is possible without any real divine power. In speaking of Jacob's first gut reaction of the awesomeness of the place where he had his heavenly-ladder dream (Gen 28:17), Otto writes, "There is no need … for the experient to pass on to resolve his mere impression of the eerie and aweful into the idea of a 'numen', a divine power, dwelling in the 'aweful' place …. Worship is possible without this further explicative process."[117] In fact, it matters not if the objects that supervene on the numinous are demons or *Elohim*—the *Mysterium Tremendum* numinous feeling can be the same. If the objects of religious feelings came about as projections of evolving minds, then it follows that those feelings could be the same regardless of their objects; for if the "posited" objects are only perceived and not real, then they do not have any ontological status that could cause feelings to change in humans.[118]

The holy evolved from primitive peoples

A significant assumption in Otto's *Das Heilige* is that religion evolved. Otto draws much of his thought from idealism which originally was a reaction against empirical epistemology.[119] Idealist philosophers like Hegel and Schleiermacher preserved a place for religion by saying that the mind sensations/experiences are really all we can know with certainty. Religion could be preserved through the minds perception of it. But this, like radical empiricism, left things of the outside world (like biblical events that happened in history) as unknowable (we did not experience them ourselves) and off limits for

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[116] Ibid., 124.

[117] Ibid., 126, 127.

[118] Raphael, in her study of Otto's concept of holiness, mentions that, early on, many had strong reservations about Otto's ideas: "A number of British theologians contemporary with Otto … were also concerned that numinous experience was more macabre than Christian: that it had the ring of natural religion, and it appeared to obviate any immediate need for faith or commitment to the Church. The generous span of Otto's theory of religion made theologians apprehensive that his understanding of holiness would include sub-Christian elements. The fears were not groundless. Undoubtedly, numinous consciousness is not, in itself, an entirely reliable foundation for Christian theology. In The Idea of the Holy Christianity becomes an instance, rather than the pre-condition of, the holy …" (Raphael, 1997, 12).

[119] Almond, 1983, 353-355, claims that Otto was most influenced by Kant, Schleiermacher, and especially, J. F. Fries.

reasonable study. When combined with the rising status of empirical science as well as the theory of natural selection by Darwin, biblical studies in most universities in Europe were undertaken with the assumption that the Israelite idea of God had evolved.[120]

Otto, who mainly concentrates on the experience of religious feelings, nevertheless takes a very scientific view of how these feelings arose and how they invoked the consciousness of deity. In accordance with the scientific requirements to keep theological explanations as close to nature and nature's evolution as possible, Otto understands that the primordial human religious "predisposition" was something that evolved and flourished over a long period, could be stimulated by outside influences, but always developed ontologically from within:

> The *predispositions* which the human reason brought with it when the species Man entered history became long ago, not merely for individuals but for the species as a whole, a *religious impulsion*, to which incitements from without and pressure from within the mind both contributed. It begins in undirected, groping emotion, a seeking and shaping of representations, and goes on, by a continual onward striving, to generate ideas, till its nature is self-illumined and made clear by an explication of the obscure *a priori* foundation of thought itself, out of which it originated. And this emotion, this searching, this generation and explication of ideas, gives the warp of the fabric of religious evolution, whose woof we are to discuss later.[121]

The religious feeling, which begins as a kernel of "religious impulsion," is latent in every person and gives the "warp" and "woof" of "religious evolution." Here, Otto is keeping fully with the subjective feelings; but these feelings find their highest manifestation only through being "self-illumined" by the *a priori* numinous. Whatever "incitements from without" may be take a back seat to this self-illumination.

The above quote from Otto is admittedly ambiguous. Any idea, however, that a supernatural God is one of the "incitements from without" in the development of the numinous is quickly eliminated when one considers his suggested steps in religion's evolution: first in the process of religious evolution arise "curious phenomena," like the notions of

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[120] The Hegelian idealist notion of the inevitable evolution of the "Absolute" was applied by Hegel's student Wilhelm Vatke to the OT. "But here already we have the teachings and principles of the Wellhausen's school and its successors, all dominated by the Hegelian idea of evolution" (Heick, 1946, 122). Another unintended result of idealism—especially as promulgated by Hegel—was materialism. Left wing Hegelians (especially D. F. Strauss, F. C. Baur, Ludwig Feuerbach, and Karl Marx) inverted his theory about the material world being a product of mind and professed instead that it could just as well be the other way around: i.e., mind *is* material (Strauss claimed the only difference between idealism and materialism was a "mere quarrel about words"). The Bible was then studied in a way that disregarded the spiritual (supernatural) and replaced it with the claim that God was simply a "product of historical development rather than its author" (Wilkens and Padgett, 2000, 88, 113, 384).

[121] Otto, 1958, 116.

'clean' and 'unclean', belief in and worship of the dead, belief in and worship of 'souls' or 'spirits', magic, fairy tale, and myth, homage to natural objects, whether frightful or extraordinary, noxious or advantageous, the strange idea of 'power' (*orenda* or *mana*), fetishism and totemism, worship of animal and plant, daemonism and poly daemonism.[122]

These all come out of—if indirectly—a numinous element and form "the vestibule of religion."[123] The numinous awareness that finds its focus on demons is especially appropriate as proto-religion because the religious feeling is not "diverted … to earthly things" (like stars, volcanoes, sun, moon, etc.). The numinous in this case "remains a pure feeling, as in 'panic' terror … or itself *invents, or, better, discovers*, the numinous object by rendering explicit the obscure germinal ideas latent in itself." (Italics mine)[124] Once again, as Otto has said before, there is a "positing of the numinous object" (i.e., the numinous "invents" its object). And this can occur, writes Otto, with only the tiniest amount of environmental stimulus:

> This experience of eerie shuddering and awe breaks out rather from depths of the souls which the circumstantial, external impression cannot sound, and the force with which it breaks out is so disproportionate to the mere external stimulation that the eruption may be termed, if not entirely, at least very nearly, spontaneous.[125]

As the numinous feeling grows, it is not evolving from one species to another; rather, it is more precisely *growing*. In primordial humans it was there, but latent. As the human species develops, the numinous began to grow and to take on ("posit") objects, both real (e.g., volcanoes, stars, etc.) and imagined (e.g., demons).[126]

If the early stirring of the numinous does not get "diverted" to things-in-the-world, then, as the subject has his or her feelings of "'How uncanny!' or 'How eerie this place is!'" there may be a chance for this pure feeling-awareness to slip over into perceiving some unseen-but-felt object:

> '*It* is not quite right here'; '*It* is uncanny.' The English 'This place is haunted' shows a transition to a positive form of expression. Here we have the obscure basis of meaning and idea rising into greater clarity and beginning to make itself explicit as the notion, however vague and fleeing, of a transcendent Something, a real operative entity of a numinous kind, which later, as the development proceeds, assumes concrete form as a '*numen loci*', a daemon, an 'El', a Baal, or the like.[127]

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[122] Ibid., 116. According to Otto, "*orenda*" and "*mana*" are native terms for "power" from, respectively, the Pacific islands and North American Indians (120).

[123] Ibid., 116.

[124] Ibid., 125. With "invents, or, better, discovers," the latter is clearly meant ironically and the former straightforwardly.

[125] Ibid., 125, 126.

[126] Ibid., 121, 122.

[127] Ibid., 126. Terrien, 1982, adds that the numinous was manifested in ancient times at the sight of menstral blood, the sexuality of women (and sexuality in general), the bottom of a deep canyon, and the ocean (100).He believes that Otto's numinous can be "spiritual powers, not

The notion, of course, that Israelite religion arose from inner feelings of uncanny-ness and haunted-ness in which its patriarchs "invent[ed], or better, discover[ed]" "a daemon" just as easily as "a Baal" or "an 'El'", inverts the biblical testimony that God made humans first and then revealed himself to them. When Otto uses "invents, or, better, discovers" (in paragraph just above), he is clearly using—given the context—"discovers" ironically (for he can only be using it straightforwardly if he believes that a real "Baal" can really be met and worshipped); actually, the whole phrase is ironically meant for "discovers, or, better, invents"—but that would too explicitly say what he is trying to say implicitly throughout his book. If Otto really meant for "discovers" to be understood in the usual sense, then there would have been no reason to mention "invents." In any case, this phrase well displays the (what I sense to be *intentional*) ambiguity that Otto employs to keep the real meaning of the numinous (that only he can define) perpetually a mystery and just beyond the reader's grasp. But this is not to be unexpected considering his contacts with Buddhism and Hinduism with their emphases on the unfathomable and esoteric.[128]

If this evolutionary scenario is how God came to be, then, says Otto, there can be no such thing as "primitive monotheism" (which is only a "missionary apologetic … eager to save the second chapter of Genesis").[129] While he insists that the "naturalistic psychologists" do not fully appreciate the "self-attestation" of religious ideas, his main gripe is against "the upholders of the theory of 'primitive monotheism'" who

> show no less serious disregard of this central fact than the naturalistic psychologists. For if the phenomena we have been considering were based simply and solely on historical traditions and dim memories of a 'primeval revelation', as on such a theory they must be, this self-attestation from within would be just as much excluded as before.[130]

necessarily personified, which are ascribed to natural objects of exceptional significance …." (99) Further confirming my thesis that Otto's numinous is in the subject is especially this statement of Terrien: "To a certain extent, the *numen* also may sometimes designate an inner voice or insight of a psychological nature."(99) In my understanding of Otto, I understand him to use "*numen*" to denote some kind of deity-object, either real or imagined. But Terrien says that even this can "designate an inner voice." If the "*numen*" is subjective feeling, then the "numinous" cannot be anything but that.

[128] Almond, 1983, 360, 361, mentions Otto's contacts with and appreciation of Buddhism and Hinduism. Otto's influence by these religions is reflected throughout *Das Heilige*, and particularly in his description of the "*mysterium tremendum*": "Conceptually *mysterium* denotes merely that which is hidden and esoteric, that which is beyond conception or understanding, extraordinary and unfamiliar" (Otto, 1958, 13).

[129] Otto, 1958, 129.

[130] Ibid., 131. It is unclear here who Otto means by "naturalistic psychologists." He probably is referring to psychologists of the physicalist type, who reduce all mental phenomena down to physical cause and effect.

In view of this quote, and of what he has professed up to this point, his big picture seems to be this: in all ages each human being has had a religious awareness (the numinous) that is only slightly or more highly developed. Otto clearly assumes that this feeling (the characteristics of which will be discussed in the next section) is *the* right and true and "holy" religious feeling. He is therefore, of course, describing something that is at the heart of the orthodox Christian (and Jewish and Muslim) question of how one can be right with God. (i.e., he is in fact stating his opinion of how immortality can be achieved [Otto, being a member of the Protestant church in Germany, would have been fully aware of the salvation and immortality questions]) It comes down to two choices (as made clear in the quote just above): either his idea that *all people* have the *true* religious feeling is true, or the opposing idea that *some people* who received a "primeval revelation" have the *true* religious feeling is true. The latter (biblical) possibility is immediately brushed off by Otto because, if it were true, the "self-attestation" (i.e., his "numinous") would be "excluded"; in other words, his numinous would be shown to *not* be the true experience of true religion because it lacks a true revelation. By mentioning this distinction (that both cannot be true at the same time), Otto illumines the reader to a great truth. If the God of Genesis—that is, the holy and eternal God—really gave a "primeval revelation" to ancient men and women, then the true and truly holy religious experience can only occur if one has as his or her object of religious feeling the true God who is not just *felt* to be external, but *is* external to the subject. To put it more bluntly, if the God of the Bible really is, then Otto's theory of "the holy" residing in the hearts of all humans is false. He understands this point correctly; but he uses it (that any "primal revelation" would exclude any "self-revelation from within") as grounds to dismiss the possibility of any "primeval revelation." But this is only begging the question of which religious experience is the right one. To assert that all peoples have religious feelings may be evidence for human psychology (and maybe give evidence for a "general revelation"), but it does not say anything about the question of whether or not those feelings are appropriate feelings based upon the true ultimate reality. By dismissing revelation, Otto is in fact violating the right of revelation to take the legal position of higher priority—for the general feeling cannot exclude the revelation, but the revelation can exclude the general feeling. But Otto turns this on its head with no argument or evidence.

The usefulness of Otto's numinous feelings

One cannot take seriously Otto's belief that true and "holy" religious feelings *can* be experienced the same, no matter who or what the object is (whether God or a demon or even Satan). The experience cannot be the same because objects of worship can be so vastly different. Plus, the *soul-state* of the person who worships God will obviously be

radically different from that of one who worships, for example, Satan. Consequently, the feelings involved will be radically different. And again, one must be extremely wary in using Otto's term "numinous" if just for the reason that it denotes both the worship feeling as well as a feeling that is worshipped. The numinous is both subject and object, and therefore cannot qualify as a true depiction of the feeling that a child of God would have for his or her loving Lord. For this reason, Otto's *"mysterium tremendum"* (one of his ways to describe the numinous) should not be used as a term for God because it is ultimately subjective and indescribable, as Otto himself says: "Conceptually *mysterium* denotes merely that which is hidden and esoteric, that which is beyond conception or understanding, extraordinary and unfamiliar."[131] The God of the Bible is indeed mysterious; but for the Christian, he is not *completely* mysterious but reveals much to his children through his Word and his Holy Spirit who indwells them.

On the other hand, some of the feelings that Otto has catalogued are quite likely those that really do arise in response to God's general revelation. Through (as the apostle Paul puts it) "the things he has made," humans are brought to feelings of wonder and awe and thoughts about God—so that "they are without excuse" (Rom 1:20b). This only makes sense because human beings are made in the image of God. They can *at least* sense him—but they are not forced to choose him as Lord. Some characteristics of the numinous (as Otto describes them) are characteristics of the feelings that arise in response to the general revelation. On the other hand, where the numinous appears to have inappropriate objects "posited"—like volcanoes, demons, pantheons of gods—the feelings that Otto says occurs are not an accurate description of the feelings that one has before the general revelation that is *evidence* of not an evil being, but a good one. This evidence is the creation which the creator made. The general revelation that points to the God who is love *provokes* (as a function of the "eternity" in people's hearts [Eccl 3:11]) the sensing of one who is all-powerful and immortal.

This general revelation-provoked feeling is similar to Otto's "creature feeling": "It is the emotion of a creature, submerged and overwhelmed by its own nothingness in contrast to that which is supreme above all creatures."[132] This "supreme" reality he goes on to describe as an "overpowering, absolute might of some kind" or "absolute overpoweringness."[133] It should be mentioned once again that Otto's "supreme" reality is a reality that is not "posited" by itself, but a reality that is "posited" by the numinous experience of the subject. Even though his *"mysterium tremendum"* is essentially all in the mind, it nevertheless has components that echo the feelings when one responds to the

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[131] Ibid., 13.
[132] Ibid., 10.
[133] Ibid., 10, 19.

general revelation. When one, for example, is alone deep in a dark forest or high on a rugged mountain ridge or is beholding the "milky way" on a moonless, crystal-clear night, one begins to sense the mystery and the tremendousness of the one who made it all. Some degree of that sense might have as its object the forest, mountains, or stars —and worship of these physical phenomena might result. But, if the general revelation is true, God plants the understanding in humans that this focus and worship of these created things is a wrong—and evil—diversion from the soul's proper object. The general revelation feeling will have an "awefulness" about it that perceives the hallowedness of the creator and feels, in response to the creator's mystery and omnipotence, some level of real fear.[134] But Otto's idea that the numinous contains elements of "terror," and "shuddering," and perceives its object of fear as being „*grässlich*" ("grisly"), makes one doubt if the numinous really has as its object the God who is love.[135] Otto based much of what he wrote in *Das Heilige* upon his observations of people groups who were not monotheistic. These groups focused their natural religious awareness upon ancestor spirits, demons, and idols that provoked very weird and fearful reactions. It appears that Otto, as he observed these reactions, assumed that they too comprised legitimate religious feelings and included them in his description of the numinous. But feelings of "creeping flesh" and blood that runs "icy cold" as well as the "grisly" (which Otto says "very clearly designate[s] the numinous element") do not accurately describe the feelings one has when he or she is prompted to think about God in witness of the beauty and grandeur of his creation.[136]

There is also a reflection of the reality of moral law and judgment in Otto's numinous where he writes about the feeling of numinous "wrath." This wrath is "the 'ideogram' of a unique emotional moment in religious experience" that is "nothing but the *tremendum* itself."[137] In his opinion, however, the biblical "wrath of Yahweh" possesses "no concern whatever with moral qualities," but

> is more like "stored-up electricity, discharging itself upon anyone who comes too near. It is 'incalculable' and 'arbitrary'. Anyone who is accustomed to think of deity only by its rational attributes must see in this 'wrath' mere caprice and willful passion.[138]

This "arbitrary" attribute of the biblical God (which he understands as being a property of the wrath component of the numinous in general) is simply a miss-characterization of YHWH. While there are indeed a few examples of what *seem* to be "arbitrary" justice

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[134] Ibid., 13.
[135] Ibid., 14.
[136] Ibid., 14, 16.
[137] Ibid., 18, 19.
[138] Ibid., 18.

(see, e.g., 2 Sam 6: 6, 7, where Uzzah is killed by God for taking hold of the ark), his moral law—especially that contained in the Mosaic Law—is quite clearly understood to be the basis upon which YHWH judges human beings. In that Otto does observe this element of wrath in the numinous, however, does somewhat accurately reflect the natural tendency for people to have a moral law in their hearts that prompts a feeling of *accountability*. This awareness of accountability as well as their awareness that they fall short of the moral law results in fear. But when Otto describes the anger perceived in the numinous as "something supra-rational [that] throbs and gleams, palpable and visible, in the 'wrath of God', prompting to a sense of 'terror' that no 'natural' anger can arouse," he cannot be describing the righteous anger of the God of the Bible.[139]

Finally, Otto's "*fascinosum*" aspect of the numinous could have some parallel with Thomas's filial fear that is always in some sort of tension with the fear of punishment (servile fear). Otto writes:

> The daemonic-divine object may appear to the mind an object of horror and dread, but at the same time it is no less something that allures with a potent charm, and the creature, who trembles before it, utterly cowed and cast down, has always at the same time the impulse to turn to it, nay even to make it somehow his own. The 'mystery' is for him not merely something to be wondered at but something that entrances him; and beside that in it which bewilders and confounds, he feels a something that captivates and transports him with a strange ravishment, rising often enough to the pitch of dizzy intoxication; it is the Dionysiac-element in the numen.[140]

Needless to say, the attracting emotion Otto describes cannot be one-size-fits-all; the feel of the "strange ravishment" when one has a demon as object will be very different from that when one has the truly Divine as object. In fact, this makes the *fascinosum* aspect of the numinous also unsuitable to describe the more positive feelings of true religion—for one cannot love a demon and God in the same way. On the other hand, Otto's *fascinosum* could have something to do, once again, with the general revelation. When humans behold God's creation, they not only are prompted to think about its creator, but also to have a longing for the creator. This longing, however, can be easily misdirected to the *fascinosum* for things or persons within the creation.

To sum up on Otto, while he does speak from time to time in *Das Heilige* of the biblical God, he never clearly speaks of that God as a *supernatural* being. If there is any doubt how he thinks of God, one can go back to his definition of the numinous at book's beginning; there, his idea of "the holy" is a subjective feeling, and that feeling is the "numinous." This definition as well as Otto's assertion that the numinous evolved are sufficient reasons to avoid using the term altogether in theological writing that seeks to

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[139] Ibid., 19.
[140] Ibid., 31.

accurately describe the attributes of God and the feelings that people have when they have a relationship with God. If the term is used, it should be, as Terrien insists, "seriously qualified."[141] That being said, Otto's idea of the numinous—which comes from his investigation of many religions around the globe—does provide some insights that can add to and/or illuminate what was learned about fear-of-God in the pre-critical age. First, Otto's study indicates that religious feelings might not fit neatly into two or three or four distinctly discernable classes; feelings are very fluid and radically different feelings can be experienced at the same time. The numinous feelings tend to "evolve" because they are "latent" in all people; but more mature feelings can wash back into the more primitive, or the primitive can erupt into the more mature if certain stimuli occur. Second, there are elements of the numinous that match certain feelings that arise as a result of the perception of the general revelation. The fear of the unknown as well as the fear of a "*mysterium tremendum*" that is "out there" are natural responses to the general revelation. One may feel fear and "awe-fulness," but probably not "creeping flesh" and "horror." His idea—based upon Schleiermacher—of "creature feeling" fits well with this initial response to the "things that [are] made" in God's creation. The "creature feeling" is perhaps used by God in that the one who begins to know that (and to feel like) he or she is a "creature" will only then begin to search for the *creator*. This response to the general revelation seems to be before the fear-of-judgment (servile fear) that Augustine and Thomas describe. But, third, Otto does present the case that the fear of God's wrath is one of his numinous feelings. Otto sees this wrath as "arbitrary" and not based upon any sort of righteousness of God. That would be quite opposed to Christian orthodoxy and makes this component of the numinous unreliable. Nevertheless, that he counts "wrath" as universally perceived and felt does give evidence that God's moral law and judgment are realities that God has placed as knowledge (if, however basic) in the hearts of all humans. Fourth, there is the "*fascinosum*" part of the numinous that is attracted to and enjoys the object of one's religious feeling. But Otto does not speak about fear arising from the loss of the relationship with that object (which would make it similar to Thomas's filial fear). Perhaps this is because the "object" is so blended into the subject, they are in essence one and the same; and once the object supervenes upon the subject, there is no fear of losing it because the subject willed it to exist in the first place, and can continue to will it to exist—without fear of losing it—if the subject so desires. But that is, admittedly, over-speculation about a very esoteric subject.

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[141] Terrien, 1962, 258.

In a lengthy journal article, Bamberger tries to show that most uses of fear-of-God in the OT have lost the component of the fear emotion/feeling. He sympathizes with the modern "distaste" for religious fear, and this appears to drive his interpretation.[142] Fearing God, he says, "is repugnant to modern taste, which regards fear as incompatible with genuine religious sentiment."[143] Bamberger then proceeds to look into a number of biblical texts that demonstrate that fear before God tended to come early while the more mature notions of obedience, moral purity, and worship came later. His investigation only uses a small sample of texts, but he does establish a general framework that Becker was to later follow and work out exhaustively. The methodological strengths and/or weaknesses that will be discussed briefly below will also tend to reappear in Becker.

Bamberger first presents a number of verses that depict fear *before* God (Becker will call these cases of fear before the "numinous"). These "chiefly of pre-exilic origin" verses mainly record incidents of men fearing before epiphanies of God and/or spectacular displays of his mighty works.[144] He then surveys a number of the ninety percent (his count) of the total fear cases that stress "the objective side of religion, as manifested either in moral conduct or in ritual."[145] With these texts, he makes the sweeping statement that all of them—that have any context at all that illumines the fear concept—show that fear-of-God means "worship."[146] When the passages, however, are considered that Bamberger sets out as proof texts, it is evident that he over-generalizes. For example, he says that the fear mentioned in Isa 29:13 "refers plainly to the ceremonial, observed in a lifeless and mechanical fashion."[147] This is indeed what God is saying; but the point missed is that this is not what God *desires*. Fear-of-the-LORD should be more than just ceremony and ritual. It should be a relationship—as the first part of the verse implies—of the heart. The fear emotion could certainly be allowed in this case especially in view of God's anger because of the hypocrisy of the people. Actually,

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[142] Bamberger, 1929, 49.

[143] Ibid., 39.

[144] Ibid., 40.

[145] Ibid., 39. All these that Bamberger identifies as stressing the "objective side of religion" are all those fear-of-God cases that are not what I call "event" cases, but "virtue" cases. So for Bamberger, if an instance of OT fear-of-God is not an event (i.e., if the context does not obviously show that the fear emotion/feeling is signified), then the meaning is automatically deemed to be something other than fear. Behind this thinking is the idea that fear—in one's religious practice—can in no way be a virtue.

[146] Ibid., 43.

[147] Ibid., 44.

this verse delimits what can be included in legitimate fear-of-God: non-heartfelt worship is not allowed.[148]

Several other of his texts are worthy of comment: Josh 24:14 can indeed to some extent be referring to worship (and this implies, as Bamberger correctly perceives, the abandonment of the worship of false gods);[149] but the solemn gravity of the occasion—especially seen in view of the inevitability of sin (see vv. 19-22)—warrants the view that fearing and serving the LORD/abandoning false gods (v. 14) are not synonymous concepts, but the former is foundational for the latter.[150] The stern threats of God's judgment issued by Joshua in this case furthermore warrants the idea that he was trying to instill real fear (of punishment and of God who would bring the punishment) in the hearts of a rebellious people. Similar dynamics are found in Ps 5:7(8) where David bows down in fear (which, according to Bamberger, "refers to worship in the strictly devotional sense") towards God's holy temple.[151] In view of God's great judgment of the wicked (vv. 4-6) and his "great mercy," David's worship could very well be best described as "fearful worship." But "fear" here does not have to mean worship: an Israelite could have any one of a number of feelings/emotions in the temple; one could certainly bow down in fear just as one could bow down in worship. Bamberger seems to base his opinion on the assumption that fearing is synonymous with bowing down—the latter often translated as

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[148] Luther also mentions Isa 29:13 because the LXX translates יראתם אתי ("their fear of me") as σέβονταί με ("their worship of me"). Furthermore, in Matt 15:9 and Mark 7:7 Jesus quotes the LXX. This is powerful evidence that fear-of-God was a Hebraism for worship. In reply, it should be pointed out that σέβομαι in classical usage originally meant "shrinking from" and "falling back" (TDNT). The OT and NT writers used it sporadically for "worship." About this, I could make similar remarks to those I make (see FN 233) about Jesus' quote of Deut 6:13 (in Matt 4:10 [parallel Luke 4:8], where Jesus says, κύριον τὸν θεόν σου προσκυνήσεις ["worship the Lord your God"]): the idea of "bowing down" (the literal meaning of προσκυνέω—see TDNT) like the "shrinking back" of σέβομαι presupposes a trembling and fearful attitude before one's object of worship. This kind of attitude would have been much easier for the ancients to understand than most in western democratic countries today.

[149] Bamberger, 1929

[150] Bamberger uses parallelism in Josh 24:14 as a contextual "help" to determine what fear-of-God means. In this case he assumes that "revere the LORD" and "serve him in sincerity and faithfulness"/"put away the gods that your ancestors served" are in *synonymous* parallelism. If he is right that this parallel is synonymous, then he would, of course, have a contextual help; but the assumption of synonymity should itself be first justified by some contextual "help"—but in fact, there is none. If context does not support synonymity within this parallel, then the parallel cannot be used as evidence for fear-of-God meaning that one should serve God and avoid worship of other gods. The assumption of synonymity within the many cases of virtue-fear-of-God parallelism is a significant mistake that Becker also makes (see my section "Becker's Deuteronomistic Development" below; also see my thoughts about the 2 Kings 17 admonitions to not fear false gods—pp. 85ff.).

[151] Bamberger, 1929, 44.

"worship." But if there is synonymity, the case might be that "bow down" is meant to be taken literally—and fearing could mean bowing. But I do not think this is the case. As will be seen with Becker later, there is the tendency of these critical commentators to overcomplicate the text. In the case of Ps 5:7(8), there is most likely—just like the text says—a combination of fear-feeling and worship in view. In Deut 6:2 (as well as other "hortatory" sections in Deuteronomy) "fear of Jhwh is not the *motive* for keeping the laws, but *is itself* the keeping of the laws."[152] While this might be so, one does not have to take "fear the LORD" and "keep all his decrees and all his commandments" as synonymous. The latter can be taken to build upon the former. And especially in view of the reality of God's jealousy and anger (see vv. 13-15), compliance to God's decrees should build upon a base of fearful recognition that God has every right to judge human sin. Bamberger mentions several other fear-of-God passages that indicate some aspect of the worship of God (Gen 22:12; Neh 1:11; Job 28:28; 31:30; Ps 22:24; 33:18; 147:11; Prov 10:27; 22:4; Jonah 1:9; Mal 3:5); but none explicitly rule out the emotion of fear.

For passages that do not have any contextual indications of what is meant by fear-of-God, Bamberger suggests that meaning can be found by the form criticism tactic of comparison: "from the more explicit examples, it is usually possible to determine the meaning of the term in documents of the same period when the context gives no help."[153] He does not comment further on this idea and the reader is left to wonder what implications this would have.

In summary, other than *alleged* synonymous parallels, Bamberger does not really give evidence for his claim that most of the OT fear-of-God passages do not depict the emotion/feeling of fear.[154] Like with Becker, the claim is simply made; but meaningful justification for the claim is not given. There is clearly a large body of "authoritative" form-critical opinion behind the claims of Bamberger and Becker, but little is said about it (Becker does give a nod to Hermann Gunkel in the brief description of his method, as will be seen in the next section, but he does not discuss how his exegesis of fear-of-God texts is affected by it).

Joachim Becker

We now come to the longest fear-of-God work of the critical age—Becker's *Gottesfurcht im Alten Testament*.[155] Unlike pre-critical authors, Becker does not write

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[152] Ibid., 45.
[153] Ibid., 43.
[154] Simplistic appeals to synonymous parallelism are criticized by Kugel, 1981 (see my pp. 91-92).
[155] Becker, 1965.

from the perspective of biblical authority/inspiration. His work, therefore, does not aim to discern the appropriate fears that believers and non-believers may be justified in experiencing before God. Even though he accomplishes an impressively thorough survey of OT fear texts, his goal is to provide evidence that the prevailing views of source and (especially) form critics can be upheld and even buttressed by presenting in a systematic way the fear linguistic forms and their meanings as found in the various literary layers of the OT. In fact, Becker's work is not an investigation into the fear-of-God phenomenon *per se*, but a presentation of how source and form critical scenarios are not at odds with the biblical fear-of-God concepts. A close look at his *Vorwort* should help in understanding this:

> Der Unterscheidung der verschiedenen Begriffsarten dient das Herausstellen geprägter sprachlicher Formen, die den einzelnen Begriffsarten eigen sind. Die Begriffsarten mit ihren sprachlichen Formen sind hinwiederum an bestimmte literarische Formen oder literarische Schichten gebunden. Bei der Erklärung der einselnen Stellen wird aus dem jeweiligen Kontext der Nachweis zu erbringen sein, dass die Annahme einer bestimmten sprachlichen Form für eine bestimmte Begriffsausprägung zu Recht besteht. Die Anwendung dieser Methode zur Ermittlung von Begriffsunterschieden soll eine wesentliche Aufgabe der vorliegenden Arbeit sein. Sie enspricht einem Anliegen der neueren Exegese, die vor allem seit Gunkel den Blick geschärft hat für die eine literarische Form bestimmenden sprachlichen Prägungen.

The beginning makes it clear that he is interested in distinguishing the fear-of-God "various idea-types" (i.e., the various categories of meanings for fear-of-God [e.g., numinous fear, cultic and moral ideas of fear, etc.]), and he assumes that these types correspond to linguistic forms that are found in certain literary forms in the OT. By the "explanation" of the *contexts* of the individual fear-of-God instances, Becker will furnish "proof" (*Nachweis*) that a certain linguistic form will indeed have a certain "idea-shape" (*Begriffsausprägung*). This correspondence between linguistic form and idea shape is what most concerns Becker—as well as his belief that this correspondence will occur within a certain "literary form." But the second half of the paragraph is perplexing: he says that "an essential task" of his work is to apply "this method" to the determination of "idea differences" (*„Begriffsunterschieden"*). What is "this method" that allows him to distinguish the meaning of one fear-of-God use from another? It might be that he is referring to using "context" in each fear-of-God case to determine the "idea-types"; but based upon what he says last about how his work "corresponds to a matter of the new exegesis" (i.e., the exegesis in the tradition of H. Gunkel), it seems to me that Becker's method has less to do with context of the local text than with that of the "literary form." In other words, the method, which "corresponds to a matter of the new exegesis," is to let the pre-established characteristics of literary layers (forms) in the OT provide the main

authority in how the individual linguistic forms of fear-of-God found in those layers should be translated.

A number of factors indicate that Becker's primary interpretational force comes from the literary form: Becker assumes the general outlines of source and form criticism throughout his work. Between this and his general acceptance of Otto's idea of the development of the numinous, it is clear that Becker writes from the start as though the fear-of-God phenomenon evolved. In fact, he writes in his *Vorwort* that a result of his work will be "to give an overview of the semantic *development* of the root *jr'*" (emphasis mine). The notion that fear-of-God developed as the Israelite cult developed is taken as a matter of course. The stages of this development are reflected in the OT literary forms that were authored/redacted by men who sought to adjust and/or create special works according to the needs of their day (e.g., the "Deuteronomist" was a shaper of pre-existing works as well as an author who constantly emphasized loyalty to the Israelite federal *Bund*). In all this, Becker's method is circular, in that the form critical theory (of Gunkel) he is trying to support is the method that will determine the meanings of the individual fear-of-God cases.[156] I believe this is the case—based upon how he proceeds in

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[156] At the heart of Becker's work is the following reasoning: *fear-of-God evolved in meaning because the Israelite religion evolved.* But because his primary aim (as only made explicit in the foreword) is to advance form criticism another step, his bottom line reasoning is actually this: *the Israelite religion evolved (as per the form-critical theory) because fear-of-God evolved.* His work is ultimately not about fear-of-God, but about showing how fear-of-God buttresses the claims of form criticism. Now as I have just described Becker's conclusion and premise, the logic is obviously circular. But there is more to the story. Becker demonstrates that fear-of-God evolved; but how? He does this by showing that each layer of literary form (as postulated by form criticism) has a corresponding fear-of-God linguistic form. That is, early literary forms have linguistic forms that signify earlier and more primitive concepts of fear-of-God, and later literary forms have linguistic forms that signify later and more developed fear-of-God concepts. Perhaps Becker is on to something here; but pondering this a little deeper will show that he really does not have a good case. One might first raise this question: even if each literary form does contain a unique linguistic form to represent fear-of-God, does it follow that a different linguistic form that is unique to another literary form will signify a different meaning? Could not each linguistic form—regardless of where they are found—just as easily all signify the same fear-of-God meaning? But Becker assumes that the changing linguistic forms are evidence for semantic change; but, as far as trying to prove the validity of form criticism, this too is question begging because the form-critical reconstruction of history is what underlies the assumption in the first place. But before proceeding, it should be pointed out that each literary form is in reality made up of a mix of fear-of-God linguistic forms. No literary form is completely uniform in its linguistic form content. This would seem to dull the force of Becker's argument. But for the sake of my argument here, I will give him the benefit of the doubt, and agree that the surprisingly high numbers of certain linguistic forms in certain literary forms could indeed point to an evolution in the fear-of-God concept. At this point, one could legitimately inquire if the literary features of each literary form might account for the unique linguistic forms. As it turns out, the answer is yes—the unique linguistic forms can easily be accounted for by the function of

his study—despite his claim to neutrality later in his *Vorwort* („Die Arbeit stellt sich das Thema in seiner ganzen Breite, ohne es auf eine bestimmte Begriffsart, auf bestimmte literarische Schichten oder einzelne Bücher zu beschränken.").

Becker's method has three variables: literary form, linguistic form, and idea-type. If any two of these are known, then the third can be determined. But this is really not a method; rather, this arrangement is a *law* that has been proposed and defended by form critics. That there are really only three components is indicated when Becker says the following (already quoted just above): „Die Begriffsarten mit ihren sprachlichen Formen sind hinwiederum an bestimmte literarische Formen oder literarische Schichten gebunden." And when he mentions in the next sentence that "prevailing context" will illuminate the fear-of-God linguistic form and idea-type relationship, the "prevailing context" to which he refers will primarily consist of the context of the literary form, not the immediate fear-of-God text context. In other words, local text context will be examined in his study, but his interpretation of the local text will be driven by the meaning that the text *should have* according to the literary form in which it is found. Each fear-of-God case will be assumed to have a meaning according to the *Geist* of the literary form unless local context is sufficient to indicate otherwise. But any feature of a passage that even remotely supports the demands of the literary form will be fully exploited. For example, fear-of-God cola in the Psalms that are set in parallel with righteous conduct

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the material that they are in: narratives—many of them in the oldest material of the OT—use lots of imperfect and perfect verbs; the Psalms often describe what will happen to the group or person *who* does this or that—and the participle is naturally employed; in the wisdom literature, fear-of-God itself is often the *topic*—so it is not surprising to see the noun in use. Now if the literary characteristics of the various literary forms plainly account for the existence of unique fear-of-God linguistic forms, then this element of Becker's argument is effectively removed. If this is so, then Becker is left with no *reasonable* argument. To justify his claim that fear-of-God texts in the OT support the validity of form criticism, he can only appeal to the supposed evolution of fear-of-God; but this evolution is mainly based upon the idea that later literary forms will invariably show a development in the cult—which is one of the central tenents of form criticism. So for Becker, form criticism is legitimated by form criticism. But one might, in response, say that my reasoning is also circular because my reason for holding to a more stable fear-of-God meaning is because God is and does not change. This charge is technically true; but it is an appropriate argument just the same. Becker's circular reasoning, on the other hand, is not appropriate because the authority to which he appeals is not absolute and final. Essentially, Becker appeals to a theory brought forth by men who voluntarily excluded God as an epistemological reality. The most succinct way to express Becker's argument vs. my own is this: he appeals (covertly) to human authority; I appeal (openly) to God's authority. Circularity may be present in both, but only the latter can ultimately be called *reasonable*. This all boils down to choosing between two opinions; either God is or God is not. All human beings are forced to ground their decisions in life upon one or the other—for God has so arranged the universe such that there is *no middle ground*. Reasoning that appeals to *'adam* and reasoning that appeals to the true biblical God might both be circular, but they are far from being equally so.

cola (e.g., the two clauses of Ps 28:1—"Happy is everyone who fears the LORD, [happy is everyone] who walks in his ways") will be assumed to be *synonymous* because cultic obedience to YHWH and his law is generally what fear-of-God means according to the Psalm literary form.

If Becker is in essence trying to add evidence to support this law-like triad relationship, then the *lawfulness* of the triad depends upon there being *no exceptions* to the rule. If there are exceptions clearly shown by the local text context, then the triad is proved not to be a law at all—and each case of fear-of-God meaning that the law requires *could be* otherwise. The lawfulness of his method is already in question when Becker admits of the "mixing" and "blurring" of the fear-of-God ideas as they occur from one literary form to another. Nevertheless, Becker is spring-loaded to interpret them according to the demands of the form-critical paradigm. So if a particular case of fear-of-God could be interpreted by the local context one way as well as another, Becker will interpret it according to the demands of the literary form. The main problem is this: the forms as well as the interpretational force in those forms are products of a view of Israelite history that assumes their religion was simply an evolution of fear of the unknown to creation of an advanced cult.[157] When the literary form, therefore, drives

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[157] J. Coert Rylaarsdam, in a foreword to Tucker, 1971, vii, viii, essentially says that the various higher criticisms (including form criticism) assume that the Bible evolved through human agency, and that this has had serious ramifications for theology. (I thoroughly agree; but I would say *disastrous* ramifications. Note: when Rylaarsdam says "conditioned character" in the following quote, I sense strongly that he really means "made by humans and not by God." These kind of "euphemisms" are sometimes employed by higher critics to veil their assumption [and often the point that they are trying to prove] that the Bible is from human beings and not from God.) Rylaarsdam writes: "The historicality of the Bible, that is, the conditioned character of its contents, a conditioned-ness which makes them dependent upon all kinds of human limitations and situations in precisely the same way as the legacies of all sorts of historical traditions, is an assumption of modern criticism throughout. That assumption makes it modern. At the outset the assumption was held very tentatively, even fearfully, and in relatively circumscribed fashion. It asserted itself in the face of venerable traditions of dogma and confessional authority that equated the form of the contents of Scripture, its verbal conceptualizations, with the divine absolute. But the assumptions so gingerly held at the outset were to vindicate their tenability and importance in the process. The Bible is a far more historical book than the pioneers of historical criticism ever dreamed; and we are aware of this precisely because what they began continued: from literary criticism, to form criticism, to tradition criticism. In one way or another, over a period of more than a thousand years, the whole cultural setting of the ancient world of the Near East and every Israelite in all those centuries had some sort of a hand in the making of the Bible.

Needless to say, the impact of these developments on theology has been tremendous and continues as a powerful influence today. The word of God in relation to Scripture, as well as in relation to the church and the world, is being redefined and conceptualized in dynamic, fresh ways today because of the theological implications of modern criticism. Criticism set out to tell the story of the Bible. It did not intend to deal with theology, let alone launch new movements in theology. Nevertheless, however unintentionally, it did both." Rylaarsdam's suggestion that

interpretation, it will tend to drive it in a direction that is not in keeping with the overall biblical view of theology and anthropology. The form critics believe that a certain case of fear-of-God denotes whatever the appropriate literary form author/redactor thought it *should* mean; conversely, the biblical view interprets a certain fear-of-God case in view of what was really experienced in Israelite history in the midst of the outworking of God's redemption plan. At the most foundational level, I believe that the results of Becker's work are unreliable because his anti-supernatural critical framework (i.e., God as God is epistemologically off limits) which provide his assumptions, will not allow him explain the emotional reaction that one has before a *real* and *living* God. The most he can do (like Otto before him) is to explain fear in terms of what one *imagines* about God.

As this investigation proceeds, a number of Becker's practices that relate to his triadic law mentioned above will be criticized: first, his *literary categories* greatly oversimplify the reality of what happened in the pre-canonization (or perhaps better, pre-recognition as *Scripture*) times. The debate that still goes on today regarding the sources of the Bible and who wrote them demonstrates (as Childs has well and repeatedly pointed out) the great mistake of declaring—if just for the sake of coming to an artificial consensus of the "main lines"—that the writers, their sources, and when they wrote can be known. The speculation about authors, redactors, assemblers, and their oral or written sources is practically endless because the biblical record itself is almost silent on the subject and there is no way to reliably know what was in the writer's minds or from what sources they drew (or, anything about the sources of the sources!). Second, Becker greatly over-complicates the implications of the several *linguistic forms* of ירא. For example, the simple and normal occurrences of verb, noun, and adjective will be understood by Becker to justify a highly questionable range of meanings. A verb will indicate being "terrorized," the noun will mean "righteousness," and the adjective will mean "loyal." But this goes hard against the semantic grain that normally manifests a very close semantic relationship between the basic forms of the same root word. Third, the number of meanings within each of the "*idea-types*" that are sustained by ירא is severely over-inflated—especially in view of the fact (as admitted by Becker) that the "numinous" meaning of ירא is never entirely absent.[158] But how elastic can one word be? The *multiplicity* of meanings that Becker suggests is enough to put his results in question; but when some renderings (e.g., "love," "adoration") become nearly *opposite* to the persistent

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higher critics did not anticipate or intend any impact upon theology should be compared with the remarks of Gunkel in my FN 337.

[158] Becker's (Becker, 1965) semantic field for ירא includes (only a very partial list) awe, humility, honor, submission (81), loyalty (87), love (99), not forgetting, forsaking, or rebelling against the LORD (117), membership in the cult (126), religion (186), being pro-wisdom (215), knowledge (217), God's law, testimonies, and precepts (268), etc.

root feeling-of-fear meaning, then the reader understands that Becker has gone too far in trying to make fear-of-God fit into the form-critical mold.

I will now undertake a brief perusal of each of Becker's idea-type categories by which he orders his work.

Fear-of-God as Numinous Fear (Furcht vor dem Numinosen)

It must be said right away that Becker (like Otto) uses the term „*das Numinose*" ambiguously. Despite his chapter two and three titles that contain *Gottesfurcht als Furcht vor dem Numinosen*, Becker is most of the time (when using the term "numinous") either explicitly or implicitly referring to a feeling, not God. If he does appear to be referring to God, a closer look will reveal that he is referring—in Ottonian fashion—to the *perception* of God. A number of particular details indicate that this is so: first, „*das Numinose*" is, grammatically speaking, without gender (i.e., it is a neuter noun); second, the term (which he acknowledges is from Otto) is not a theological one, but "a recognized history-of-religion and psychology-of-religion terminus";[159] third, „*das Numinose*" is used to "designate the difference of the divine," but only "insofar as it [i.e., the divine] comes experientially to the consciousness of the man";[160] fourth, the fear resulting from the "encounter with the numinous" has its origin not in supernatural occurrence, but in the natural events that humans *interpreted* as being supernatural (see his discussion of the fear that is provoked by the smoking and quaking mountain of Exod 19, 20).[161] As the analysis on Becker's work proceeds in this section, additional features will be pointed out that further demonstrate Becker's blending of the subject and the object when speaking about the numinous.

The first major portion of *Gottesfurcht in Alten Testament* deals with the many cases of fear that involve the fear-feeling before the "numinous."[162] This portion is the least complex in that it is dealing only with fear-feelings in response to God (or his works) and not the more abstract *virtue*-fear-of-God ideas.[163] As rightly pointed out by

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[159] Ibid., 19.

[160] Ibid., 19. The feeling, for example, of "*fascinosum*"—as opposed to *das Numinose*—is understood to be the feeling Moses experiences in Exod 3:6 (see p. 28).

[161] Ibid., 20, 21. Here, Becker contrasts the earlier J text (Exod 19:18, 20) with the later E material (Exod 20:18a). The J text stresses the fire, smoke, and quaking mountain, and therefore indicates the true cause of the Israelite's fear.

[162] Becker's chapter one is a lexical overview of all the Hebrew words used for fear. Chapters two and three are devoted to the numinous fear subject, as well as some consideration of the variety of fears displayed before men, animals, natural events, etc.

[163] As a reminder, I designate biblical fear-of-God cases as "virtue" fear-of-God cases when they simply signify a god-pleasing virtue of a man or a woman or a group (e.g., "a woman who

Becker, „Der Mensch des AT erschrickt, erzittert, erbebt sehr rasch"![164] He does a thorough job surveying many of the OT texts that display these various physical manifestations of the fear emotion/feeling. The reliance upon Otto's terminology (and ontology in my opinion), however, often make his results questionable; the fear-response to some "presence" that finds its main being/existence in the mind of the fear-responder cannot be in all respects the same fear-response that one experiences when the living "consuming fire" God is *known* to be present. While his other chapters seek to support the developmental scenario by showing that most fear-of-God texts in later parts of the OT involve mainly the virtue-fear-of-God category, he nevertheless admits that "numinous" fear is never completely absent in any of the main parts of the OT.[165]

In his inquiry into the *„Eigenart der numinosen Furcht"* Becker writes, „Gottesfurcht als Furcht vor dem Numinosen kann alle Stufen der Gefühlsskala durchlaufen vom tödlichen Erschrecken bis zur ehrfürchtigen Scheu."[166] This is very much the case as Becker shows by many examples. The "linguistic criterion" for his numinous fear is mainly the use of the verb plus accusative and the verb plus מלפני/מפני/מן. He writes regarding the former: „Die Konstruktion mit dem Akkusative drückt mehr abgeschwächte numinose Furcht im Sinne ehrfürchtiger Scheu aus und findet deschalb bei den Stellen des kultischen, sittlichen und nomistischen Begriffs." Regarding the latter, Becker says: „Die Konstruktion mit [מלפני/מפני/מן] drückt mehr wirkliche Furcht aus (vgl. Das deutsche ‚sich fürchten vor') und findet deshalb beim kultishen, sittlichen und nomistischen Begriff nur selten Anwendung."[167] Becker has some justification for this; the construction with the preposition appears to bring out higher fear intensity because of the heightened sense of "presence" of the feared thing or person.[168] The prepositions מלפני/מפני/מן, however, only inform the reader that the feared object is

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fears the LORD is to be praised" [Prov 31:30b]), or indicate a positive value in general (e.g., "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge" [Prov 1:7a]).

[164] Becker, 1965, 6. Here, he is quoting L. Köhler, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, 1947, 132.

[165] Even though Becker will argue strongly for a semantic development of the fear-of-God concept from "numinous" fear to fear-of-God as virtues, he nevertheless admits the following: „Umgekehrt gibt es auch keine Zeit, in der die Furcht vor dem Numinosen nicht mehr anzutreffen wäre. Es sind sogar Anzeichen dafür vorhanden, dass eine relative späte Zeit das Numinose mehr hervorkehrt als die Frühzeit." (Ibid., 77. This quote also demonstrates the ambivalence in Becker's use of "numinous"; in the first use [„*Furcht vor dem Numinosen*"] the numinous seems to be God. In the second use [„*das Numinose*"] the numinous seems to be the fearful emotion/feeling [see my concerns about „*das Numinose*" in the chapter one section on R. Otto].) Regarding the NT, Becker writes, „ist jedoch zu bedenken, dass auch das NT durchaus die numinose Furcht kennt und schätzt" (58).

[166] Ibid., 57.
[167] Ibid., 59.
[168] Ogden, 2007, 61.

near (in time, space, threat level, etc.). Strictly speaking, they do not modify the verb and therefore indicate the type or level of fear. The fearfulness of the near *object* is what mainly determines the meaning. (In Ecclesiastes, for example, one can fear before heights (12:5) and before God (8:12, 13); the two are, of course, not to be feared in exactly the same way.)[169]

Regarding the verb + accusative (God), its *generic* nature and its wide employment in a multitude of fear contexts provide evidence that it should not be restricted to "weak" fear of the "awe" („*ehrfürchtiger Scheu*") variety as Becker suggests. ירא plus an accusative object is simply a baseline form that indicates that there is (or should be) fear manifested in the subject because of a certain object; but the form *does not comment* upon the level or variety of fear. It should be understood that ירי + accusative (God or LORD [or "me" or "him" as pronoun for God]) is found here and there throughout the OT. But Becker (and BDB as well) connects "numinous" fear most evidently with those instances in which ירי + accusative is employed in narrative scenes in which a person or persons are recorded to have feared before God. In these cases, the presence of God and the reaction of the people are described—and in several cases (see immediately below), extreme fear is evident. But these narrative texts are only a few compared to the ירי + accusative (God) texts that are non-narrative and that present fear-of-God as a virtue. Even these virtue-fear-of-God cases from time to time contain enough contextual information such that one is almost forced to see real fear and a high level of it. This is why BDB, for example, puts the virtue-fear-of-God cases found in Job 9:35; 27:24; Isa 57:11 and Jer 5:22 into the category of "fear, be afraid" and not "fear, reverence, honour." But in most other virtue-fear-of-God instances (in which context does not illumine the fear kind or intensity), BDB and Becker (and most other modern commentators) will give them non-fear-feeling meanings. In other words, if a run-of-the-mill ירי + accusative (+ God) form is found, it will be assumed to have non-fear meaning (loyalty, honor, righteousness, etc.) unless some contextual feature proves it to be fear. But this method is the reverse of what it should be; fear should be interpreted as fear—because that is the core meaning of ירי—unless the context strongly indicates otherwise. The triad that Becker appears to suggest in his monograph's first major section (about "numinous" fear) consists of OT narrative epiphanies (the literary form), ירי + accusative (God) or ירי + מלפני/מפני/מן + God (linguistic form), and, respectively, "weakened fear" or "fear" (the "idea-type). That the idea-type will change so radically when the literary form is changed (e.g., to "loyalty," and "obedience" in the Deuteronomistic literary form) is a subject that

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[169] While fear before heights and fear before God may not be precisely the same, they both have the foundational unpleasant fear-feeling that is a warning sign that danger is present. In fact, practically all the OT uses of fear plus מלפני/מפני/מן involve contexts in which danger to life is present (see BDB for list of OT uses).

will be discussed in the next section. For the remainder of this section, I would only like to briefly counter his idea that ירא + accusative (God) indicates "weakened fear."

To do this, two OT texts can be mentioned—from First Samuel and Jonah. In the former, the Israelites gathered in Gilgal and celebrated because they finally had—as they requested—their first king (1 Sam 11:15). But their king and judge up till that moment— God (operating through Samuel)—was angered by this because the people had rejected his rule (and Samuel's) in favor of a human king (1 Sam 8:6-8). This decision had far-reaching and catastrophic consequences. The sin of rejecting God as king was great. So Samuel told the people to "take your stand and see this great thing that the LORD will do before your eyes" (12:16). That "great thing" was to destroy their crops with rain (vv. 17, 18)—a terrible punishment because of their "wickedness" (12:17). As the people became acutely aware of their evil and watched their year's efforts get washed away (perhaps more accurately, destroyed by mildew), וירא כל העם מאד את יהוה ואת שמואל ("[then] all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel" [v. 18]). The use of מאד ("greatly") reflects the fact that the verb plus accusative does not comment upon the fear *level*.[170] Only contextual or syntactical factors that give *clear* semantic input (like in our present passage) can inform the reader of the actual fear level/kind in a given fear-of-God text. In this case of the Israelites fearing both God and Samuel, the context of a very wicked deed (on a nationwide scale!), Samuel's rebuke, the thunder and rain, and punishment in the form of the destruction of the crop certainly indicate a high level of fear. The linguistic form of the verb plus accusative *allows* for a high level of fear, and the addition of מאד to the form in this case *guarantees* it. But here, the adverb addition only confirms what is already known through the context.[171]

In Jonah, after the sailors were already "afraid" of the storm (Jon 1:5), and "more afraid" of Jonah's confession (v. 10), they "feared the LORD even more" (once the seas calmed after they had thrown Jonah—at his request—overboard [Jon 1:16]). The MT of 1:16 reads: וייראו האנשים יראה גדולה את יהוה ([literally] "and the men feared the LORD a great fear"). In this case, the context of the sailors' initial fear in reaction to the storm was without a doubt extreme. Anyone who has experienced dangerously stormy seas in a vulnerable vessel knows the feeling. By the time the sailors gets to the fear of YHWH, the context does not say if the initial fear of the sea is still present; but based upon how the syntactical arrangement goes from "they feared" (v. 5) to "they feared greatly" (v. 10) to "they feared the LORD greatly" (v. 16), it appears that the writer of Jonah had an

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[170] In 2 Kings 10:4 מאד is used *twice* to modify "they feared."

[171] Becker admits that this Deuteronomistic ירא + accusative (God) case means "real" fear: „in v. 18 jedoch liegt nicht der typisch dt-stische Begriff vor, sondern wirkliche (numinose) Furcht …." 1 Sam 12:14, 24, on the other hand, are instances of ירא + accusative (God) in the more normal Deuteronomistic sense of „Jahwe verehren" (Becker, 1965, 33).

escalation of fear in mind.[172] Like the First Samuel case, the modifiers simply serve to point to the level of fear involved; but it is clear from the context that the fear experienced by the sailors—when YHWH becomes the object of their fear—is some mixture of great fear, awe, and reverence (the latter is indicated by the sacrifice and vows the sailors then made [1:16b]). This is certainly not a case of "weakened numinous fear."

These two passages are presented mainly to show that ירא + accusative (God) is a linguistic/syntactic form that simply says that fear exists, but does not comment upon kind or intensity. In the case of the two above texts, the kind and intensity are discerned by the verb modifiers as well as the general context of God's judgment and punishment. Becker perhaps wants to tone down the fear content of this linguistic form (in earlier literary layers whose narratives contain frequent event fear-of-God cases) in order to more easily accommodate the more abstract meanings of the form that will be found in later literary layers. The vast majority of the (later) occurrences of the ירא + accusative (God) form will indicate, according to Becker, one or more of the abstract notions (cultic loyalty, commitment to the Mosaic Law, etc.). For the purposes of this section, I will only say that Becker's idea that this particular linguistic/syntactic form indicates "more weakened numinous fear" cannot be supported. That this form can allow for more abstract interpretations will be discussed in the next section. Much of Becker's thinking on this matter is motivated by his belief that the meaning of ירא developed over time from numinous "primitive" fear, to the more abstract and refined notions of the mature cult— i.e., reverence, honor, loyalty, righteousness, and the like. To this question of "development" we now turn.

Becker's View of "Numinous" Fear development

Becker believes that the idea of fear-of-God developed (evolved) between the times of the composing of the oldest and the newest parts of the OT. In this development, explains Becker, much of the fear-feeling dried up: „Im Zuge dieser Entwicklung geht das Moment eigentlicher furcht fast ganz verloren; Gottesfurcht wird Äquivalent für Religion und Frömmigkeit."[173] The fear-of-God phenomenon first arose in "primitive" humans and developed into a "designation for religion and piousness."[174] Along with this development

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[172] Sasson, 1990, 138, points out this escalation. Becker includes Jon 1:16 among the texts that display "numinous" fear in reaction to the deeds of God (Becker, 1965, 37, 284). His explanation of the fear kind of Jon 1:16, however, is only made in a brief footnote within chapter six (non-Deuteronomistic places of the "cultic idea"). Becker writes there: „In vv. 10 und 16 hingegen drückt [ירא] eigentliche Furcht aus" (176). He does not comment on the intensity of the fear.

[173] Becker, 1965, 75.

[174] Ibid., 75, 78.

was a corresponding development in the concept of God. When fear was more of the "numinous" kind, YHWH was perceived to be—as Becker puts it—the "unpredictable" and the "demonic."[175] As the concept of God became more "purified," fear-of-God evolved along with it into the more abstract ideas of "religion and piousness."[176] Hebrew words for fear (especially ירא) were retained throughout this development because the first Israelite stirrings of their religion came in the form of the emotion of fear as they had their initial encounters with the "numinous." With this in mind, „es ist daher verständlich, dass der Terminus Furcht als Ausdruck für das verhältnis des Menschen zu Gott überhaupt in Gebrauch kommen kann."[177] This development, which is paralleled by other ancient near eastern God and fear concepts, can even be seen on into the NT where "numinous" fear is "superceded" by "faith."[178]

I have already offered some criticism against Becker and Otto for their opinions that both God and religion evolve. At this point, I would only like to mention a couple of points that relate to Becker's belief that Israel's ideas of fear and God paralleled those of other nations in the Ancient Near East.[179] The people who wrote those "parallel" texts are not here today—so they cannot be asked what they were really thinking when they wrote. The same goes for the OT writers. So the next best thing is to rely upon their *testimony*.

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[175] Ibid., 78. „Jahwe ist in älterer Zeit der Unberechenbare, Dämonische, dem die numinose Furcht entspricht." Here, Becker is clearly drawing upon Ottonian terminology.

[176] Ibid.

[177] Ibid., 75.

[178] Ibid., 76. When Becker makes his case for fear-of-God development, he does say at several points (perhaps to the point of contradicting himself) that "numinous" fear remains throughout the Bible (see FN 165). "Numinous" fear is actually, according to Becker, a "ground-tone" that remains in the more highly developed fear-as-virtue forms (cultic, righteous, and legal [80]). Even regarding the NT, Becker admits: „Es ist jedoch zu bedenken, dass auch das NT durchaus die numinose Furcht kennt und schätzt." (58—Becker lists the following NT texts as "numinous" fear examples: Matt 9:8 (Luke 5:26); Matt 14:26 (Mark 6:50); Matt 17:6 (Mark 6:9; Luke 9:34); Matt 28:4; Mark 4:41 (Luke 8:25); Mark 5:15 (Luke 8:35); Mark 16:8; Luke 1:12, 65; 2:9; 5:10; 7:16; 8:37; 24:5, 37; Acts 2:43; 5:5; 5:11; 10:4; 19:17; Phil 2:12; Heb 12:28-29.)

[179] Becker (Ibid., 78, 79) introduces a lengthy list of ANE texts with: „In diesem Zusammenhang ist es von Nutzen, auf akkadische und ägyptische Parallelen hinzuweisen, die für ihre Sprachen eine entsprechende semantische Entwicklung bezeugen …." The dating of the examples he presents is in most cases not clear, and most of the examples (like many in the Bible) are of the "virtue" variety—and contextual clues that would shed light on their meanings are generally lacking (e.g., "fear [the deity]!" "It is good to fear God." "It goes well with the one who fears … his God." "I want to fear Adad." "The day on which I feared the gods was the joy of my heart." "I am daily attentive to his [Marduk's] fear." "My lord the king is a god-fearer." "I am Assurnasirpal, your sad servant, who is humble, who fears [Ishtar's] divinity, who is prudent, your darling."). The non-Israelite ANE fear-of-God texts are so scattered and fragmentary and of such a generic nature that one can only see a developmental tendency in them with great strain. If anything, the ANE mentions of fear-of-God give additional evidence for a general revelation in which all humans have some innate sense of God—and fear arises because of that sense.

The testimonies of each are, of course, very different. There cannot be a one-to-one parallel correspondence—if just for the fact that they do not agree upon the identity of the deity. Either YHWH is the only true God, as the OT claims, or, for example, Chemosh is God as assumed by king Mesha of Moab.[180] Either they are both wrong or one is right— but they both cannot be right. To discern who speaks the truth, one must rely upon the quality and trustworthiness of the testimony. It cannot be denied that the OT testimony is by far the most compelling, thorough, and powerful. It records not only the testimony of men and women, but, most importantly, the testimony of God. This testimony is all set within a moral atmosphere in which *true witness* (as opposed to *false witness*) is obligatory—for both the people who testified in the OT as well as those who recorded those testimonies (sometimes one and the same). This holds also for the NT where Christ confirmed the obligation to bear true witness by simply saying, "But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'" (Matt 5:37a NKJV). Unlike the majority of the other ANE texts, the *intention* of the OT is to make God known and to preserve for later generations how he has worked out his kingdom plan in this world. The ANE gods and their ways are normally only mentioned in passing—usually in the context of rulers recording their conquests and other achievements. Most important for the present matter is this: the OT is far and away the most *insistent* ANE work in making the case that its God is the only God: YHWH is God "and there is no other" (Isa 45:5a). In other words, if the OT writers were to look over the shoulders of scholars today and evaluate their methods, they would insist that, because YHWH is the only God, the writers of other ANE texts who believed in other gods are *not to be trusted*. They would lament as folly the notion that the characteristics of God and fear-of-God as found in the OT can be paralleled to the characteristics of false gods and fear of those false gods as found in the other ANE texts.

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[180] Pritchard, 1958, 209. Regarding the viability of using ANE parallels, Blocher, 1977, 21, insightfully has the following to say: "But should the comparative approach reign supreme? It is significant indeed that none can quote a saying "The fear of Marduk (or Baal or Râ) is the principle of wisdom"; yet the men of the Bible would not have been embarrassed by such a saying, they would have denounced and rejected it because Marduk is not god, Marduk is a Nothing! In other words, the uniqueness of truth among human errors and demonic lies is *truth*— it may not be obvious in its expression (cf. 2 Cor. 11:13f.). Untruth is not just something else than truth: it is truth corrupted, and sometimes so with subtlety. In this light, the existence of scattered similarities to Biblical truths in the ancient Near-East could be considered as glimpses of God's original revelation, with no damage done to uniqueness, and Godfearing teachers of wisdom in Israel could assimilate insights which Egyptians had gained by God's common grace, just as their fathers had spoiled these Egyptians' riches. The weakness of the comparative approach is that it tends to take the field of phenomena as the ultimate reference for judgement. But *Veritas index sui et false*! Reverent reference to the LORD first *is* the principle of wisdom! When one abides by this principle, he can appreciate (and there is plentiful evidence for him then to canvass!) how darkened and distorted the truth of God has been in nations deprived of special revelation."

And if a scholar today insisted upon making the parallel anyways, the OT writer would safely assume that that scholar believed the God of the OT to be just as false as those of the nations around Israel. This judgment is not unfair or incorrect—for, as was alluded to just above, either there is one God who is the true God (which is the OT claim), or none of the gods are true (i.e., exist); but they cannot all be true, for that—in view of the ANE vastly differing claims about God—would be a violation of the law of non-contradiction. The very testimony of the OT implores the reader to not see any parallels between YHWH and other gods. The OT simply says in essence that YHWH is, and the others are not.[181]

So when attempts are made today to find parallels between ancient Israelite religion and the religions of her contemporary neighbors, often assumed to be true is the belief that Israel's God was really no different than the gods of the other nations; and if they are all false gods, then they must have originated in the minds of the "primitive" ancestors of these nations who first thought of gods when they feared before the unknown. In this scenario, Israel's religion could evolve in a predictable way in parallel with the other nations. But this method (and the assumptions that underlie it) dishonors those who wrote the biblical testimony. The practitioners of this method must hold as untrue the main elements of the OT testimony as recorded by many different people and sanctioned by the whole Israelite nation. To put it another way, the practitioners of this method are anti-Jewish in the sense that they assume the main lines of the Jewish OT writers' testimonies to be untruths; God is not and he did not speak, and Israel, therefore, has no monopoly on the truth about God.

At this point one could reply that Becker (and Otto and many others) is writing within an idealist epistemological framework which understands that knowledge is so strongly located within the subject that the law of non-contradiction no longer applies. The people of Canaan can have their god Molech and make their sacrifices according to their understanding of truth, and the Israelites can have their God YHWH and make their sacrifices according to their understanding of truth. As long as they are both doing what they sincerely know to be true and right, then one cannot judge the other—and scholars today can certainly not judge between them. In response to this kind of thinking, I can only say that we have nothing if it is true. All hope is lost for *true* truth—and, frankly, men and women have no hope because they have no *assurance* that their god is really the god that can save them out of the pain and suffering and death that are realities in life "under the sun." In fact, the reason for even doing "science" or "theology" is

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[181] This knowledge and belief in the exclusive deity of YHWH in the OT is the first obligation of the moral law, as evidenced by the first two of the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:1-6).

eliminated—because the truth will never be found. One might reply, "But the search for truth is nevertheless worthwhile!" Perhaps so—but the search would in reality be no more meaningful than Sisyphus's mission to forever role the rock up the hill or the commitment of Vladamir and Estragon to wait for Godot. If something *a priori* cannot be found, why look for it?[182] But the insistence that the search is nevertheless worthwhile is really only self-refuting, for it claims that the value of searching for truth which cannot be found is a good and *true* value.

My position rejects a worldview that is rationally incompatible with life as lived normally in the experienced everyday world. If the idealist (in the skeptical vein of Otto and Becker) were to apply his or her philosophy to everyday life, the senses which rely upon reliable and true informational input from the world would be ignored, and that person's life would as a result be in great danger. But my common sense view holds that things in the world (trees, dogs, cats, crossing traffic, etc.) as well as metaphysical phenomena (love, beauty, testimony, God, etc.) can be sufficiently known to operate safely and predictably in the world.[183] With the belief in the reliability of this knowledge, I perceive that the testimony contained within the OT is honest and accurate and reliable. The testimony itself claims that it is testimony and was meant to serve not only the people of that time, but people of all future times as well. In this way, the Bible is a legal document admissible as testimony in court for the purpose of deciding the truth of matters. Like any other testimony it ought to be considered innocent and accurate testimony unless it can be demonstrated beyond a reasonable doubt that the testimony is otherwise.[184] Orderly and just civilization actually rests upon this assumption of innocence.

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[182] John Barton calls for his fellow higher critics to conduct their work with the understanding that the "right" method will never be found: "Indeed, if there is one tendency of biblical criticism it has been my aim to call in question," writes Barton, "it is this tendency to seek the normative, a tendency that crops up in every kind of criticism …. The basic flaw, I have suggested, is the belief that the question 'How should we read the Old Testament?' can be answered" (Barton, 1996, 246).

[183] "Common sense" realism (T. Reid) comprises part of my philosophical view. See my introduction, pp. 13-14.

[184] Kaiser, 1980, 7, shares the same view: "For our part we believe all texts should be innocent of all charges of artificiality until they are proven guilty by clear external witnesses. The text should first be dealt with on its own terms. All editorial impositions designated by modernity (derived not from real sources—to which evangelicals have no objection—but rather deduced from broad philosophical and sociological impositions over the text) which can be credited with atomizing the text and deleting the connectors allegedly assigned to pious or misguided redactors must be excluded from the discipline until validated by evidence." Further on he writes: "…all criteria should approach the issue in a similar fashion to the American system of jurisprudence: a text is innocent until proven guilty by known data provided by sources whose truthfulness on those points can be demonstrated or which share the same general area of contemporaneity as the

When the biblical testimony is heard fairly and impartially, that testimony clearly indicates that God is unchanging and that God desires his relationships with human beings to be based upon love and not fear (Deut 6:5; Matt 22:37)—for God was first with Adam and Eve in a state of peace, and (servile) fear did not come till the fall.[185] But once fear came—not as fear of the unknown, but fear of punishment from the God whom they already knew—then it to some extent defined the relationship from that time onward. While the Bible writers may from time to time use "fear" to denote non-fear virtues (as Becker well illumines), fear certainly does not evolve wholesale into that; for from start to finish the Bible is consistent in recording that righteous men and women usually experienced the fear-feeling when God visited them or showed his mighty power: Adam "was afraid" of God immediately after the first sin (Gen 3:10); David was "afraid of God" when God killed Uzzah for laying a hand on the ark (1 Chron 13:12); Daniel fell down with his face to the ground, trembling and overwhelmed when confronted with the heavenly vision (Dan 10:12, 19); Peter, James, and John were "overcome by fear" when Jesus was transfigured upon the mountain (Matt 17:6); and John fell down "as though dead" when visited by Christ (Rev 1:17). The testimony never gives any indication that rain, thunder, hail, earthquakes, burning bushes, or fire- and smoke-covered mountains were the *sources* of fear and, then, of God. These natural phenomena are not just in the "old" parts of the OT, but can be found throughout the Bible. And despite all of Becker's insistence upon a "development" of the fear-of-God concept, he admits that, „umgekehrt gibt es auch keine Zeit, in der die Furcht vor dem Numinosen nicht mehr anzutreffen wäre. Es sind sogar Anzeichen dafür vorhanden, dass eine relative spate Zeit das Numinose mehr hervorkehrt als die Frühzeit"[186] This is a valuable observation, but one that is not significantly reflected in the bulk of his study. I think this is because it goes against the grain of the form-critical paradigm that he is both using and defending. Therefore, there is the tendency—especially in the virtue-fear-of-God cases—to leave "numinous" fear out of the discussion altogether and to replace it with something more abstract and advanced. Only if the immediate context of a virtue-fear-of-God text *obviously* indicates "numinous" fear will Becker confess that "numinous" fear is—at least partly—in view. Virtue-fear-of-God passages that do not contain this context—i.e., they simply do not *comment*—will be assumed to be devoid of "numinous" fear.[187]

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texts under investigation and whose performance record of producing reliable data has been good" (28).

[185] It could be that Adam and Eve before the fall had some measure of filial fear.

[186] Becker, 1965, 77 (see FN 165 and 178 above).

[187] I put "numinous" in quotation marks to remind the reader that, in my opinion, this term does not accurately represent the actual fear-feeling (or any other feeling/emotion for that matter) that one has when in a relationship with the true and living God. But this is the term that Becker mainly employs to more or less denote the "primitive" feeling—which often included being

The developmental view is flawed for many reasons. But the most distressing reason is that it has little respect for reasonable and compelling testimony; in this way, it is anti-Jewish. It turns the compassionate and loving God of Israel's testimony into the „*Dämonische*" of the pagan nations around her. And because of its epistemological restrictions, the developmental view shuts itself off from any hope of finding any truth about God or about God's purpose for humankind. Doing theology (or any other discipline) this way—if practiced consistently in accordance with the epistemological skepticism that underlies the developmental view—is actually purposeless and, as Qoheleth would say, "meaningless" and a "chasing after the wind."

Becker's Deuteronomistic Development

Becker's chapter four title is: „*Gottesfurcht als Gottesverehrung (‚Kultischer Begriff') Der Deuteronomisch-Deuteronomistische Begriff.*" ("Fear-of-God as adoration-of-God ['Cultic Idea']; the Deuteronomic-Deuteronomistic Idea"). Because confusion is inherent (especially in translation) in the source/form-critical terms related to authorship/redaction/assemblers/etc. of Deuteronomy to Second Kings, a brief clarification of these terms (as used in the critical literature—mainly following M. Noth) is in order:

1. Deuteronomy (Becker's "Dt"): the fifth book of Moses.

2. Deuteronomic Code: chapters 12-26 of Deuteronomy.

3. Deuteronomist (Becker's "Dt-st"): the "author/compiler" of Deuteronomy through Second Kings—and perhaps other parts of the OT—who wrote sometime during the exile.[188]

4. Deuteronomistic History: what the "Deuteronomist" wrote (i.e., Deuteronomy-2 Kings).[189]

5. Deuteronomistic Historian (usually in English abbreviated "Dtr"): the person or "school" that redacted the "Deuteronomistic History" that had been previously written by the "Deuteronomist."[190]

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fearful—when one is aware of the "presence" of God. So I continue to use the term; but the quotation marks signify that I do so with (in the words of Terrien) "serious qualification."

[188] Soulen and Soulen, 2001, 46.

[189] Ibid.

[190] Ibid. Based upon the confusing nature of this nomenclature, contradictions among scholars are bound to arise. For example, Römer and Pury, 2000, 48, understand that Dtr. is the *Deuteronomist*. Crenshaw thinks Dtr. is the Deuteronomistic history (Crenshaw, 2005).

6. Deuteronomistic (Becker's "Dt-stisch") is an adjective used to denote the characteristics of the "Deuteronomistic History" as imparted by either the "Deuteronomist" or the redaction of the "Deuteronomistic Historian" ("Dtr.").

While Becker will go into some detail about which fear-of-God texts were written/influenced by the Deuteronomist, Dtr, and subsequent redactors who tried to fit Deut-2 Kings with the words of the prophets (DtrP) and the Mosaic Law (DtrN), his main thrust in chapter four is simply to link the linguistic form and the fear idea-type with everything in the OT that "was written in the Deuteronomistic language and the Deuteronomistic spirit."[191] This includes all that was authored/redacted by the Deuteronomist, the Deuteronomistic Historian, and subsequent redactors.

Becker here presents his next main triad. The first component is—as already alluded to—the Deuteronomistic literary form. This form reflects the culture and religion of the authors/compilers/redactors who purposed to write and arrange Israel's history in order to justify the exile and to instill a sense of loyalty in Israel's YHWH cult.[192] The second component of this triad is the verb + YHWH linguistic form which is found in all but a few fear-of-God cases in the Deuteronomistic literary form. The third part of this triad—the idea-type—is in general an attitude of loyalty (*Treue*) to the Israelite cult and to the covenant of its God, YHWH. Becker writes the following regarding this linguistic form and the idea-type relationship:

> Der Gebrauch bestimmter Wortformen ist mehr als nur stilistische Eigentümlichkeit; die Wortform wird bestimmt von der Eigenart des auszudrückenden Begriffes. Die gemässe sprachliche Form der sich in kultischer Verrichtung und Beobachtung der Bundessatzung betätigenden Jahwetreue ist das Verbum.[193]

According to Becker, the meanings of the many fear-of-God cases within the Deuteronomistic layer are remarkably consistent:

> Der Begriff der Gottesfurcht, genauer des Jahwe-Fürchtens, ist im Dt und in allen anderen nach Geist und Sprache als dt-stisch kenntlichen Partien auffallend einheitlich. Er besagt Verehrung Jahwes unter dem besonderen Aspekt der Treue zu ihm als dem Bundesgott. Die Treue findet ihren normalen Ausdruck im alleinigen Kult Jahwes und der Beobachtung der Bundessatzung.… Die Jahwetreue ist der typische aspect der dt-stischen Stellen des kultischen Begriffs, der dazu berechtigt, sie als eigene Gruppe zusammenzufassen.[194]

Becker then proceeds to support his case by the highlighting of a number of examples.

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[191] Becker, 1965, 85 (see his FN 2). Plath, 1962, 42, says the ירא instances in Deuteronomy and Dtr "correspond fully."

[192] According to the form-critical theory of how Deut-2 Kings came to be (which Becker obviously subscribes to). The theory—in my understanding—is deeply flawed.

[193] Becker, 1965, 87.

[194] Ibid., 85.

I will now respond to this schema and comment upon a number of texts that Becker presents as support for the validity of the triad. But first, a few general observations should be made: while there are some insights to be gained from form-critical theories on how the OT came to be, the reality of how Deuteronomy and the former prophets were recorded can only be very speculatively explained. The people involved and the sources they worked from are—with only a few exceptions—not specified in the OT. On the other hand, there are the *testimonies*—not only of those who recorded the biblical history, but also of those *within* that history—that notify the reader that God really did guide the Israelites in the founding of a nation which would later bless "all nations." Readers are also notified that the people and events described in that history are not fictional. The history is presented as such and not as a creation of an author who had certain political and cult motivations in mind.[195] Even if the theories about the Deuteronomist/Dtr/*et al* are approximately correct, the myriad of factors involved (authors, redactors, written sources, oral sources, sources of sources, etc.) make it highly unlikely that such uniformity in the fear-of-God meaning (especially such an abstract meaning as "loyalty") would be the case throughout the entire work. Be that as it may, the main error of Becker's form-critical schema is that it defines the proper relationship between God and Israel (which affects how he views fear-of-God) according to what was hypothetically in the mind of the "author" and not what is described in the history itself. The testimonies in the biblical history itself are of lower order exegetical value because they are deemed to be, historically speaking, unreliable. So the key is to try to get into the mind of the author; but in my view, this is an extremely speculative enterprise.

Another problem is the emphasis put upon the linguistic form of the verb plus YHWH. The verb, first of all, is just that—a plain verb. If Becker were referring to a rare or unusual use of the verb, then perhaps that might indicate a special meaning. But the plain indicative Qal use of ירא is especially *un*remarkable. The verb is indeed almost exclusively employed in Deut-2 Kings; but that is the case throughout all of the OT—with the exception of the Psalms where a number of "adjectives" and nouns appear (but still with the second highest count of verbal forms of ירא in the OT), and Proverbs which is unusual in preferring the noun.[196] According to the count of Stähli, Deut-2 Kings (plus

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[195] The tendency by those operating generally within the Deuteronomistic form-critical framework to understand the Deuteronomist, Dtr, *et al* more as *authors* and less as *assemblers* is reflected in the title of one of their more recent colloquia collections: *Israel Constructs its History: Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research* (ed. Pury and Römer [see FN 113 just above]).

[196] Stähli, 1971, 766, counts 30 verbs in the Psalms, 16 cases of the Niphal participle נוֹרָא, 27 adjectives, and 10 nouns (if the participle and other verbs were combined, Psalms would have the most ירא verbs in the OT). Proverbs has 5 verbs, 3 adjectives, and 14 nouns. As I will argue in the next section, I do not think that the ירא-based "adjectives" found in the Psalms (and a few

Ruth) has 72 instances of the verb. The rest of the OT (not including any apocryphal books) has 211. So the "Deuteronomistic History" does have a high rate of fear cases (not just before God, but humans, natural phenomena, etc.), but this is simply a function of the historical subject matter that it records and not the artistic creativity of the writer(s). Deuteronomy, for example, is thick with references to fear because the book recapitulates the events of the previous forty years in which a "rebellious and stiff-necked" (Deut 31:27 NIV) people were tested (Deut 8:2) in one fearful situation after another. Somewhat of a change in the employment of ירא is seen in Deuteronomy in that YHWH for the first time makes himself and his law known to the entire "nation." While the earlier Pentateuch narrative mainly describes God revealing himself and his will to a few people in a few instances (i.e., to the "patriarchs," and a number of "numinous" cases of fear-of-God result), Deuteronomy presents God as now *with* his people trying to grow them up by teaching them to fear him out of love by allowing them first to fear him out of the threat of punishment. Josh-2 Kings then records the history of the Israelites who by then had their own God and covenant and tabernacle (and later, temple). In this part of the history, people still experience fear/dread/terror at times before God, but fear-of-YHWH *as a virtue* becomes common because a whole nation now knows the identity of their God, and that nation recognizes (based upon the stories passed down to them about the Exodus experience) their susceptibility to sin and the *value* of fearing YHWH. So, unlike in Genesis, there are many more opportunities in Deut-2 Kings for virtue-fear-of-God cases to occur.

The Deuteronomistic theory does not accurately account for this increased use of virtue-fear-of-God. The employment of ירא + YHWH was not driven by some hypothetical author's need to build loyalty into the cult, but arose as a *response of the people* to the presence and the demands of YHWH. With the revelation of God's name to the nation of Israel and the creation of the covenant community of YHWH, the chances for people to say "Fear YHWH!" or "He fears YHWH" greatly increased—and that is why these so often occur in Deuteronomy and the former prophets. But that is not to say that virtue-fear-of-God cases did not exist before; several instances occur very early on (the documentarians would say in J and E sources). For example Abraham was told by

elsewhere) are properly designated. Morphologically and semantically, they function as participles. If I am correct, this should add even more verbs to the Psalms verb count. If all the verbs, Niphal participles, and "adjectives" in the Psalms were then combined, the total verb count—according to Stähli—would be 73. This would make Psalms the king of יָרֵא (i.e., the verb) use among the OT books with nearly twice as many as that found in the book with the second most plentiful count, Deuteronomy (total count there, 39). All this is intended only to show that the phenomenon of the verb in Deut-2 Kings tells the exegete absolutely nothing beyond the base meaning of "fear" and normal semantic functions of tense, voice, mood, etc. Only contextual factors (including syntax) can provide additional semantic information.

God (upon passing the test of being willing to offer up his son), "…now I know that you fear God …." (Gen 22:12)[197] Virtue-fear-of-God is evident here because God is referring to virtues that were *indicated* by Abraham's actions—i.e., faith, loyalty, trust, and humble obedience. But "the beginning" of Abraham's virtues, however, was the fear-feeling before God (as indicated by the use of ירא and not אמן (faith, loyalty, trust) or שמע (obedience)—and to this "virtue" the use of fear-of-God here most immediately applies.

The triad's idea-type of loyalty to YHWH and to the YHWH cult appears in some measure to be the case when context is considered. But Becker in accordance with the law-like nature of the triad over-generalizes; as will be seen in a moment, he is prone to classify all virtue-fear-of-God cases in this Deuteronomistic literary level as virtues that have to do with commitment to the YHWH cult. In the process of the evolution into this idea-type, real fear has all but disappeared. This is the strong impression the reader gets as he or she reads Becker's explanation of this triad in chapter four. But, first, what Becker already acknowledged in his "numinous" investigation earlier deserves repeating:

> Die numinose Furcht ist Ausgangspunkt einer semantischen Entwicklung, die zum kultischen, sittlichen und nomistischen Begriff der Gottesfurcht führt, aber sie ist auch bleibender Grundton einer jeden Begriffsausprägung. Trotz starker Abschwächung des numinosen Elementes schwingt numinose Furcht mit, ja, sie vermag dann und wann wieder aufzuleben. Dies ist bei den Darlegungen in kap. IV-IX ergänzend zu berücksichtigen.[198]

This raises a practical issue that has to do with Bible translations: if "numinous" fear remains in all the idea-types, then it is understandable why the original Hebrew of the OT uses ירא to designate these idea-types.[199] On the other hand, if, for example, אמן was

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[197] The "adjective" is used here; but, as mentioned in the FN just above, it is possible that nearly all of these ירא cases, that several of the lexica and commentaries deem as adjectival, could be more reasonably understood as participles—because they function as such (see my fuller discussion about this question in the next section).

[198] Becker, 1965, 80.

[199] Assumed here is that Becker follows Otto in understanding that the more developed feelings of the "numinous"—like fascination, worship, joy, etc.—still retain some element of the fear feeling. According to Otto, "Though the numinous emotion in its completest development shows a world of difference from the mere 'daemonic dread', yet not even at the highest level does it belie its pedigree or kindred. Even when the worship of 'daemons' has long since reached the higher level of worship of 'gods', these gods still retain as numina something of the 'ghost' in the impress they make on the feelings of the worshipper, viz. the peculiar quality of the 'uncanny' and 'aweful', which survives with the quality of exaltedness and sublimity or is symbolized by means of it. And this element, softened though it is, does not disappear even on the highest level of all, where the worship of God is at its purest. Its disappearance would be indeed an essential loss. The 'shudder' reappears in a form ennobled beyond measure where the soul, held speechless, trembles inwardly to the farthest fibre of its being" (Otto, 1958, 17). At this point, I should once again point out that in this dissertation, I try to avoid the use of Otto's "numinous" term (at least, it is put in quotation marks to indicate that it is Otto's term). As already argued in the section on

used to denote the idea-type of "loyalty," then the "numinous" fear that was actually still present and remained as a "ground tone" of the "loyalty" would not be understood to be there. To put this succinctly, the use of "fear" in biblical times would denote mainly fear as well as imply the virtues that flow from that fear. But a word like "loyalty" could only mean something close to that ("stand firm," "faithful," etc. [see BDB אמן]) but not the feeling of fear. So the OT use of ירא in the many virtue-fear-of-God cases is meant to notify the reader that fear and (perhaps) some other virtue(s) are present. The current English use of fear is remarkably similar: one can say "she fears the Lord" and mean real fear and/or, for example, loyalty. While a person today—based upon the modern aversion to fear (especially of God)—might not consider the fear feeling when hearing this expression, it must be said that, nevertheless, it is the only formula that gives the hearer the *opportunity* to think of both loyalty *and* fear. If the biblical writers—as I strongly believe—intended real fear and (often) some other virtue to be understood in most or all virtue-fear-of-God cases, then the best way to transfer that information to the reader in the briefest way was to use "fear." Likewise, Bible translators today ought to use "fear" to transmit the full meaning intended by the Scripture.[200]

The virtue-fear-of-God passages in Deut-2 Kings are by and large unclear as to the exact virtues that they designate. Because "fear" is used, however, the reader knows that some level of fear-feeling is indicated and that some other virtue could also be implied. This is analogous not only to how "fear" can be used today, but also, for example, "love": when a man says to his wife in a moment of passion "I love you," the meaning is that he has the warm emotion of attachment at that moment (i.e., the foundational feeling of love). If a few minutes later he says to his beloved, "I love my country," the meaning is probably weakly related to the "love" meant in the first mention, but points more to a sense of pride about his country and loyalty in serving it (the latter could be considered a "virtue"). If these expressions of love were heard without knowing the people involved or their circumstances, then the meaning would be hard to discern. So some overarching *perspective* would be helpful. With virtue-fear-of-God, the Deuteronomistic schema offers to the exegete a way to gain *perspective*. If the form critics are right, then it follows that the author might use fear-of-God in trying to bring about commitment to the cult. But

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Otto, I believe the term—as invented and used by Otto—is used to signify the religious feelings of the subject and not God (as a true exterior object). Whatever Otto (or Becker) might intend to be the final ontological reality connected with "the numinous," it is sure (as seen in the quote above) that the feeling of fear is somehow a part of it.

[200] Most Bible versions translate many of the virtue-fear-of-God passages into the perceived virtues of, for example, "reverence," "honor," and "respect"; but to probably most in western society today, these terms no longer signify any fear emotion/feeling. Therefore, these translations—if a fear "ground tone" does indeed remain in the original Hebrew—are often *mis*translations.

if Deut-2 Kings is mainly a recording of how God worked historically in the lives of the Israelites, then the fear-of-God cases found there can *to some extent* be interpreted in view of the historical fact that the people were then in the process of forming a cult community centered in Jerusalem; but they must not be interpreted *solely* in light of that historical reality. Those who recorded the history of the former prophets might have even had some desire (or at least a tendency) to employ fear-of-God to designate loyalty and commitment to the cult; but even if this were so, there is no way to know today that this was the case—for those who wrote Deut-2 Kings simply do not say anything either way on this question. Therefore, while the "literary form" might have some interpretational force, it is too speculative of a phenomenon to be given preference over local context and linguistic characteristics when exegeting a text.

Before looking at several passages, I will list the Deut-2 Kings fear texts according to the source of the fear and the kind/level of fear:

Fear Before Men—Fear: 1 Sam 12:18. *Dread*: Deut 2:4; 20:1; 20:8; 28:10; Josh 9:24; 10:2; 10:25; Judg 7:3; 7:10; 1 Sam 7:7; 17:11; 17:24; 21:12(13); 23:3; 28:5; 28:20; 1 Kings 1:50; 1:51; 17:13; 2 Kings 6:16; 10:4. *Terror*: 1 Sam 31:4. *Awe*: Josh 4:14. *Unknown*: 1 Sam 14:26.

Fear before God—Fear: Judg 6:23; 1 Sam 12:20; 2 Sam 6:9. *Dread*: 1 Sam 4:7. *Terror*: Deut 5:5. *Virtue*: Deut 4:10; 5:29; 6:2, 13, 24; 8:6; 10:12, 20; 13:4(5); 14:23; 17:19; 25:18; 28:58; 31:12, 13; Josh 4:24; 22:25; 24:14; Judg 6:10; 1 Sam 12:14, 18, 24; 1 Kings 8:40, 43; 18:3, 12; 2 Kings 4:1; 17:7, 25, 28, 32-39, 41.

Fear as an Attribute of Things—Terrible: Deut 1:19.

Fear as an Attribute of God's Works—Awesome: Deut 10:21; 2 Sam 7:23.

Fear as an Attribute of God—Awesome: Deut 7:21; 10:17; 28:58; Judg 13:6. *Terrible*: Deut 8:15.

A glance at the above list shows, first of all, that real fear is a part of Deuteronomy and the former prophets—so ירא does not develop into an abstact virtue of a cult follower and leave fear behind. This is an important point. There continues to be (as in the rest of the OT) the feeling of fear as an anchor. Other meanings could have developed, but the existence of these fear-feeling passages show that the other meanings could—in whole or in part—still mean "fear." Nevertheless, Becker indicates that all the virtue fear-of-God texts in this section stand for virtues closely related to loyalty and/or obedience to the YHWH cult. To justify this, he claims that many of these fear-of-God instances are in

synonymous parallel with adjacent or nearby lines that have to do with covenant loyalty.[201] Verses in which he finds synonymous parallels are:

Deut 5:29: Keep the commandments.

Deut 6:2: Keep the commandments.

Deut 6:13: Worship and swear by God's name.

Deut 6:24: Observe God's statutes.

Deut 8:6: Keep the commandments and walk in God's ways.

Deut 10:12: Walk in God's ways and love him and serve him.

Deut 10:20: Serve God and cling to him and swear by his name.

Deut 13:4: Follow God and keep the commandments and listen to his voice and serve him and cling to him.

Deut 28:58: Follow God's laws.

Deut 31:12: Observe the words of the law.

Josh 24:14: Serve God in sincerity and truth.

1 Sam 12:14: Serve God and listen to his voice and do not rebel against his commands.

1 Sam 12:24: Serve God in truth and with all the heart and consider what he has done.

2 Kings 17:34: They do not follow the commandments or the statutes or the laws or the ordnances.

2 Kings 17:35: Do not bow down to other gods and do not serve them and do not sacrifice to them.

2 Kings 17:36: Bow down to God and sacrifice to him.

These parallels are where Becker finds his main evidence that these passages fit the theme of the literary form.[202] But it should be kept in mind that this opinion (that the parallelism is by and large synonymous) *is driven by the literary form*. Becker is clear in saying that the law commitment thrust that is a part of his Deuteronomistic form is the determining factor in how fear-of-God of God is viewed:

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[201] Plath, 1962, 33, identifies many of these (in his words) "parallel expressions" (*parallele Ausdrücke*)—and it is from him that I borrow the term "parallel." Becker, 1965, identifies them as "synonymous expressions" (*synonyme Wendungen* [see pp. 94, 99, 107, 115, 117, 120]). Because of Plath's use of "parallel," Becker's *de facto* designation of these verses as such, and some indications that many of these "parallels" really are in poetic relationship with fear-of-God, it seems acceptable to employ the term.

[202] Plath, 1962, 33, also notices and makes use of these parallels.

> Die Erkenntnis, dass das Gesetz in alter Zeit und auch noch im Deuteronomy—freilich in literarischer Darstellung—die Funktion der Bundessatzung hatte und sich dadurch vom Gesetz als der „absoluten Grösse der Spätzeit" tiefgreifend unterscheidet, verdanken wir vor allem M. Noth. Diese Auffassung darf als bekannt vorausgesetzt werden und ist hier nicht im einzelnen darzulegen und zu beweisen. *Es genügt uns, sie für das Verständnis des Begriffs des Jahwe-Fürchtens im Deuteronomy zuverwerten.* (emphasis mine)[203]

Here, Becker reveals more clearly his method that was ambiguously mentioned in the *Vorwort*. His statement there bears repeating:

> Die Begriffsarten mit ihren sprachlichen Formen sind hinwiederum an bestimmte literarische Formen oder literarische Schichten gebunden. Bei der Erklärung der einselnen Stellen wird aus dem jeweiligen Kontext der Nachweis zu erbringen sein, dass die Annahme einer bestimmten sprachlichen Form für eine bestimmte Begriffsausprägung zu Recht besteht. Die Anwendung dieser Methode zur Ermittlung von Begriffsunterschieden soll eine wesentliche Aufgabe der vorliegenden Arbeit sein.[204]

When Becker in this quote mentions using the "prevailing context" that comes out of the "individual places," it is now clear that he means the literary form context and not the immediate biblical context. In the case of Deuteronomy, as Becker mentions in the quote before last, "prevailing context" has everything to do with the late literary creation of the Mosaic Law-based YHWH cult. Therefore, this concentration upon the "federal laws" (which everything should be interpreted in light of) should be "presupposed" and there is no need "to explain" it or "to prove" it. As has already been said, this method is a great over-generalization taken from a highly speculative theory that is ultimately not a study into the OT uses of fear-of-God *per se* (in which an exhaustive biblical [i.e., theological] analysis of each text and each context is accomplished), but a forcing of large groups of fear-of-God texts into a few "idea-types" preconceived by form-critics. The "Deuteronomistic" group of *virtue*-fear-of-God texts is easy prey for this method because most of them do not have any in-verse context to protect them from misinterpretation.[205] But Becker takes one *potential* in-verse (and sometimes near-verse) context-producer—i.e., the *parallel*—and uses this phenomenon as "evidence" that the idea-type fits the literary form. He does this by designating many of the parallels as "synonymous," not based upon local context, but because a "synonymous" designation often fits with the

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[203] Becker, 1965, 89.

[204] Ibid., v.

[205] What I mean here is this: if a text says "And David was afraid of the LORD that day" (2 Sam 6:9), we know from the context (Uzzah was suddenly killed for mishandling the ark) that David had the feeling of fear. The "virtue" fear-of-God texts, on the other hand, are not depicting (at least in their immediate context) an epiphany or startling work of God. They are often imperative ("fear God!"), narrative accounts of a condition ("He did not fear God" Deut 25:18), or Psalmic non-narrative poetry that tells *about* men and women *who* do or do not fear God ("You who fear the LORD, praise him!" Ps 22:23 [24]).

demands of the literary form. With this accomplished, he can then say that a general idea-type exists for the Deuteronomistic literary form, and finally declare how this one idea-type fits in finely with the one main linguistic form that is mainly found there—that is, the verb + YHWH.

A brief look at several of these virtue-fear-of-God texts should be sufficient to show how Becker's overemphasis on the literary form tends to degrade the plain meaning of the text. My first example, Deut 6:13, is also the first one that Becker uses to justify his position (v. 12 is included for context):

> 6:12 take care that you do not forget the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 6:13 The LORD your God you shall fear; him you shall serve, and by his name alone you shall swear.[206]

When this text is read, "fear" can certainly be interpreted to mean just what it says, i.e., the feeling of fear. There is the possibility, however, that there exists some element of figurative meaning. So when one goes to the surrounding context to gain perspective, one reads that Moses is recounting (in chapter five) the giving of the law at Sinai approximately forty years previous, and imploring the new generation not to make the mistakes of their fathers and mothers and thereby once again fall under the harsh judgment of God. When the reader ponders the fearful events at Sinai and the wrath of God that repeatedly broke out against the "rebellious and stiff-necked" people (Deut 31:27), he or she would not be surprised to find among Moses' admonitions some mention of fear. In fact, much of what Moses says in Deuteronomy is quite threatening in tone, because evil-doing among the Israelites—despite all the past lessons—is routinely made out to be inevitable (which, in turn, inevitably brings on God's wrath and punishment). With this disturbing mood in the readers mind, could he or she then say that the imperative "fear the LORD" in this stormy atmosphere has no place? Given the circumstances, is it reasonable to fear? It appears obvious that the fear feeling could certainly be a part of this context—and would quite reasonably be expected. I mention this in order to set a contrast with how Becker interprets the passage.

The framework of the recounting of the Ten Commandments in chapter five is the main local contextual consideration according to Becker. Much of what is said in chapter six is meant to focus attention on loyalty and obedience to YHWH—which implies the keeping of his commandments. To this end, he takes it that תירא ("you shall fear") in v. 13 is in synonymous parallel (also in v. 13) with תעבד ("you shall serve") and תשבע ("you shall swear"), as well as פן תשכח ("lest you forget") in v. 12 and ואהבת ("you shall

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[206] I designate this a virtue-fear-of-God case because, first, there is no epiphany or awesome work of God that the fear is a reaction to; second, the fear is something that is commanded—therefore it must be a quality (virtue) that is highly desired by God; and, third, it can imply other virtues that flow out of the primary fear-feeling virtue.

love") in v. 5.[207] Now, even though Becker says, "In 6:13 [*yorē'*] is surrounded by a row of synonymous expressions," it is clear that he does not mean that these expressions are synonymous with the *feeling* of fear; rather, the semantic flow is always away from fear and toward the meaning of the parallels.[208] But in the case of this text, Becker would have a difficult time saying that fear-of-God is synonymous with serving and swearing and not forgetting and loving. Fear would semantically be very elastic indeed if it could also mean these. In order to get the kind of parallelism that he desires, Becker comes up with an interesting twist: he first applies the Deuteronomistic emphasis of loyalty to YHWH onto the meaning of the parallels. By saying, for example, that "lest you forget" really is designed to say "worship YHWH alone," then a nice synonymous parallel can be found with "fear the LORD" after "fear" here has also been subjected to and interpreted according to the literary form. With serving, swearing, not forgetting, and loving now gelled into a convenient cult-centered generalization, תירא in v. 13 can now more easily be seen to be in synonymous parallel with them (because the same generalization applies to it too). One gets the feeling that much of the contextual detail he goes into on many of the passages is simply a formality—for, at best, only one feature of the context (i.e., the attempt to get people to be loyal to the cult and to the cult's God) has any substantial relevance.[209] This is not to say that Becker—even with his flawed "history of religions" foundation—does not perceive important elements of the text that were quite likely to be to some degree upon the minds of the writers. But even if a major intention of the text was to build loyalty and obedience to YHWH and his Jerusalem cult, it does not follow that "loyalty" and "obedience" are the only aspects of cult life to which Moses' imperatives must somehow point.[210]

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[207] Becker, 1965, 94, writes (note: his transliteration symbols are somewhat different than those of the SBL system used in this dissertation): „In 6, 13 ist *jāre'* von einer Reihe synonymer Wendungen umgeben, die ihrerseits erhärten, dass *jāre'* nicht formell Gesetzesbeobachtung ausdrückt. Sie kreisen sämtlich um Bundestreue und Verehrung Jahwes als des allein zu verehrenden Gottes; sie sind ja, wie bereits erwähnt wurde, ein Kommentar zum Hauptgebot des Dekalogs. Die synonymen Wendungen sind: *šākah 'ät-JHWH* (v. 12); *'ābad* (v. 13) (vgl. 5, 9), das zweifellos Terminus kultischer Verehrung ist; *nišba' bišᵉmô* (v. 13) (vgl. 5, 11), das Anerkennung und Verehrung einer Gottheit voraussetzt, da man bei dem Gott schwört, den man verehrt; *hālak 'ahᵃrê ᵃlohîm 'aherîm*, das antithetisch zur Jahwetreue steht. Wir können sodann noch *'āhab* in 6, 5 zu den Synonyma des in 6, 13 stehenden *jāre'* rechnen …."

[208] Ibid., 94. One could reasonably question why the parallels to virtue-fear-of-God cases are so often semantically in the driver's seat and not the other way around.

[209] Deut 10:12 is quite similar to 6:13 (with parallels of "walk in all [God's] ways," "to love him," "to serve the LORD," and [in v. 13] "to keep the commandments of the LORD"). Becker (Ibid., 99) applies the same "method" there with similar results.

[210] If Becker's form-critical history-of-religions scenario is correct, then perhaps the text really does only have the "reality" (i.e., the intention of the author) of generating loyalty and obedience to the (artificial) cult; in this case, all imperatives could quite likely be intended to be

The same semantic blending is also seen in Becker's handling of Deut 13:4 (Heb. v. 5): "The LORD your God you shall follow, him alone you shall fear, his commandments you shall keep, his voice you shall obey, him you shall serve, and to him you shall hold fast." In this verse are found, according to Becker, "the longest row of typical Deuteronomistic expressions of YHWH-affiliation and law-observation."[211] The same Deuteronomistic effect is also seen by Becker once one moves into the books of the former prophets. For example, there are many Joshua chapter 24 synonymous parallels to ירא (in v. 14).[212] Becker lists the following: "serve" the LORD (vv 14, 15, 18, 19, 21, 22, 24), "put away" other gods (vv. 14, 23), "incline your hearts to the LORD" (v. 23), "hear" the voice of the LORD (v. 24), do not "forsake the LORD" (vv. 16, 20), do not "serve foreign gods" (vv. 16, 20), and do not deal "falsely" with God (v. 27). Regarding these Becker says, "All terms and expressions express loyalty to YHWH or the opposite."[213] The same goes for many of the parallel expressions in and surrounding 1 Sam 12:14 and 24. In the former, Becker lists the following synonyms to ירא: do not "forget" the LORD (v. 9), do not "forsake" the LORD (v. 10), do not "serve" Baal or Astartes (v. 10), "serve" the LORD (v. 10, 14), "heed his voice" (v. 14), do "not rebel against the commandment of the LORD" (v. 14), and "follow the LORD" (v. 14).[214] The synonymous parallels to the virtue-fear-of-God text in 1 Sam 12:24 are: "do not turn aside from following the LORD" (v. 20), "serve the LORD with all your heart" (v. 20), "do not turn aside after useless things" (v. 21), "serve him faithfully with all your heart" (v. 24), and do not do "wickedly" (v. 25).[215]

Becker closes his investigation of the Deuteronomistic literary type by commenting briefly upon the many virtue-fear-of-God cases in 2 Kings 17. In his estimation, "it stands without doubt that [*yorē'*] here means 'worship' [„*verehren*"], and no translator has decided differently." With this confident statement, Becker goes on to say that "it is

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taken to denote this reality. On the other hand, if YHWH is real and the Jerusalem cult developed in the working out of his redemptive plan upon earth, then the imperatives of Moses can signify realities that have to do with that redemptive plan—those realities being, for example, blessings, love, joy, sin, wrath, curses, punishment, fear, being in the "book of life" or not being in it, etc., etc.

[211] Becker, 1965, 102.

[212] A number of his examples are "antithetical." For ease of understanding, I have presented them all as imperatives (e.g., for Josh 24:27—"[this stone] shall be a witness against you, if you *deal falsely with your God*"—I record Becker's synonymous parallel as "*do not deal falsely with God*").

[213] Becker, 1965, 115.

[214] Ibid., 117.

[215] Ibid., 117, 118.

superfluous, therefore, to quote the synonymous expressions."[216] In 2 Kings 17:7-41, there are not a few "expressions"—many of them like those listed in the paragraph above—that Becker would no doubt consider to be synonymous parallels to "fear." Much could be said about the fear texts here: it seems at first glance that they *could* be referring to "worship" (which Becker understands as being an aspect of the general Deuteronomistic loyalty to YHWH theme). Indeed, many Bible translations do use "worship" here (NRSV, NIV, NLT, NCV [also "honor"]); but several stick with "fear" (KJV, NKJV, NASB). One could insert "worship," or even "honor," or "praise," and it would not go against what sounds natural to the ear. But in view of the disastrous downfall-of-Israel context of this pericope, a strong element of real fear is very likely indicated. This fearful context is present even if "Deuteronomist"/"Deuteronomistic" writers did "construct" much if not all of the history—for even from a literary standpoint, there is still enough sin and punishment and pain and death around to justify the feeling of fear. The 2 Kings narrative does not give much in the way of details about what went on during the 8th century BC Assyrian sieges of the cities in Israel and Judah; but from what is now known extra-biblically about Assyrian siege warfare from around that time (8th cent. BC), the three year siege of Samaria (2 Kings 17:5) must have been horrible.[217] The writer of 2 Kings 17 is at pains to show that the Israelites got what they deserved, for the LORD had warned them not to worship idols (v. 12), to not turn from his commands (v. 13), to not worship or bow down to other gods (v. 35), to carefully follow all aspects of the law (v. 37), and to not forget the covenant that he had made with them. The Israelites, however, "sinned against the LORD their God" (v. 7) by practicing the religions of the surrounding nations (v. 8), by setting up high places and sacred stones and Asherah poles (vv. 9, 10), by disobeying his commandments (v. 16), by bowing down to the stars and worshipping Baal (v. 16), and by practicing human sacrifice, divination, and sorcery (v. 17).

That the fear feeling is indicated in chapter 17 in also implied by the several contrasts made between fearing God and fearing "other gods" (see vv. 35-39). As Otto's work has to some degree accurately pointed out, people around the world are prone to fear whatever ends up being their object of worship. And the more "primitive" and "demonic"-oriented this worship is, the more there is of the feeling of fear.[218] The point to be learned from this is that people are prone to fear false gods who they believe can either bless their lives or make their lives miserable. But sometimes blended into the fear of

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[216] Ibid., 120. In the German here, Becker writes: „Es steht ausser Zweifel, dass *jāre'* hier ‚verehren' bedeutet, und kein Übersetzer hat sich anders entschieden. Es erübrigt sich deshalb, die synonymen Wendungen anzuführen."

[217] 2 Kings 17 should be read in light of the sickening predictions made in Deut 28:49-57.

[218] See the analysis of Rudolf Otto's „*Das Heilige*" earlier in this chapter.

false gods is the fear of real demonic and/or satanic activity. Those depicted in the Bible as being in idolatry are often portrayed as being in bondage. For example, the prophets of Baal went as far as flagellating and cutting themselves in their effort to move Baal to action (1 Kings 18:28), and some in the remnant of the people remaining in the land after the Assyrian exile went as far as to sacrifice their children (2 Kings 17:17) in order to appease their god (probably Molech—see 2 Kings 23:10). The nations lived in fear of their gods, and did strange and appalling things in order to please them. But YHWH calls his people to not fear idols because they are powerless to do any harm or good in comparison to the harm and good that he can do.[219] The same principle is stated by Jesus when he said *to his disciples*, "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell." Christ is clearly referring in the first clause to anyone other than God, and in the second clause, to God.[220] The fear that is mentioned here must be seen in light of the discussion of the inevitability of persecution that takes place just before. The point is that Jesus' disciples should not fear those who might persecute them—for they have no power to harm the soul—but to fear God who has the power and authority to harm both body and soul.[221] But in this fear of God's punishment is great hope: the God who has the power to make life miserable is also the God who has the power to create abundant life for his followers. At the end of the 2 Kings section recounting the horrible consequences for failing to "fear" YHWH is found this principle—but it is spoken positively: "'And the covenant that I have made with you, you shall not forget, nor shall you fear other gods. But the LORD your God you shall fear; and He will deliver you from the hand of all your enemies.'" (17:38, 39 NKJV). Most of the versions translate the two "fear" instances here as "worship." I believe this is a significant loss, for in this text, God is saying that by fearing God alone (who, alone, *ought* to be feared) one can be free from the fear of false gods and also be free of the fear of everything else (except God).[222]

It would also appear to be an essential loss when the instance of ירא in v. 35 is translated (as most versions do) as "worship." There, the LORD is quoted as commanding: "You shall not fear other gods, nor bow down to them nor serve them nor

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[219] This is clearly his message in Jeremiah chapter ten.

[220] See the discussion of Matt 10:28 in the section on NT uses of fear-of-God below.

[221] The same principle exists behind the words of YHWH throughout Deut-2 Kings as he repeatedly calls his people away from false god worship, and he repeatedly backs up his claim to fearsomeness through many warnings.

[222] This "fear and bondage" can be felt as a „*Grundton*" in the annals of the Assyrian kings who brought about the downfall of the Northern Kingdom. The accumulation of booty and bodies is routinely connected with the satiation of their gods, and the mood is generally dark and heartless (see Luckenbill, 1927). See also 1 Chron 16:25, 26 for the justification for fearing God alone: "For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the LORD made the heavens" (NIV).

sacrifice to them ….” If all is blending into the Deuteronomistic idea of worship, then the textual richness that illustrates the *details* of idolatry is overlooked. In this case, the text implies that many of the Israelites had been *afraid* of “other gods.” This is a call for them to not be afraid of them (which would be a great benefit to be freed from this fear [as vv. 38 and 39 suggest]). The translation “do not worship other gods” completely loses the idea that one can be freed from the fear inherent in idolatry. From a syntactical standpoint, the next phrase—“nor bow down to them”—is much nearer in lexical meaning to “worship.” If the translator felt that one of these should be rendered “worship,” חָוָה (DBLSD: “bow down,” “prostrate oneself,” “bow in worship” [only in the rare Hishtafel form]) would be the first choice.[223] But the best choice would be to follow the MT and LXX texts and simply describe the phenomena that are a part of false god worship—i.e., fearing and bowing down.[224]

The most important contextual factor for determining how ירא is used in the many Deut-2 Kings virtue-fear-of-God passages is (as mentioned above) the fearful context of the Mosaic Law. In a key passage (Deut 4:9-13), the admonition to teach the fear-of-God is clearly set within the fearful context of the giving of the law at Sinai:

> Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren, 4:10 especially concerning the day you stood before the LORD your God in Horeb, when the LORD said to me, ‘Gather the people to Me, and I will let them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and *that* they may teach their children.’ 4:11 “Then you came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire to the midst of heaven, with darkness, cloud, and thick darkness. 4:12 And the LORD spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of the words, but saw no form; *you* only *heard* a voice. 4:13 So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone.

Here, Moses is trying to remind the people of the deadly seriousness of the LORD when he called them to Sinai about forty years earlier to receive the law. Moses paints a picture in the minds of his hearers of the terrifying scene and informs them that the reason for having the people endure the Sinai spectacle was to instill in them (“that they may learn” v. 10) the fear of the LORD. This was supposed to be a lesson that the Israelites would learn and pass on to their children (v. 9). The reason *why* they should learn this is stated in the narrative description itself (in Exod 20:18-20):

> Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw *it,* they trembled

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[223] The 1912 version of the Luther Bible goes this way („Fürchtet keine andern Götter und betet sie nicht an“).

[224] Only occasionally does the LXX deviate from translating ירא (and its derivatives) as φοβέω (and its derivatives). One example is Josh 22:25 where LXX uses σέβομαι (“to worship”).

and stood afar off. 20:19 Then they said to Moses, "You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die." 20:20 And Moses said to the people, "Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin."

In view of these two passages, it is clear that "fear" was to be "learned" and to be a part of the Israelites' relationship with God "all the days they live on the earth." The purpose for this fear is clearly stated in Exod 20:20b: "so that you may not sin." Moses's encouragement to the people *not* to fear (Exod 20:20a) should in no way be taken as somehow canceling out this teachable fear. Moses—in his role as mediator—was only trying to calm their *extreme level* of fear that was precipitated by a *misunderstanding* of God and his motives.[225] The Israelites still did not yet realize that—despite the smoke, thunder, quaking mountain, and threats of punishment—God still had their best interest in mind. Considering the fearful circumstances then, what was *promised* to happen if the

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[225] Durham, 1987, implies that no fear at all was warranted when the people beheld the terrifying epiphany: "The people must have no fear, [Moses] says, because God had come for the purpose of giving them the experience of his Presence" (303) He further believes that the fear that would make the Israelites avoid sin is really reverence, which is a "basic emphasis of Israel's teaching tradition"—an idea that he picks up from Becker and Stähli (the latter draws almost exclusively from the former; see my p.123). Finally, Durham writes: "What is meant by such 'reverence' or 'fear' is a respect for Yahweh/Elohim that will give a constant emphasis to his way for living and relationship, and so avoid the missing of the way (חטא) that is sin" (304). Bamberger throughout his article argues that fear-of-God cases in the OT should in most cases be taken in a "derived sense" (i.e., they mean something else other than the fear feeling). His main proof text is Exod 20:20 of which he says, "Plainly, Moses either contradicted himself within a single sentence, or else used the word *fear* with two widely different connotations." On the face of it, Bamberger has a point. Several things, however, can be said in response: Moses could have easily used one of the normal words for "worship"—חוה or עבד—if that were the intended meaning (note: Deut-2 Kings by far prefers חוה or עבד [and not ירא] in cases in which the context *strongly suggests* worship—see Deut 4:19; 12:2; 17:3; 29:18 (17); 30:17; 31:20; Josh 22:27; 1 Sam 1:3; 15:24; 2 Sam 12:20; 15:32; 1 Kings 1:47; 2 Kings 18:22; 19:37; 21:3). It does not seem, however, that "worship" would "goad" people away from sin. Worship and loyalty and honor do not really *force* a sinful person away from sin; but fear can. In any case, יראה (n.f.) is used for several good reasons. First, the Israelites' situation is conditional upon their improvement in conduct (Exod 19:3); in other words, fear is not unexpected in view of the big "if" regarding their future survival. Second, God obviously made the Sinai experience as dreadful and terrifying as possible for a reason (see Deut 4:10; 5:29). As Moses indicates, the experience was a "test," and that test had the ultimate purpose of dissuading the people from sin. The intensity of the people's sin and the intensity of God's anger (see Deut 9:14—God was so angry that he wanted to kill them all) provides justification to the idea that God—at this initial stage of the relationship— simply used terror as a means to scare the people out of their sin. God had certainly shown love and compassion already towards his people as they came out of Egypt; but their conduct at Sinai demonstrates that they were still so "stiff-necked" and prone to spiritual adultery that God appears fully justified in using the force of fear to make the people behave in a way that would be good for them in the long run. Worship eventually came about through the Sinai experience—but it appears that fear was a necessary step to get there.

people disobeyed, and in view of what *did* happen later (the horrors under siege conditions should be kept in mind here), it seems that some fear-of-God would be a small price to pay if it helped the people avoid sin and its disastrous results.[226] Going again to 2 Kings 17, the LORD made it clear that fear of him would bring a good result (i.e., he would "deliver [them] from the hand of all [their] enemies" v. 39); conversely, when the people would not fear the LORD, then disaster surely followed (in the case of failing to fear in v. 25, the LORD responded by sending lions to attack the people). The reason I mention these texts is simply to make the point that the Deut-2 Kings virtue-fear-of-God cases (and I believe for the rest of the Bible as well) cannot be semantically separated from the fearful lessons learned at Sinai: God is supreme in power and moral authority and humans are contingent beings who are obligated to live according to God's law. But because humans are universally susceptible to sin, the threat of God's punishment is ever at hand—and fear comes as a result. But fear is not just a *result*; in view of the fact that it is commanded, fear to some extent can be *willed*. And this can come about through *knowledge*. This was to some extent the purpose of Sinai: to educate the Israelites about the true nature of God and of themselves. With this knowledge, they could ponder their situation and potentialities, and choose to fear God as a result. The fear-of-God phenomenon, therefore, is somewhat paradoxical: it is an unpleasant result to be avoided; but each occurrence of fear-of-God that results from sin is (if a person is willing) an *education* in the way things really are in life "under the sun." As a result, a man or woman can walk more circumspectly and fearfully in order to avoid sin, punishment, and even more fear that could lead to even more wisdom. This paradox might be reflected in

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[226] Plath, 1962, 40, understands that YHWH's „*Furchtbarkeit*" is to a significant extent attributable to YHWH's absolute will and omnipotence. This idea will be critical for the understanding of fear-of-God in Qoheleth. I believe that modern theologians have tended to minimize the fear-feeling that is justified when one is faced with greater authority and power. It is very much the spirit of the age in the west to dismiss fear before authoritative and/or powerful people or institutions (this might be an inevitable characteristic of wealthy socialized democracies that are relatively insolated from abuses of power [at least, in the minds of the people]). Even Becker, 1965 (in his monograph's forward), admits (and claims he will resist) the efforts of OT commentators to "free the Old Testament" from the accusation that it promotes a religion of fear. But Becker in his Deuteronomistic section gives very little attention to the fear feeling. Plath goes a bit deeper; but in my opinion, they are both only scratching around on the surface of the human/God relational phenomenon of fear-of-God. Plath's opinion (p. 39), however, that fear-of-God and love-of-God should not be entirely separated because it "splits the heart" is indeed a good point. Unfortunately, he does not significantly develop this thought further. The pre-critical fear-of-God commentators (and, perhaps, as well as Otto) might very well have expressed the opinion that one cannot have love-of-God without fear-of-God; but it seems to me that one can have fear-of-God (i.e., total servile fear-of-God) without any love-of-God. Whatever the case, one does not have to think too long about the psychology of love and fear to realize that these mental phenomena are very complex and related to each other in ways that are beyond understanding.

Solomon's words that fear-of-God is the "end of the matter" (Eccl 12:13) as well as "the beginning" of both wisdom and knowledge (Prov 1:7; 9:10). Despite this paradoxical nature, one thing is for sure: the Bible repeatedly portrays fear-of-God in a positive light, and teaches that it ought to be practiced by all (as Qoheleth says, fear-of-God [and keeping his commandments] is the "all" of humankind [Eccl 12:13b]).

A few remarks should now be made regarding Becker's suggested *synonymous* parallels. Becker uses literary parallels in the "Deuteronomistic" literary genre as a conduit to bring the virtue-fear-of-God cases found there into line with the demands of the literary form. That is, fear means "loyalty" (or similar) because fear is synonymous to the parallels that are in one way or another indicative of loyalty. This program of Becker's does not work for a variety of reasons. It is extremely unlikely, first of all, that so many parallels of such diverse literal meanings could be synonymous with fear and/or loyalty. The method of bringing the demands of the Deuteronomistic form to bear on both the virtue-fear-of-God cases as well as the parallels, and then professing that they are then all synonymous, goes against normal semantics and certainly degrades the exegete's ability to determine the information that the writer intended to transfer to the reader. A common sense reading of most of the parallels reveal many specific details about Israelite religious life that enrich the narrative. A few of them may figuratively mean "loyalty," but the majority have their own semantic focus and at most are only related to cult loyalty in that the action or emotion described is simply what cult-honoring people *do* or *feel*. The parallels to virtue-fear-of-God in Deut-2 Kings inform the reader that loyal Israelites do the following: they—

Keep the law (Deut 5:29; 6:2; 8:6; 14:4 [5]; 28:58; 31:12; 2 Kings 17:34)

Swear by God's name (Deut 6:13; 10:20)

Walk in God's ways (Deut 8:6; 10:12)

Love God (Deut 10:12)

Serve God (Deut 10:12, 20, 13:4 [5], Josh 24:14; 1 Sam 12:14; 2 Sam 12:24; 2 Kings 17:35)

Cling to God (Deut 10:20, 13:4 [5])

Follow God (Deut 13:4 [5])

Listen to God's voice (Deut 13:4 [5]; 1 Sam 12:14)

Bow down to God (2 Kings 17:35, 36)

Sacrifice to God (2 Kings 17:35, 36)

This list demonstrates the variety and specificity of the texts in parallel with virtue-fear-of-God. On the face of it, there does not seem to be much room for synonymous parallelism.

But Becker seems to be under the impression that most or all of OT parallelism must be synonymous.[227] But this does not have to be the case. Although parallelism is a phenomenon mostly discussed in the context of clearly poetical texts, its use is found throughout the OT. Parallelism is "the basic feature of biblical songs—and, for that matter, of most of the sayings, proverbs, laws, laments, blessings, curses, prayers, and speeches found in the Bible."[228] Whether or not the virtue-fear-of-God texts and their alleged parallels in Deut-2 Kings are part of poetical sections is still a debated question. Whatever the case, the existence of parallels there—in the sense of one clause which follows on and somehow expands upon another—is obviously a reality. For this brief discussion about parallelism, a look at Deut 6:13 will be helpful. The NRSV text reads: "You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name." This verse could be seen to consist of three cola in parallel:

The LORD—fear!/

Him [the LORD]—serve!/

In his [the LORD's] name—take oaths!//

When one initially reads through the verse, it is certainly evident that the three cola are intimately *related* to YHWH worship. And yet each colon has its own particular message: the first colon commands fear of God, the second commands submissive service, and the third commands that one appeal to YHWH as the highest authority when taking oaths. The first and third commands involve—respectively—the heart (feeling/emotion) and mind (intellectual assent to YHWH's authority); but the second command has to do with

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[227] Christensen, 1991, 204, suggests the following for Deut 10:12: "Careful prosodic analysis suggests that the term is defined here by means of poetic parallelism: "to fear YHWH" is "to walk in all his ways." This phrase is explained by the words that follow: "to fear God" means "to love him and to serve YHWH your God with all your heart and with all your being" (v 12)." Wright, 1953, 399, writes regarding Deut 10:12: "To fear God means to walk along the paths which he has laid out; to love God means to serve him and obey him. Note that it is characteristic of Deuteronomy to combine fear and love, and to see the fruit of both in obedient service." Calvin, 1950, 359, on the other hand, appears to keep fear-of-God quite close to the fear emotion/feeling when summing up Deut 10: "Lest they should despise this teaching [Moses] reminds them of God's awful power [in Deut 10:17]; for the cause of contempt and negligence is, that the majesty of God does not always obtain its due reverence. Wherefore he inspires them with fear, to deter them from self-indulgence and indifference." Plath, 1962, 41, notices that אהב has a number of the same parallels as ירא, and therefore sees some blending of the former into the latter. But he does not press the requirements of the Deuteronomistic literary form into ירא as hard as Becker—and his view, therefore, is more balanced. He points out, for example, that in Deut 1:1, „stützt sich das Liebesgebot ebenfalls auf die Erkenntnis der "fruchtbaren" Taten Gottes …. Ebenso kann auch nicht unwidersprochen bleiben, dass sich die ירא-Belege lediglich auf die Furchtbarkeit und die Strafen Jahves beziehen …."

[228] Kugel, 1981, 1. His chapter two is devoted to prose parallelism.

91

the works that flow out from the attitude of the heart *and* the orientation of the mind. Or, it could be that "serve!"—as is commonly done—be translated as "worship!" Whatever the case, the second colon could be understood as the center of a small chiastic arrangement in which the "works" (either service and/or worship) that are a part of YHWH cult loyalty flow from the affective and cognitive wellspring of the believer.

This sample verse simply illustrates that many factors come into play in parallelism. According to Kugel, the parallel cola A and B (and C, etc.) can have a near or distant relationship:

> The ways of parallelism are numerous and varied, and the intensity of the semantic parallelism established between clauses might be said to range from "zero perceivable correspondence" to "near-zero perceivable differentiation" (i.e., just short of word-for-word repetition).[229]

In his monograph, Kugel presents many kinds of biblical parallelisms (and he does not claim to have established an exhaustive list). In general, he sees parallelism as simply indicating: "'A is so, and *what's more*, B is so.' That is, B was connected to A, had something in common with it, but was not expected to be (nor regarded as) mere restatement."[230] He further explains:

> What this means is simply: B, by being connected to A—carrying it further, echoing it, defining it, restating it, contrasting with it, *it does not matter which*—has an emphatic, 'seconding' character, and it is this, more than any aesthetic of symmetry or paralleling, which is at the heart of biblical parallelism.[231]

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[229] Ibid., 7. Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, 1993, 225, write, "Scholars refer to the structure of Hebrew poetry as *parallelism of members*, a term that has unfortunately spawned a common misunderstanding. Many people understand "parallelism" to mean that a second poetic line merely restates or contrasts the point of the previous line in different words. They assume that an equal sign (=) links the lines together. Actually, parallelism is that phenomenon whereby two or more successive poetic lines strengthen, reinforce, and develop each other's thought. As a kind of emphatic additional thought, the follow-up lines further define, specify, expand, intensify, or contrast the first."

[230] Kugel, 1981, 8.

[231] Ibid., 51. Fokkelman, 2001, uses the metaphor of binoculars and eyes to understand parallelism: "The dynamics and surprises of *parallelismus membrorum* may also be expressed in a metaphor. This way of constructing verses is like a pair of binoculars.… We look through two cylinders, with both eyes, so that we have the advantage of seeing depth. Our eyes, with or without binoculars, see 'in stereo.' The effect results from the fact that one eye has a slightly different angle of incidence that the other and hence produces a minimally different image; these two pictures are easily superimposed and assembled into the one image inside our brain.

Parallelismus membrorum does something comparable: this shaping device creates two subtly different images on one line (the full poetic line). As this is done with the tools of language, we have every opportunity to consider both pictures separately and let them sink in. This is where the metaphor ceases to be appropriate: the point of the similarity between A and B is their very difference! Only those who look closely and have patience will discover and savor the role played by dissimilarity, its surprises, and its richness of meaning." (pp. 78, 79. Kugel [p.

Kugel argues strongly against the idea that one can simply define any given case of parallelism as either synonymous or antithetical. The details of parallel texts and their contexts are way too varied for that. The practice of assuming synonymity in parallel texts is especially criticized by Kugel as "a drastic sort of leveling" that does not understand that B has something to do with A's *completion*." And this "completion" can occur in just about an "endless" variety of ways.[232] I very much agree with Kugel's emphasis on *variety*. In my view, that is what one sees when one thoughtfully considers the virtue-fear-of-God parallels pointed out by Becker. There is too much variety present for them all—or even a small portion of them—to be made to be synonymous in the way that he suggests.

To sum up on Becker's second main section in which he suggests the hermeneutical trio of the Deuteronomistic literary form, ירא plus LORD, and the idea-type of loyalty to the YHWH cult, there can be no doubt that many if not all of the virtue-fear-of-God instances in Deut-2 Kings do intimately *relate* to the establishment of the YHWH cult of the Israelites. God-honoring loyalty to YHWH appears to flow out of fear-of-God; it might even have fear-of-God as a necessary component. Whatever the case, it *is* not loyalty (or worship or obedience). If it were (and I am speaking here in the most direct semantic sense of the word) then ירא would not have been used, but אמן. There is nothing in the virtue-fear-of-God texts in Deuteronomy and the former prophets that preclude them from meaning just what they say—i.e., "fear." It is true that there is some interpretational leeway afforded here by the fact that—unlike in "numinous" fear cases— the object of the fear is not immediately *present* in the context. The same could be said, for example, about "love": the meaning is perfectly clear when a person reads "the man loved his wife as he watched her prepare dinner." But notions of honor and fidelity—with perhaps some attenuation of the love emotion—would be discerned when one reads, "love your wife all the days of your life," or "blessed is the man who loves his wife," or "the love of one's wife is the beginning of marital success" (a pronounced semantic shrinking would, of course, be perceived in "he loved his wife's blueberry pancakes"). More abstract notions of faith, loyalty, honor, and reverence may come into the semantic mix, but the emotion of love will not fail to be the primary constituent. I believe the same thing can be said about the fear feeling in virtue-fear-of-God cases.

The point to be illustrated by this is simply that one must regard the known semantic flexibility of a word (which might have some dependence on linguistic form) and the textual context in which it is used. But Becker's "context" is mainly the

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12] says the term "*parallelismus membrorum*" means "the parallelism of the clauses" and that it was coined by Robert Lowth in his 1753 study *De sacra poesi Hebraeorum*)

[232] Kugel, 1981, 13, 15.

hypothetical historical contexts of the Deuteronomist and Dtr. who were mainly concerned with invoking loyalty to the Jerusalem-centered YHWH cult. Even if Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History came about more or less as the form-critics believe, it still does not explain (if Becker is correct) why the writers would use such a plethora of words of diverse literal meanings to all mean the same thing. Whoever they were who wrote and redacted this large portion of OT narrative, they certainly did not lack skill; they could have—and most likely did—carefully use each word to denote specific meanings that could be understood both then and today. The simplest explanation is most often the best: they wrote what they did because that is what they meant to say. To conclude, it should be said that Becker in this section on Deut-2 Kings puts too much emphasis on the non-fear "virtues" that fear-of-God can allude to. This is done at the (almost) complete expense of the fear feeling—and that is a mistake; for when one considers the fearful circumstances in Deut-2 Kings (in which fear is used to dissuade people from sin), the fact that ירא is still used in plenty of real fear-feeling cases (i.e., it has not semantically developed in a linear fashion), and, lastly, what Becker mentions about the "numinous ground-tone" remaining throughout the OT (even just a little fear is still fear!), one should realize that the writers of the MT and the LXX used—respectively—ירא and φοβέω for a good reason.[233]

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[233] My thesis that the fear emotion/feeling is the primary element in OT virture fear-of-God cases could be brought into question by the fact that Jesus in his quote of Deut 6:13 (or perhaps the nearly identical Deut 10:20) in Matt 4:10 (parallel Luke 4:8) uses "worship" and not "fear." The LXX Deut 6:13a Greek of nearly all manuscripts says: κύριον τὸν θεόν σου φοβηθήσῃ καὶ αὐτῷ λατρεύσεις (lit. "fear the Lord your God and serve him"); but Jesus' quote of this in Matt 4:1b reads, κύριον τὸν θεόν σου προσκυνήσεις καὶ αὐτῷ μόνῳ λατρεύσεις (lit. "you shall worship the Lord your God and serve him alone"). The Matthew text as displayed here (from NA27) is not contested in the manuscripts (they are consistent in using the verb προσκυνέω and not φοβέω) and the LXX text shown (from Rahlfs, *Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft*, 1982) is consistent in the manuscripts—with one notable exception: Alexandrinus (A) dating from the 5th century contains in Deut 6:13 (and in 10:20) the Greek text exactly as quoted by Jesus. The Hebrew manuscripts consistently show ירא in 6:13 (the BHS apparatus does not mention any manuscripts that use חוה ["to bow down," "to worship"—see TWOT #619] in Deut 6:13 or 10:20). To explain the textual difference between Jesus' quote and the LXX text, Allen, 1951, 32, simply suggests that, first, the writer (or the writer's sources) of Matt 4:10 might have possessed and been influenced by a copy of the LXX that used the verb προσκυνέω instead of φοβέω; or, second, there is the possibility that the Matt 4:10 writer wanted to antithetically employ the same word (προσκυνέω) that had just been used by Satan in the verse before ("and [Satan] said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me."). Regarding Allen's first suggestion, I would say that—given the LXX manuscript evidence—it is unlikely that προσκυνέω was used in Deut 6:13 and 10:20 in any of the LXX texts extant at the beginning of the church era. Alexandrinus does indeed use προσκυνέω in Deut 6:13 and 10:20; but these appear to be the only deviations (besides Josh 22:25's σέβομαι ["worship"]) from φοβέω in Deut-2 Kings virtue-fear-of-God texts according to the Rahlfs LXX apparatus. In other words,

Becker's next main category consists of a number of fear-of-God passages from the Psalms.[234] Although he understands this category as being still under the general rubric of "fear-of-God as worship-of-God ('Cultic Idea')"—and therefore closely related to Deut-2 Kings—it nevertheless has the distinctive emphasis of designating *those who belong to the cult community*. This idea-type, says Becker, is represented linguistically by the *plural* of the verbal-adjective יָרֵא which is often found in construct with "YHWH" or "Elohim" (or a pronominal suffix that represents him).[235] This linguistic phenomenon means that the emphasis is not on the fear feeling, but on the state of belongingness to the community:

> Wie dem dt-stischen Begriff eignet dem *jir'ê* JHWH der Psalmen der Zug der Jahwetreue, mit dem Unterschied jedoch, dass es nicht um den Akt des Fürchtens geht, sondern um die Fürchtenden. Der Begriffsart eignet so ein komminitärer Zug,

where the Rahlfs LXX uses φοβέω in virtue-fear-of-God cases, the Rahlfs apparatus does not show any manuscript deviations, except for Deut 6:13; 10:20 where A uses προσκυνέω (Wevers, 1977, LXX apparatus of Deuteronomy was also consulted). Therefore, one gets the feeling that the Deut 6:13/10:20 copyist of A (or one of the copyists or editors of a source [in time] before him) adjusted these Deuteronomy texts to align with the words of Jesus in Matthew. Even if the LXX Deuteronomy text before the writer of Matthew did contain προσκυνέω in Deut 6:13 and 10:20, I still do not think—given my understanding of "inspiration"—that the Matthew writer (who I believe was Matthew) would have recorded the words out of Deuteronomy at the expense of the words that Jesus spoke (of course, Matthew might not have had Jesus' exact words, but perhaps only a note saying [or a memory recalling] that Jesus had quoted Deut 6:13/10:20). Regarding Allen's second possibility that the Matthew writer wanted to (antithetically) balance Satan's use of προσκυνέω, I think this could have some merit: the stark contrast between the two possible worships (between the devil and God) is fine liteary style and brings home the theological point; but I would say that this is not a literary or even theological creation of the writer, but is actually what Jesus said in response to Satan. If so, then this gives authoratative justification to the understanding that enough of the concept of "worship" is contained in Deut 6:13 and 10:20 to permit "fear" there to be translated into "worship." This is what the Lord did *in this circumstance*. And it must finally be kept in mind that προσκυνέω is not completely without an undercurrent of fear—for it first means "to bow down." In those days, to "bow down" and to "worship" were not at all separate from the phenomena of fearful "reverence" and "awe" before God.

[234] Becker, 1965, 125, notes the existence of other fear-of-God idea-types in the Psalms: „Natürlich umfasst diese Gruppe nicht alle Stellen des Psalmenbuches, in dem als einem Sammelbecken verschiedenster Strömungen vielmehr fast alle Begriffsausprägungen der Gottesfurcht anzutreffen sind."

[235] Ibid., 129. The Psalms m/p construct-state verbal-adjectives of יָרֵא are (all of which Becker regards as having adjectival function): 15:4; 22:23 (24), 25 (26); 25:14; 31:19 (20); 33:18; 34:7 (8), 9 (10); 60:4 (6); 61:5 (6); 66:16; 85:9 (10); 103:11, 13, 17; 111:5; Ps 115:11, 13; 118:4; 119:74, 79; 135:20; 145:19; 147:11.

ein Interesse an der Zugehörigkeit zur Gemeinda Jahwes und dadurch etwas Statisches.[236]

This belongingness to the community is especially to be perceived when the construct state is used. In Ps 22, for example, the MT of verse 24 reads יִרְאֵי יְהוָה הַלְלוּהוּ ("You who fear the LORD, praise him!" [English v. 23]). From the pointing of יִרְאֵי it is evident that it is in construct with "YHWH."[237] It is probably not inappropriate to say that most would read this text with the same understanding that is reflected in the NRSV text; that is, "LORD" clearly appears to be the object of fear. But this interpretation appears at first to run against the grain of the construct state that is present here—for the construct often indicates the genitive-of-possession relationship. In this case, יִרְאֵי + LORD should mean "the fearers *of* (i.e., who belong to) the LORD." This is how Becker takes it.[238] By going with the genitive-possessive, the emphasis is not on fear, but on the ownership of the community by God. This ownership is best represented if יִרְאֵי is not viewed as verbal (i.e., as a participle)—which would still allow it to take an object—but as adjectival which fits quite comfortably in the construct state and has no opportunity to display action and therefore claim an object. So, Becker's hermeneutical triad in this section of his book consists of this plural adjective used in construct with LORD (the "linguistic form"), the "idea-type" of membership in the cult community, and the "literary form" of the Psalms.

For a number of reasons I do not think that Becker is on the right track. My main concern is that he pushes forward a form-critical emphasis on cult loyalty at the expense of a literal reading of the text. The consequence is that the original meaning of ירא is pushed aside in favor of something more abstract and in keeping with the notion that fear-of-God evolved. Once again, it should be recalled that Becker is trying to show that a certain literary form will have a certain linguistic form, and that these two will indicate a certain idea-type. The identification of these Psalms' linguistic forms as "adjectival" gives Becker something different that he can then use to justify an idea-type that is also

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[236] Ibid., 126.

[237] In the construct state plural, tsere-yod replaces hiriq-yod + mem. Regarding the other vowels, most Qal active masculine participles, singular or plural, will resist losing the characteristic first syllable holem, even in construct (although the second syllable tsere will usually reduce to shewa in all forms except the singular non-construct). But because יָרֵא is a stative verb—and undergoes vowel changes more like adjectives and nouns—the first syllable qamets usually reduces to shewa and the second syllable tsere will tend to persist (including in the singular construct). The exception is the plural construct which takes the form יִרְאֵי.

[238] Becker, 1965, 127, writes, „In der Verbindung *jir'ê JHWH* regiert *jir'ê* daher nicht den Akkusative wie das Verbaladjektiv in verbaler Funktion (*jāre' 'ät-JHWH*), sondern nach unseren grammatikalischen Kategorien den Genetiv, und zwar nicht einmal den genetivus objectivus, sondern eher den genetivus subjectivus, so dass *jir'ê JHWH* eher ‚die Fürchtenden Jahwes' als ‚die Jahwe Fürchtenden' bedeutet."

quite different. But a plain reading of these texts shows that ירא is being used in each case as a participle (verbal-adjective); and the participle here is not evidence for some semantic shift, but is simply the linguistic form that *naturally* appears in biblical songs. The Israelites at the temple (and elsewhere) sang songs about what happens to those *who* live righteously and about those *who* do evil. The Psalms are mainly not narrative history in which it might be said, "The people feared God" (i.e., narrative tends to use the indicative verb), but are to a large extent songs about the general consequences for those who do either doing good and evil—and this naturally leads to the use of the participle: "Blessed are *those who fear* God." It should be noted that the participle does not normally indicate some basic semantic change; it indicates voice [active or passive] and the type of action corresponding to the type of Hebrew verb [Qal, Piel, etc.]). But only other factors can indicate a change in the basic meaning of a given verb.[239] The participle is simply one of several verbal linguistic forms used *within* a semantic field. But Becker insists these (plural) uses of ירא function adjectivally—and that gives him enough room to justify a shift in meaning (from "fear" to "community"). Becker could have a point if these in fact are pure adjectives (i.e., completely non-verbal modifiers of nouns); but this certainly does not have to be the case—even though they occur in the construct state. It will be necessary to take some time to explain grammatically why this is so.[240]

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[239] Becker (Ibid., 46) makes the case—with some justification—that the Niphal participle נוֹרָא is semantically employed as an adjective; for the form is often used as an attribute of God (see, e.g., Pss 47:3; 68:35 [36]; 76:7 [8]). BDB makes its meaning quite elastic ("fearful," "dreadful," "cause astonishment and awe," "inspire reverence, godly fear, and awe"); but Becker understands that נוֹרָא has not developed but remained quite close to its numinous fear roots. I agree with Becker that this form has become somewhat of an independent entity that modifies nouns (the wilderness [Deut 1:19; 8:15], people [Isa 18:2, 7], the day of YHWH [Joel 2:31 (3:4); Mal 4:5 (3:23)], and, frequently, God)—i.e., it operates adjectivally. But Becker keeps this Niphal form—unlike the Psalms Qal participles that are being discussed in this section—very close to the fear feeling. This is somewhat strange in view of Becker's insistence that the adjectivally functioning instances of ירא mean something quite developed and abstract, yet the adjectivally functioning נוֹרָא stays right close to its semantic roots. The reason why probably relates to the fact that *context* clearly sets some definite limits of how far one can go with the meaning of נוֹרָא. Because it is often used as an attribute of God, one cannot say about it what one would say concerning the virtue-fear-of-God uses that are describing phenomena experienced by men and women. נוֹרָא is also constrained by its clear meaning of "fearful" when used as an attribute of fear-provoking realities other than God. Because of this context, Becker cannot press נוֹרָא into the form-critical mold and find in it some development (even though it is employed throughout the OT) by which it becomes more abstract and less fearful as time goes on.

[240] Becker says that יְרֵא (as used in the Psalms) is a "verbal-adjective in adjectival function." (and there are instances of the m/s which he designates "verbal-adjective[s] in verbal function"). This terminology is ambiguous and needs some explaining: when Becker writes about verbal-adjectives that function adjectivally, he means that there is *no action* in what is said about the nouns that they modify. If this is the case, then they—in my opinion—are no longer "verbal-

This problem of trying to distinguish between participle and adjective is by and large only a problem with stative verbs—one of which is ירא.[241] Most verbs simply describe action (She *throws* …) and have little if anything to do semantically or morphologically with adjectives that describe states (… the *red* ball). But *stative* verbs denote states of being and a few have corresponding adjectives that are identical in appearance to several forms of the verb. For example, consider the stative (qamets/tsere pattern) verbs יָרֵא and מָלֵא ("to fill up, be full" DBLSD): the spellings/pointings of the Qal perfect 3m/s verbs, Qal m/s participles, and the m/s adjectives are identical (יָרֵא, מָלֵא); the Qal m/p active participles and the m/p adjectives are also identical in form (יְרֵאִים, מְלֵאִים). In the biblical cases in which the linguistic form could be an adjective or a verb, then one must consider syntax and context to discern which is being used. Because most stative verbs only describe states and not action, the exegete may not find much semantic difference between the adjective and the verb.

But יָרֵא and מָלֵא are actually part of a small subclass of stative verbs that can indicate a state and/or indicate action (and take an object). With these, it is an important exegetical task to discern if an adjective is being used or a participle—for if there is action present, it might be a critical element in rightly understanding the message of the text. There are a number of OT examples of יָרֵא that depict a stative situation (e.g., Gen 3:10: ויאמר את קלך שמעתי בגן ואירא ["He said, 'I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid'"]); other uses depict action (i.e., they are "fientive") and—in their own unusual way—are transitive (e.g., Num 14:9: אל תיראו את עם הארץ ["Do not fear the people of the land"]).[242] The verb in many forms—including the participle form—can take objects of action. Despite the fact that no real physical action is transferred from

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adjectives" but simply "adjectives" (as they are designated by some of the lexica). All this boils down to grammatical definitions—which can sometimes be problematic. For the sake of clarity in this section, I will limit (somewhat artificially) the use of "adjective" to words that give some *non-action* quality (property) to a noun (or name or pronoun). But if a noun-modifying word imparts any kind of action, then I will call that word a "participle." Also, in describing Becker's opinions in this section, where he designates a word as a "verbal-adjective in adjectival function", I will simply say that he designates the word as an "adjective." If Becker describes a word as a "verbal-adjective in verbal function," I will interpret that to mean that the word is a "participle." This will avoid the repeated use of the cumbersome "verbal-adjective in adjectival/verbal function" formula as well as the ambiguity that is inherent in it (in principle, just as ambiguous as the phrase "adjectival-verb in verbal/adjectival function"). I do this in order to try to discern if there is any action in יְרֵאִי as used in this group of Psalms.

[241] "Adjective" and "participle" are being used here in a somewhat restricted sense. See footnote immediately above.

[242] Waltke and O'Connor, 1990, 363, use the term "fientive" instead of "active" (vs. "stative") because "active" is already used in the nomenclature of *voice*. "A fientive verb," they write, "is one that designates a dynamic situation.… A fientive verb may be either transitive or intransitive …."

subject to object when one fears something (one might argue the "action" goes from object to subject ["the dog caused the man to fear"]), the fear nevertheless does have an object on which it focuses (at the very least, this is the case *grammatically*). Because of this, Waltke and O'Connor think that stative verbs that can have fientive meanings should be "construed as quasi-fientive when they occur either implicitly or explicitly with an object and as stative when they are free."[243]

The potential for stative and fientive meanings in יָרֵא means that the exegete must be careful to distinguish between the verb and the adjective. If one mis-identifies יָרֵא as an adjective when studying a fear passage, the stress will be placed on the *state*; but the *action* of fearing (only possible if יָרֵא is a verb) might be overlooked. As a verb, יָרֵא can indicate stative *or* fientive situations; but as an adjective, it can *only* indicate stative situations.[244] Verbs and adjectives can usually be easily distinguished based upon morphology. But, as just mentioned, with יָרֵא there is the aggravating feature that several of the verb forms are identical to several of the adjectival forms. Because one cannot tell the verb from the adjective based upon morphology alone, then one must consider other factors in deciding which is being used.

Becker is aware of all this as well—and knows that he must find some grammatical reason to justify his designation of these יְרֵאֵי uses as adjectival. He does this by pointing to the fact that all of these Psalms cases of יְרֵאֵי are in the *construct state*.[245] Before replying to this, it should be mentioned that Becker does not claim that the masculine/*singular* cases are adjectives (even though they too are in construct with YHWH/Elohim)—but admits that they take objects and function as "verbal-adjectives." Pss 25:12; 112:1; 128:1, 4, according to Becker, signify "moral" (Ps 25:12) and "law-observation" (Pss 112:1; 128:1, 4) idea-types,[246] and are not in a genitive-*possessive* relationship with LORD or Elohim (like the plural), but in a genitive-*objective*

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[243] Ibid., 366.

[244] The reader is once again reminded that "adjective" is being used somewhat artificially to denote only modifiers of nouns that give the noun some *non-action* property or quality.

[245] Becker, 1965, 126, writes: „Der kommunitäre Zug äussert sich bis in die sprachlichen Formen hinein. Während der dt-stische Begriff ausschliesslich das Verbum gebraucht oder das Verbaladjektiv in verbaler Funktion, haben wir hier das Verbaladjektiv in adjektivaler Funktion. Schon der status constructus ist der Beweis dafür."

[246] Ibid., 127, 285, 286. It is unlikely that יָרֵא in Ps 112:1 is in the construct state. On a different note, Becker appears to hold the view that the kultic („*kultische*") and moral („*sittliche*") idea-types of fear evolved more or less as two streams from the original "numinous" fear (184). The law-observation („*nomistische*") idea-type was a further development of the moral idea-type (262). See the next section for a brief discussion about Becker's moral and law-observation idea-types.

relationship.[247] In other words, in the Psalms (and elsewhere) יְרֵא can take an object but יְרְאֵי cannot. Becker does have a point about these singular construct forms; they do indeed take God as the object of fear. While I agree that the *singular* forms are participles ("verbal-adjectives" as Becker calls them), I do not think he gives any credible reasons for making the distinction. In my view, the only reason he sets the singular cases apart is because there is pressure to fit them in with other instances of the singular form that are deemed to denote the "moral" idea-type.[248] But there is really no good evidence to split off the plurals and make them pure adjectives. The syntax and context do not at all require that. It is true that—apart from any other semantic factors—the construct state does suggest the existence of a genitive-possessive; but this does not have to be the case.[249]

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[247] After Becker claims this sing./plur. distinction, he justifies it with the following: „Damit hängt zusammen, dass das sittliche *j^ere' JHWH* (*'^älohîm*) nie durch die suffigierten Formen vertreten wird, was beim *jir'ê JHWH* sehr häufig der Fall ist …. Die Suffixe drücken eben im allgemeinen leichter unser Possessivpronomen aus als das im Akkusativ stehende Personalpronomen. Der tiefste Grund für den formalen Unterschied zwischen *j^ere' JHWH* (*'^älohîm*) und dem *jir'ê JHWH* der Psalmen liegt in ihrer inhaltlichen Verschiedenheit, zu der nicht zuletzt das Vorhandensein oder Nichtvorhandensein des kommunitären Aspekts, des Interesses an der Zugehörigkeit zur Jahwegemeinde zu rechnen ist." This can be responded to briefly: first, the phenomenon of the second and third person suffixes on the plural is simply what one can expect to exist in the Psalms; for the Psalms speak repeatedly in many lines of poetry—one after the other—about God and people. Because God is mentioned in successive lines there is ample opportunity for the pronominal suffix to be used. Of the total of 30 (LDLS) m/p construct state "verbal-adjectives" of ירא, all but five (Exod 18:21; Eccl 8:12; Mal 3:16 x 2; 4:2 [3:20]) are in the Psalms—so one should expect a mix of "YHWH," "Elohim," "him," and "you" to follow יְרְאֵי. On the other hand, the m/s occurs only eleven (LDLS) times (Gen 22:12; Job 1:1, 8; 2:3; Ps 25:12; 128:1, 4; Prov 13:13; 14:2; Eccl 7:18; Isa 50:10) in passages that by and large do not lend themselves to repeated uses of the pronominal suffix (the Psalms passages could, but 128:1 is the first verse—so "him" or "you" following יְרֵא would be nonsensical; 128:4 occurs after a number of lines that do not mention God—so the pronominal suffix would not be expected there; and 25:12 could have gone either way). Regarding Beckers " deepest reason" for the m/s and m/p distinction, all that can be said in response is that the plural will of course occur in the Psalms which by nature have a "community aspect"—and this "community aspect" will thereby be associated with all that is in the Psalms, including the fear-of-God. The m/p is just a way to talk (and sing) about God's community (and about those who are outside of the community). The use of the m/p instead of the m/s signals only *number*—and that is all. In no way can it signal what kind of genitive situation exists when it finds itself in a construct-state relationship; only syntactical and contextual factors can do that.

[248] See Becker, 1965, 285, for a list of moral idea-type texts. According to Becker, the moral idea-type texts that employ יְרֵא + YHWH/Elohim (other than in the Psalms) are Gen 22:12; Job 1:1, 8; 2:3; Prov 14:2; 31:30 (feminine/singular); Eccl 7:18.

[249] Despite all that Becker strongly argues for in the main text of his chapter five, he confesses the tenuousness of his m/p and m/s distinction (as well as his justification of it based upon the use of the pronominal suffix [see FN 247 first]) in the following footnote (Ibid., 127):

A clearer understanding of how adjectives and participles operate in the construct state might be helpful at this point. This will help the reader see that Becker's designation of this יְרְאֵי verbal-adjective group as genitive-possessive ("the fearers of [i.e., owned by] God") based upon *number* is inappropriate. It should first be said that adjectives (used as substantives) are found regularly in the construct state. A number of these denote some relationship of possession. Ps 34:9 (10) contains one example: קְדֹשָׁיו (lit. "the holy ones of him" or "his holy ones").[250] Others simply modify the absolute-state noun. For example, "upright" modifies "heart" in Ps 32:11: יִשְׁרֵי־לֵב (lit. "the upright ones of heart" or "the ones having upright hearts"). Adjectives used in the construct state denote some non-action attribute. Because there is no action, then it is unlikely that the adjective in the construct state (or any other state) can take an object of action. That is not what adjectives do. But participles ("verbal-adjectives")—can and often do in the OT have action objects. Participles can also exist in the construct state (inasmuch as they too can operate substantivally).[251] Being indicative of action, the participle will often take the noun (or pronoun, another participle, etc.) in the absolute state as object. Of the more than a thousand OT instances of the construct-state participle, not a few take the absolute as an (genitive, not accusative case) object.[252] These participles that find themselves in the construct state will tend to be from verbs that signify not so much direct (even physical)

„So bedeutet also *j*ᵉ*re'ājw* eher ‚seine Fürchtenden' als ‚die ihn Fürchtenden'. Die grammatikalischen Formen lassen die Frage—mit Ausnahme der 1. Person des Singulars—an sich offen. Es soll auch nicht behauptet werden, dass z. B. *j*ᵉ*re'ājw* in keiner Weise ‚die ihn Fürchtenden' bedeutet. Eine soch strikte Entscheidung wäre unsachlich, eben weil die hebräische Sprache nicht unterscheidet. Es kann sich also nur darum handeln, dass die Suffixe in den vorliegenden Fällen eher einem Possessivpronomen gleichkommen. Mit demselben Körnchen Salz ist die obige Behauptung zu nehmen, dass JHWH in der Verbindung *jir'ê* JHWH einem genetivus possessivus, im sittlichen *j*ᵉ*re'* JHWH (*'*ᵃ*lohîm*) hingegen einem genetivus objectivus gleichkomme." Anson F. Rainey (Professor Emeritus of Ancient Near Eastern Cultures and Semitic Linguistics at Tel Aviv University) graciously spent a few minutes with me at the 2008 SBL meeting (Nov. 23, Boston, MA) discussing this question. In Dr. Rainey's view, these plural forms in the Psalms are substantives (i.e., "the ones fearing" is taken as a unit) but are nevertheless employed in genitive-objective relationships with God/LORD. They function much the same as ירא indicative verbs that have God/LORD as object.

[250] See Van der Merwe, Naudé, and Kroeze, 1999, sec. 25.4, "Syntactic-Semantic Relationships in Construct Relationships," and sec. 30.4, "Adjectives used as Substantives."

[251] Waltke, 2007, 614.

[252] LDLS search gives 1177 instances (of all verbs) of the "participle" in the construct state. The true count is probably higher, as LDLS designates many participle-looking and functioning words as adjectives. This is especially true of ירא; LDLS designates every one of the 29 construct-state instances of ירא as adjectives. (BDB, on the other hand, lists most of them under the *verb* ירא, and assigns them the meaning "fear, reverence, honor.")

action, but more of an abstract quality, emotion, or feeling.[253] Object taking participles that depict more direct action tend to avoid the construct state and simply add accusative objects. But any participle can take the construct if the writer's intention is to show possession.

The unusual (and rare) subclass of stative verbs that can exhibit both adjectival (stative) and participial (fientive) characteristics, however, present the exegete with some special challenges—especially in view of he identical spelling in several forms of the participle and adjective. A closer look at several of these verbs may be helpful at this point. The construct-state stative verbs that are found in the OT that stress more of a truly stative quality will occasionally be found to operate adjectivally—and the lexica will sometimes designate these cases as adjectives. On the other hand, those that depict action will usually take objects of the action. These stative verbs that are "fientive" more than likely use the participle. But this over-generalizes what actually occurs with these stative verbs. Each is unique—but, as will now be seen, the tendency (as they occur in the construct state) is that they take objects. The problem of common spelling between participle and adjective actually turns out to be almost a non-factor—except with ירא where it is a significant problem. Several of the stative/fientive stative verbs will now be briefly analyzed in order to shed some light on our understanding of ירא (note: the searches related to these several stative verbs were for participles and adjectives *in the construct state*).

כָּבֵד: LDLS search results register only three participles.[254] Two of these, 1 Sam 2:30 and Lam 1:8 take objects and, being in the Piel, cannot be confused with the associated adjectives—of which there are only five. These five are clearly used adjectivally, so even though Ezek 3:5 and 6 are m/p and look just like participles, the syntax/context plainly employs them as adjectives.

מָלֵא: no results were displayed for participles. Three adjectives were found—all three operating adjectivally. Two of these are feminine; one (Jer 6:11) is m/s and

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[253] Exod 18:21a is a good example of this: "You should also look for able men among all the people, men who fear God, are trustworthy, and hate dishonest gain." "Fear" and "hate" appear to be in parallel in this way: "You should also look (from all the people) [first] for able men who fear God, [and second] for trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain." Both "fear" (יִרְאֵי) and "hate" (שֹׂנְאֵי) are in the construct state. The former obviously takes "God" as its object while "hate" takes "dishonest gain" as object. (Note how שֹׂנְאֵי takes the first letter holem characteristic of most participles. There is apparently sufficient action in hating to warrant the holem than there is in fearing [which remains with the stative spelling])

[254] LDLS was used for the several verbs being studied here. Searches were made for "participles" and "adjectives" only in the construct state.

could be taken as a participle, although it is fairly clear that it operates adjectivally (מְלֵא יָמִים "the very aged" or, literally, "full years").[255]

אָהֵב: There are 29 participles but no adjectives (an adjective corresponding to אָהֵב does not exist).[256] It can be argued that all 29 take objects (this is especially obvious in Deut 5:10; 7:9; Prov 8:17, 21; and Dan 9:4)—at least implicitly; but even though most lexica deem these to be participles,[257] the English translations often translate them as nouns in a genitive-possessive relationship. The result is "those who love you" becomes "your friends" or "your lovers." But these do not technically reflect a possessive (i.e., ownership) situation—for "friends" and "lovers" are not really *owned*.[258] In any case, it is at least implicitly understood that the affection of the "friends" and "lovers" has as its object the person(s) in the absolute state.

שָׂנֵא: there are no adjectives that correspond closely with שָׂנֵא; but 41 participles are listed.[259] Even though this verb and אָהֵב are stative verbs (with the qamets/tsere vowels pattern), in the participle they take the holem/tsere pattern (when in the Qal) characteristic of non-stative verbs. So, distinguishing between participle and adjective—if there were adjectives—would be no problem. All 41 participles of שָׂנֵא take objects. While the English versions routinely translate these participles as ("your" or "his") "enemies," this in no way diminishes the idea of hatred of the person, thing, or community (or even God—see Deut 5:9; 7:10 [x2]; 32:41; 33:11; 2 Sam 19:6 [7]; 22:18, 41; Ps 21:8 [9]; 139:21) who/that is in the absolute state. The participle, for example, in Lev 26:17 is שֹׂנְאֵיכֶם—which literally means "the haters of you (pl.)," or better, "those who hate you (pl.)."

Several things can be learned from the above examples: first, spelling commonality between participle and adjective is not necessarily a problem; second, the context of each passage typically shows whether an adjective or a participle is present; third, the emotion words אָהֵב and שָׂנֵא are mainly understood to be verbal (for in many cases they clearly take objects). In those cases that are typically translated (in the English versions) as genitive-possessives ("your friend/lover," "your enemy"), the idea of possession is not as direct as with something owned (e.g., "the king's horse")—but more speaks of those who

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[255] There are eleven מָלֵא non-construct-state participles—and they continue to have the stative spelling (see e.g., Ps 144:13; Isa 6:1; 51:20; Jer 23:24).

[256] According to BDB, DBLSD, ESL, and TWOT.

[257] DBLSD is an exception.

[258] These "friends" and "lovers" cases are close to—but not exactly like—the "possessor" relationships within the family ("the son of the man," "the father of the son"). see Van der Merwe, Naudé, and Kroeze, 1999, sec. 25.4 (their "kinship/relationship—possessor" category).

[259]There is the adjective שָׂנִיא ("disdained" DBLSD), but the yod makes it easily distinguishable.

are simply within one's domain. Even if the genitive-possessive was intended by the writers, the fact remains that there is an emotion-action going on with the absolute-state person(s) as its object. In other words, what must *be* for "your enemies" to be grammatically employed is that there really is a group out there who hates (at least has something against) whoever "your" is/are. Using the genitive-possessive, of course, can mean that these emotion terms are used very loosely; "your friends" and "your lovers" (both אֹהֲבֶיךָ) are very different ideas that may or may not have much to do with the baseline meaning of אָהֵב.[260] One thing is sure, however: when אָהֵב or שָׂנֵא is employed in a genitive-possessive construct-state relationship, the absolute-state person(s) is *de facto* understood to be the object of the emotions portrayed. Those who love and hate in the OT are rarely understood as people who love or hate *in general*. Unless an object is at least implicitly understood in all of the construct-state uses of these two emotion words, then the texts make no sense.[261] The same lack of sense would be apparent if יָרֵא was seen to operate this way. But this is what Becker insists to be the case for the Psalms group that has been the topic of this section.

The above discussion demonstrates (as does the ambiguity in the grammatical terminology) that the simple facts that are represented by the biblical text can be quickly clouded over by too much speculation. In trying to get to the bottom of whether Becker is correct or not in his designation of these Psalms instances of ירא as "verbal-adjectives" which operate "adjectivally" (as well as his designation of them as genitive-possessives), one simply needs to ask, "is there action or not"? If there is, then it is not all about "possession," but all about the people who fear and the object of that fear. A LDLS search for all non-Psalms ירא participles/adjectives does indeed show that there is action—and the situation is probably the same for the Psalms; other than a few cases in which the object of the fear is unclear, nearly all of the uses obviously portray both a subject who fears as well as an object of the fear. The results of the search are as follows:[262]

> Verbal + explicit object: Gen 32:12; 42:18; Exod 9:20; Deut 7:19; 1 Kings 18:3; 18:12; 2 Kings 4:1; 17:32, 33, 34, 41; Job 1:1; Eccl 8:13; 9:2; Jer 26:19; 42:11, 16; Dan 1:10; Jon 1:9.

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[260]Being from the same אָהֵב linguistic form, one can only tell one from the other through consideration of the context.

[261] It is inevitable that the reader of all of these construct-state participles will assume that the absolute person(s) is the object of the love or hate. If no object were understood, then Lev 26:17bα, for example, would be translated, "your haters (who have an emotion of hate toward no particular object [or toward an unknown object]) will rule over you." But that clearly would not make sense within the context of the passage.

[262] Almost all of these are designated by LDLS as adjectives; but, as can be seen by the catalogue of the results, it strongly appears to me that most if not all have action and function as participles. This view agrees with BDB who also understand most of these as participles.

Verbal + implicit object: Deut 20:8; Judg 7:3; 1 Sam 23:3.

Non-verbal (adjectival use): none.

Construct state verbal + explicit object: Gen 22:12; Exod 18:21; Job 1:8; 2:3; Prov 13:13; 14:2; 31:30; Eccl 7:18; 8:12; Isa 50:10; Mal 3:16 (x2), 20 (4:2).[263]

Construct state verbal + implicit object: none.

Construct state non-verbal (adjectival use): none.

As can be seen, my perception when viewing these passages was that nearly all had an object of the fear and none of them—whether singular or plural, c/s or non-c/s—gave any indications of a true possessive situation. After considering the stative verbs briefly studied above as well as ירא, it is clear that there is a very strong tendency for them to take objects. The main factor that brings me to this conclusion is context. Each text was submitted to the following question: "how well does the taking of an object fit the context?" In principle, there were five possible answers (which I now show below—each with a sample text [not necessarily using a stative verb] for clarity):

1. Taking a direct object is impossible: 1 Kings 18:19 mentions the prophets of Baal and Asherah "who eat at Jezebel's Table" (אֹכְלֵי שֻׁלְחַן אִיזֶבֶל). Needless to say, the prophets are not eating Jezebel or her table, but in a sense, they belong to the table. To be more precise, the table represents the group that is close to Jezebel, and the Baal and Asherah prophets are a part of that group (what might be called a construct partative relationship).[264]

2. Taking a direct object is possible, but unlikely: Gen 13:8: "Then Abram said to Lot, 'Let there be no strife between you and me, and between your herders (רֹעֶיךָ) and my herders (רֹעַי); for we are kindred.'" The text is clearly referring to the shepherds *owned by* Abraham and Lot (or at least under their authority). רָעָה can pass action to an object (see 2 Sam 5:2); but in Gen 13:8, an object is not taken—otherwise they would have been herding Abraham and Lot (a very unlikely situation [see also 1 Kings 10:28 where the "traders" do not trade "the king" but are traders of (owned by) the king]).

3. It is a toss-up between taking an object and not taking an object: Moses says to the Israelites in Deut 1:16, "I charged your judges (שֹׁפְטֵיכֶם) at that time: 'give the members of your community a fair hearing ….'" "Your judges" could mean those

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[263] I would put all Psalms cases of participles/adjectives in this category (except Psalms 112:1 which I would put in the "Verbal + explicit object" category [it is not in the construct state]).

[264] See Van der Merwe, Naudé, and Kroeze, 1999, sec. 25.4.3.

judging the Israelites (object of action) or the judges possessed by them (or even both).

4. Taking an object is likely: in 2 Sam 19:5, 6 (6, 7) Joab bitterly complains to David (NASB): "Today you have covered with shame the faces of all your servants … by loving those who hate you (שֹׂנְאֶיךָ), and by hating those who love you (אֹהֲבֶיךָ)." Both these construct uses here could be possessive ("the haters/lovers who belong to you), but that would nearly be nonsense in comparison with understanding both of these verbal-adjectives as taking "you"—i.e., King David—as the object. The context must be seen in light of Joab's implied message that he (and others) loved David, but David hated them in return.

5. Taking an object is certain: Ps 3:21 (22) depicts a clear case of cause and effect in the second clause: "and those who hate [וְשֹׂנְאַי] the righteous will be condemned." The translation "and those haters possessed by the righteous will be condemned" would make no sense in context. On the other hand, the fact that these "haters" will be condemned makes perfect sense if this is a result of them hating "the righteous."

Of the construct-state Psalms passages (employing ירא) that Becker claims are genitive-possessive, I would put all of them in category four—i.e., they most likely take objects. There are several reasons I believe this is so: first, it is common to speak about fear in terms of an object of the fear, and it is probably the same here. Second, there seems to be no virtue in fear unless that fear is directed at an appropriate fear object; only then will an advantage be possible. Because the Psalms repeatedly mention the advantages of fearing, then it follows that that fear must have a correct object.[265] For example, 25:14 asserts that "the friendship of the LORD is for those who fear him, and he makes his covenant known to them." It must be remembered that fear-of-God in the Bible is always portrayed as a virtue, and, therefore, it makes sense that it will be rewarded. But if Ps 25:14 is genitive-possessive, then these rewards are given to people (owned by God) who simply are fearful with no particular object of their fear. This leads to the third reason: it is pointless to talk about "fearers" in general without the object of their fear somehow being understood. In very few instances is fear in the OT and NT without some explicit or (however vague) implicit object. The object can be one that makes the fear justifiable or not. Fear of God (and occasionally of human authorities when one has

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[265] Benefits of fearing God (from Becker's Psalms group) are: God's friendship (25:14); abundant goodness (31:19 [20]); God's attention (33:18); the angel of the LORD encamps around God fearers (34:7 [8]); they are delivered and have a good heritage (61:5 [6]); they have no want (34:9 [10]); they are out of bowshot (60:4 [6]); salvation (85:9 [10]); great steadfast love (103:11); God's compassion (103:13); God's steadfast love and his righteousness (103:17); food (111:5); God fulfills their desires and hears their cry and saves them (145:19); God takes pleasure in those who fear him (147:11).

sinned) is good; conversely, most other fears are portrayed in a bad light. But especially when it comes to God's people, objectless fear is no virtue at all. This is why a genitive-possessive rendering of all of these passages would be so strange; objectless fear would be encouraged and rewarded. If Becker is right, then Ps 103:11 (for example) should be translated like this: "For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward God's fearful people."[266] Such a translation would provoke questions like "if this is not fear-of-God, then what are they fearful of?" and "does objectless fearfulness define God's people?" or a comment like, "I thought God's people should not be fearful, but 'bold and courageous'"! Fourth, it makes perfect sense that these texts are talking about the virtue that is mentioned so frequently throughout the OT—i.e., the fear of God. Especially when one considers that those who do not fear God are condemned and punished, it makes perfect sense in these Psalms texts that the verbal-adjectives are indeed verbal (i.e., participles of the verb ירא) and take God as object. These passages portray a predictable deed/consequence relationship—that is, those who fear God will be rewarded. Objectless fearing, however, is nothing deserving of reward.[267]

Action is very important in understanding how ירא is used. Becker's whole triad in this section relies on the belief that these Psalms texts that use m/p verbal-adjectives are operating totally adjectivally—i.e., without any kind of action. But ירא very often is fientive and transitive (in its strange sort of way). There is no reason, for example, to believe that the imperative has an object and the participle does not in Ps 34:9 (10): "O fear the LORD, you his holy ones, for those who fear him have no want." The Psalmist is simply commanding the people to fear YHWH because doing so is virtuous and will bring reward. There is no virtue and no reward to be found in fear itself; therefore, the rewards mentioned in these Psalms are sufficient reason to believe that fear action is being depicted—with God as object—and as a result, the uses of ירא here are not adjectival, but participial. Because the context so strongly suggests transitive action in these Psalms, Becker's designation of them as adjectival is surely incorrect. If so, then Becker's triad which depends so heavily upon the aura of belongingness (to God) and ownership (by God) falls apart.[268] This particular group of Psalms does not support the

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[266] But this is not at all how the text is usually translated. For example, the following versions clearly depict God as the object of the fear: JB/NASB/NIV/NKJV/NRSV: "those who fear him"; NCV: "those who respect him"; KJV: "them that fear him"; LB: „die, so ihn fürchten"; LXX: τοὺς φοβουμένους αὐτόν; Vg: timentes se. Allen, 1983, 17, translates as "those who revere him," but Gunkel, 1968, 441—over-translating in accordance with his evolution-of-the-cult understanding—omits any sense of fear and fear-object with: „Sondern so hoch der Himmel über der Erde, so hoch ist seine Huld über seinen Frommen."

[267] In the NT objectless fear is subject to punishment (see Rev 21:8).

[268] If Becker is right and "those who fear YHWH" means "belongingness to the community," then it would seem that all other m/p verbal-adjectives in construct with God could

form-critical notion that the Psalmists used fear-of-God as code for the belonging community; rather, fearing God is simply shown to be a virtue worth practicing—for doing so will bring great reward.

In summary, Becker's interpretation of these Psalms fear texts is simply wrong.[269] Yes, they do refer to God's covenant community, but fear-of-God here is not the covenant community itself; rather, it is a virtue that the covenant community should practice. In consideration of the sovereignty of God, the sinfulness of people, and the expectation of judgment that lingers in the background of these Psalms, fear-of-God means just what it literally says—i.e., fear. Each of these uses of ירא shows their own peculiar kind of "quasi-fientive" action and takes YHWH or Elohim (or "him" or "you") as the object of the action. Because of this action they are used verbally and should be designated as participles, not adjectives. As participles, they do not indicate some remarkable shift in "idea-type" (especially to something as abstract as belongingness to the YHWH cult community); rather, the participle is simply the linguistic form of a verb used when one says something about a group (e.g., "blessed are …) that has a certain quality or action (… those who fear God"). In this case, the quality/action of the group is that they fear God. That is, God is the object of the fear. This is how the Septuagint takes every one of these Psalms; the participle is used and God is the object of the participle in every case. Likewise, the Vulgate uses participles and God as object.[270] Both the LXX and the Vg put "Lord" and "God" (or "him" or "you") each time in the *accusative* case. Finally, the English versions that were consulted also depict God as the grammatical object of these fear texts.[271] The evidence then shows that fear-of-God in these Psalms—or any other Psalms for that matter—should not be taken as meaning something akin to belongingness to the YHWH community. The grammatical and contextual testimony of these Psalms show that יְרֵאֵי + YHWH/Elohim has not evolved into something abstract and far from the literal meaning of fear, but is in reality still very close to its fear-feeling roots.

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have this meaning also. See, for example, Ps 22:26 (27) ("those seeking him"), Ps 145:18 ("those calling him"), and Ps 145:20 ("those loving him"). Making these three texts genitive-possessive would wreck their clear contexts which show that doing these actions with God as the object are virtuous and worthy of reward.

[269] See FN 235 above for list of these texts.

[270] In the Vulgate, Psalm 66:16 (Vg 65:16) uses the 2nd person plural present active indicative verb (*timetis*) instead of the participle. Ps 119:74 (Vg 118:74) uses the 3rd person plural present active indicative verb (*timent*). In Pss 119:79 (Vg 118:79) and 147:11 (Vg 146:11), the Vulgate translates the MT using the 3rd person plural present active indicative verb; but the Vulgate's translation of the LXX uses the participle (*timentes*). In every case, however, "Lord" or "God" (or "him" or "you") is in the *accusative case*.

[271] Consulted were the NASB, NIV, KJV, NKJV, and the NRSV.

The biblical wisdom books, says Becker, contain "exclusively" the „*sittliche*" ("moral" or "ethical") idea of fear-of-God.[272] The idea is also seen here and there elsewhere in the OT, and is characteristic of fear-of-God texts produced by the Elohist. Fear-of-God in these cases indicates a „*sittliche Haltung*" ("moral attitude"); in other words, fear-of-God is the knowledge of what one should do before God, and the willingness to do it. According to Becker, the *sittliche* idea evolved from the numinous idea and actually runs on through the intertestamental apocryphal books, the NT, and can even be seen in our present use of fear-of-God. But there is no record—in the Bible or elsewhere—remaining of the development itself.[273] There are, so to speak, no "missing links." In my opinion, this is so because there was little or no evolution to begin with; it is true that semantic elasticity in fear-of-God is seen both early and late, but there is no linguistic or contextual evidence that comes close to suggesting that fear-of-God evolved completely away from its fear-feeling root meaning into a designation for a righteous attitude. The problem is that Becker perceives an evolution in meaning between the typically older narratives that depict fear-of-God before some kind of epiphany, and typically late narrative, poetic, wisdom, and prophetic Scripture that repeatedly mentions fear-of-God as a virtue. There could be an evolution in meaning; but the biblical shift to speaking of fear-of-God as a virtue in no way requires one—unless, of course, the interpreter believes at the start that the fear-feeling should never be considered as a virtue. So the biblical shift to speaking about fear as a virtue (as well as the contexts of those virtue-fear-of-God texts) does not give the interpreter justification for believing that a

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[272] Becker, 1965, 210.

[273] Ibid., 184, 192. About the longevity of the *sittlichen* idea Becker writes: „Während dem kultischen Begriff kaum ein Fortleben im späteren Sprachgebrauch beschieden war—im christlichen Raum wurde er durch *pisteuein* verdrängt, und im Judentum war das Anliegen der alleinigen Verehrung Jahwes nicht mehr dringend—, ist der sittliche Begriff von Dauer gewesen. Dabei hat die nomistische Prägung des sittlichen Begriffs keineswegs die Alleinherrschaft erlangt. Wir finden ihn in den deuterokanonischen Büchern des AT, in den Apokryphen und im NT. Besondere Erwähnung verdient die Vg-Fassung des Buches Tobias, in der häufig und ausschliesslich der sittliche Begriff vorkommt. Dieses besondere Hervorheben sittlicher Gottesfurcht hängt mit der sich auch sonst äussernden moralisierenden Tendenz dieser Rezension zusammen. Die modernen Sprachen kennen unter dem Einfluss der biblischen, alttestamentlichen Sprache die Wendungen ‚Gottesfurcht', ‚gottesfürchtig' in sittlicher Bedeutung" (192, 193). It just seems strange to me that—given such a radical change of meaning as Becker asserts—fear-of-God throughout the many hundreds of years of the Bible composition process did not develop a new word altogether (or a new word in which one could still detect the semantic roots of ירא or φοβέω). From start to finish, virtue fear-of-God is represented primarily by ירא and φοβέω. Because the feeling of fear is also from start to finish primarily represented by ירא and φοβέω, then the meanings of the two (virtue fear-of-God and fear feeling before God) cannot be far apart.

wholesale semantic development has taken place. The linguistic forms that Becker suggests as evidence for an evolution from fear to a moral attitude also do not provide sufficient reason to accept his evolutionary view—for they are no more semantically significant than those seen for his "cultic" texts, and, therefore, cannot justify the semantic evolution that he asserts.

The semantic forms that represent the *sittliche* idea are the *singular* construct-state "verbal-adjective," the noun, and some uses of the verb plus Elohim. The first of these has already been discussed above (see FN 247): to base such a great semantic difference upon number is highly questionable. The third of these (use of the simple verb) is once again making much ado about nothing—for the plain verb (most often in the Qal) is semantically neutral (i.e., it only delivers information such as person, gender, number, aspect, voice; but any significant semantic shift away from the basic meaning of the verb must be indicated by syntax and context). The second (the use of the noun יִרְאָה) is noteworthy because instances of יראה are mostly congregated within the Proverbs. According to Stähli, out of 45 occurrences 14 are in Proverbs, five in Job—there are none, however, in Ecclesiastes. But the wisdom books do not have a total monopoly on יראה: there are eight instances in the Psalms, five in Jeremiah, two each in 2 Samuel, Ezekiel, Jonah, and Nehemiah, and several other books have one instance apiece.[274]

The problem with Becker's interpretation of the noun יראה is that—generally speaking—he assumes a *sittliche* meaning (or occasionally a cultic meaning) unless the context proves otherwise. This is in keeping with the form-critical tendency to see a more refined state of the religion reflected in the later parts of the OT. But this is opposite to the way things should be; as long as these texts use the plain noun for "fear," then they should be interpreted close to that meaning unless the context clearly shows that some other meaning is intended. Then as today, a word usually has one general root meaning that a person first perceives when hearing or reading that word; but other factors provided *in addition to the word* can then prompt one to perhaps understand another meaning. With יראה, Becker assumes a meaning far removed from the basic fear-feeling unless the context makes it unavoidable. As a result, virtue-fear-of-God cases that are so prevalent in the wisdom books are easy pickings for his *sittliche* category—in view of the fact that they typically do not have immediate context (other than the word itself) that tells a reader what is meant by the use of יראה. Outside of Proverbs, however, several uses of יראה—a few of them virtue-fear-of-God cases—possess enough local context to force Becker into designating these as depicting real fear.

In Psalm 2, for example, the text in vv. 11 and 12 says "Serve the LORD with fear, with trembling kiss his feet, or he will be angry, and you will perish in the way; for his

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[274] Stähli, 1971, 766.

110

wrath is quickly kindled." The warning tone (see v. 10) of this messianic Psalm makes it hard to understand in יראה anything other than plain fear. Thus, Becker categorizes this case under his "*Furcht vor dem Numinosen*" category.[275] Psalm 90 speaks of the fragility and brevity of human life brought about by human sin and God's judgment of it ("For we are consumed by your anger; by your wrath we are overwhelmed" [v. 7]). Because of this fearful and desperate reality, Moses writes in v. 11, "Who considers the power of your anger? Your wrath is as great as the fear that is due you." Here (as also in Ps 2:11), the fear is of the virtue-fear-of-God kind—i.e., it is something that one should do, is desired by God, and brings a good result. Without the mention in Psalm 90 of "anger" and "wrath" (as well as the general distressing depiction of men and women being so hopelessly mortal), one could easily give יראה a *sittliche* meaning here (e.g., "as great as the *righteous conduct* that is due you"); but as Psalm 90 stands, this would not at all fit the context. Even though the linguistic form of יראה in construct with a possessive suffix is very similar to the several instances in Proverbs (which he deems as all having *sittliche* meaning), Becker is obliged by context to deem this use to mean „*Furchtbarkeit.*"[276] Nor can the real fearfulness before YHWH indicated by יראה in Jonah 1:16 be avoided, for the circumstances of the peril at sea clearly shows that the sailors were extremely fearful because of the storm and the circumstances that brought it about (Jonah's disobedience). This terror in the face of what seemed to be certain death found YHWH as object after they threw Jonah overboard and suddenly realized that YHWH had not only caused the storm, but had also stopped it. When Jonah was still aboard the ship and had confessed his guilt to the sailors (who were already fearful that the storm might sink the ship), וייראו האנשים יראה גדולה ("then the men were even more afraid"); but once the sailors threw Jonah overboard and they realized YHWH was behind it all, וייראו האנשים יראה גדולה את יהוה ("then the men feared the LORD even more"). Becker does not comment on the nouns here, but he does say that the verbs (וייראו) in vv. 10 and 16 indicate "real fear."[277]

Most of the other OT fear-of-God cases employing יראה are found in Proverbs and are all of the virtue-fear-of-God variety in which little or no *immediate* context is found that would shift the meaning one way or the other.[278] There is, however, the truth that יראה is the *beginning* of wisdom (Ps 111:10; Prov 9:10) and knowledge (Prov 1:7); these passages could possibly indicate that fear is more of an emotion or an attitude of the heart

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[275] Becker, 1965, 284.

[276] Ibid., 49.

[277] Ibid., 176. Verse 16 is catalogued under the heading of "The Numinous in the Deeds of God" (37). For passages that employ יראה to depict great fear before non-God objects, see Deut 2:25; Ps 55:5 (6); Jon 1:10.

[278] By "immediate" I mean context contained in the proverb four cola verse itself; but certain theological assumptions that stand behind the text can certainly move one to interpret these fear texts one way or the other.

which is a *prerequisite* for godly wisdom and knowledge.[279] The meaning of רֵאשִׁית (Ps 111:10 and Prov 1:7) is not completely clear: BDB defines it (for these two verses) as simply "beginning." BDB also defines תְּחִלַּת of Prov 9:10 as the "beginning" or "the first principle" of wisdom. Becker understands that when the Jews thought of the idea of the "beginning" of wisdom or knowledge, they were generally not thinking about time, but about what was "the best." This "best" had some part in guiding people to wisdom, and was therefore somewhat antithetical to the fool (1:7b) who despised wisdom. Regarding this, Becker writes: „Die Gottesfurcht führt zur Weisheit, macht geneigt und fähig, die Weisheit zu erwerben. In diesem Falle hat *re'šêt* seine Entsprechung in *bāzû*: der *ᵃwîl* ist nicht fähig und geneigt, die Weisheit zu erwerben, sondern verachtet sie." This more or less captures the essence of "beginning"—as used in these verses; it indicates something that allows or actuates godly wisdom and knowledge. Fear-of-God is the "beginning" in that it is foundational to wisdom and knowledge but is not wisdom and knowledge themselves, nor just a "choice part" of them.[280] Waltke makes the valid point that the books preamble (vv. 1-6) and v. 7 are introductory and do not have the role of defining what godly wisdom consists of. In other words, v. 7 is not telling the reader what wisdom or knowledge consists of (i.e., fear-of-God is not a *component* of wisdom). The fear-of-God must come first, but it is not something that comes first in horizontal time which can then be left behind; rather, this "temporally first step," writes Waltke, is on a "vertical axis on which all else rests. It denotes both the *initium* and the *principium*. What the alphabet is to reading, notes to reading music, and numerals to mathematics, the fear of the LORD is to attaining the revealed knowledge of this book."[281] Whatever fear-of-God is and however it functions as a "beginning," one thing is for sure: without it one can never be *wise*.

If within the idea of wisdom is contained an attitude that is willing to do what is right (that is, a „*sittliche Haltung*") then fear-of-God—being the foundation "on which all else rests"—cannot also be the same thing.[282] If it were the same thing—and if

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[279] Job 28:28 implies that fear-of-God *is* wisdom, and Prov 15:33 indicates that fear-of-God can teach one wisdom.

[280] According to Waltke, 2004, 181, the idea that "beginning of" means "the choice part" "ranks the fear of the LORD as just another wisdom teaching and allows that wisdom can be had apart from it. That notion hardly fits this context, which is not concerned as yet to state the specific content of wisdom but to prepare the way for it."

[281] Ibid.

[282] The Proverbs say that fear-of-God *is* a number of things: the beginning of knowledge (1:7); the hatred of evil (8:13); the beginning of wisdom (9:10); a fountain of life (14:27); instruction in wisdom (15:33); life (19:23). The last of these (19:23 "The fear of the LORD is life indeed") plainly shows that absolute identity is not what is in view here. Prov 19:23 reminds one of Deut 30:20 where Moses implores the Israelites to love and obey the LORD, "for He is your life and the length of your days" (NKJV). Needless to say, human life and longevity are not

Becker's idea were to be accepted—then, for example, Prov 9:10 could read "a moral attitude is the beginning of a moral attitude." But that is obviously not what the writer is trying to say here. There is clearly in the Proverbs (as well as elsewhere) the understanding that fear-of-God is something that causes other things. If fear-of-God is the cause that brings about effects of prolonged life (Prov 10:27), strong confidence (14:26), the avoidance of snares in life (14:27), the avoidance of evil (16:6), resting secure and suffering no harm (19:23), riches, honor, and life (22:4), and praise (31:30), then fear-of-God and these effects cannot be ontologically identical—for a cause must *be* something different than its effect. That fear-of-God is not ontologically the same as either an attitude predisposed to doing good works or the good works themselves is strongly suggested by Prov 16:6: בחסד ואמת יכפר עון וביראת יהוה סור מרע ("By loyalty and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the LORD one avoids evil"). The two halves of the proverb are set in parallel, both saying that something good comes out of a certain orientation of the heart (the "loyalty" and "faithfulness" of the first colon is most likely not that of God, but of men and women). Because Becker has so closely identified fear-of-God in the Proverbs with a "moral attitude," he has created in this verse the awkward situation of the second half ("one avoids evil") saying something that is patently obvious—i.e., "and by a moral attitude one avoids immoral action." That self-evident fact is probably not what the author had in mind here. To get around this, Becker tries to get some of the *sittliche* quality out of the effect of fear-of-God, i.e., out of סור מרע (lit. "to turn from evil"). He does this by suggesting that סור מרע means "the general avoidance of evil"—that is, to "turn from evil" means that "one escapes disaster" („*entgeht man dem Unheil*").[283] Because the iniquity atonement in the first verse half is essentially the escaping of disaster, this then permits יכפר עון and סור מרע to be in synonymous parallel. With this, the meaning of 16:6 in essence becomes: "a person who practices loyalty and

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identical with God. But they are absolutely dependent upon him. Similar hyperbole is seen in Deut 32:47 where Moses asserts that the "word" (i.e., the law) "is your life" (NKJV—in both of these texts this version translates the Hebrew literally and accurately). Once again, the law is not life itself, but one's success in life and quality of life is dependent upon whether or not one follows the law. The identification of fear-of-God and various phenomena mentioned in the above-listed Proverbs passages operate in a similar way; i.e., they are not trying to teach ontological identity, but rather that there is some kind of *critical relationship* between them. Fear-of-God *is* not knowledge, hatred of evil, wisdom, or life, but is a feeling/emotion/attitude that allows all these phenomena to exist in the most excellent and flourishing way. (Clines, 2003, 73-75, in his study of fear-of-God in Job 28:28 argues along similar lines. He writes: "[W]hen it is said that the fear of God 'is' wisdom it may not mean that wisdom consists of the fear of God or that wisdom and the fear of God are the same thing, or that theology is epistemology. It might mean that to fear God is a very wise thing to do, an act that is full of wisdom, or that the fear of God arises from wisdom" [75].)

[283] Becker, 1965, 227.

faithfulness will escape disaster; a person who has a moral attitude will escape disaster." But all this is simply over-interpretation of a text that is otherwise quite clear. I would say that the main parallel emphasis is not between "iniquity is atoned for" and "one avoids evil"; rather, it is between loyalty/faithfulness and fear-of-God which are both phenomena of the heart/mind that—when practiced—bring about a good outcome.

Perhaps the starkest example of fear-of-God being used to bring about something good is found in Exod 20:20. Here, Moses says to the Israelites who were quaking in terror at the base of the mountain: "Do not be afraid; for God has come only to test you and to put the fear of him upon you so that you do not sin." As has already been said above (see p. 88), it is very likely—given the context of the entire pericope—that God was using the fear feeling (with him and his awesome deeds as objects of the fear) to harshly drive the people away from sin. The context from Exodus through Deuteronomy shows that when the pressure was off and the people's awareness of the danger of God's wrath was far from their minds, they often went right back to their old ways. This is why God laments, "If only they had such a mind as this, to fear me and to keep all my commandments always, so that it might go well with them and with their children forever!" (Deut 5:29) In both Prov 16:6 and Exod 20:20, the avoidance of sin is the good result that fear-of-God brings about. It is unlikely, therefore, that the cause is more or less the same as the result. A *sittliche Haltung* is the desired result, but real fear (most likely all servile fear in Exod 20:20) is the cause which brings it about.[284]

The in-verse context of Prov 16:6, however, does not tell the reader what kind of fear is meant by יראה. But given the content of the previous two verses, one could almost imagine vv. 4-6 being a wisdom teaching that came from observing the Sinai events just mentioned!

> 16:4 The LORD has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble. 16:5 All those who are arrogant are an abomination to the LORD; be assured, they will not go unpunished. 16:6 By loyalty and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the LORD one avoids evil.

When this context of God's sovereignty (v. 4) and God's judgment (v. 5) is taken into account, then the reader can better imagine the role the fear-feeling might play in dissuading one from evil. This is why the wise can say: "My child, fear the LORD and

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[284] Becker nevertheless defines the fear of Exod 20:20 as a *sittliche* idea. He justifies this by pointing out Moses' command "do not fear" which comes just before. I do not think this reason suffices. A father who has a highly rebellious son who is constantly in trouble might very well in the punishment process invoke in the son a fearful response that is too much. While employing some mild fear-of-punishment in order to keep the boy's behavior within tolerable limits, the father might say "do not be afraid" if the punishment has had its intended effect. This is what happens in Exod 20:20 once God has "gotten their attention."

the king, and do not disobey either of them; for disaster comes from them suddenly, and who knows the ruin that both can bring?" (Prov 24:21, 22)[285]

Conclusion on Becker

Because Becker's fear-of-God investigation gives the form-critical assumptions behind each literary form such interpretational weight, fear-of-God views that might better fit in with orthodox Christian doctrine are mostly overlooked. This detracts greatly from what could have otherwise been—given the exhaustive nature of the work—an extremely valuable contribution to seminary and church. But *Gottesfurcht im Alten Testament* has as its foundation the historical-critical assumption that the idea of God first flowed out of human fear, and then (at least, for Israel) a highly developed cult resulted from that fear. Becker's use of Otto's "numinous" category strongly suggests that Becker assumes the critical foundational tenets of religious beginnings—i.e., that humans came first, then "God" appeared later as a result of human *Angst*. With this foundation, Becker uses the form-critical method of identifying literary form with linguistic form in order to determine the meaning of fear-of-God. This method, however, is top-down and rigid. In any given fear-of-God text, the meaning is generally assumed to be what the literary form says it should mean. But despite Becker's opening appeal to „*jeweiligen Kontext,*" not much of it that comes from the Bible text itself and from an orthodox understanding of the text is considered.[286] Unless a text contains overpowering contextual evidence otherwise, Becker assumes a meaning that is appropriate to the form-critical assumptions behind the literary form. The reader, therefore, gets a naturalistic view of fear-of-God, not a theological view.

Because of the length of my treatment of Becker, a short summary on my thoughts in regards to his is probably in order: Becker's category of "numinous" fear highlights many cases of people who really did fear before God (and occasionally, before weather, people, etc.). But because Becker admits that the "numinous" is a "recognized history-of-religion and psychology-of-religion terminus"[287]—which falls right in line with Otto's thinking—I do not believe that the feelings and emotions that Becker perceives to be in

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[285] The NRSV translation here follows the LXX; but the text of the MT in v. 21 makes it possible that v. 22 is not referring to the LORD or the king. The MT of v. 21 is: יְרָא־אֶת־יְהוָה בְּנִי וָמֶלֶךְ עִם־שׁוֹנִים אַל־תִּתְעָרָב (lit. "fear the LORD and the king; with those who change [Qal participle of שָׁנָה] do not associate" [Hithpiel imperfect of עָרַב]. See Owens, 2001, 588). Waltke, 2005, 287, suggests that this means (v. 21b) that one should not get involved with "[intriguing] officials" (his brackets) who "seek to grab power and advance themselves through intrigue, not by subordination to legitimate authority." Nevertheless Waltke believes that v. 22 refers to what the LORD and the king can do, not what intriguing men can do.

[286] See Becker, 1965, *Vorwort*.

[287] Ibid., 19.

the numinous reflect accurately the feelings and emotions that one has in a real relationship with the true God who made humans and in whom humans "live and move and have their being."[288]

Regarding Becker's discussion of the Deuteronomistic literary form, he considers most of the virtue-fear-of-God cases but does very little to explain why they (nearly) all deserve the meaning of "loyalty" (or something similar) to the cult. His only real justification why this is so has to do with literary parallelism: not a few of the virtue-fear-of-God cases here are set in parallel with a number of other virtues (that more or less indicate cult loyalty)—and Becker claims that these parallels are *synonymous*. But after looking at these cases as well as considering some basics of parallelism, I see no reason why these parallels must be synonymous; they can just as easily be—from a strictly literary standpoint—antithetical or any one of whole host of other parallel relationships. The problem of excessive semantic over-inflation also arises if these parallels are taken to be synonymous—for fear-of-God then comes to mean, for example, to serve, to hear, to not forsake, to not forget, to heed, to not rebel, to follow, to swear, and to love (to name just a few—see pp. 80-84, 90). But can ירא reasonably be understood to stand for all these? And yet, even though the very word for "fear" is used, Becker says that fear is "almost totally lost" in these Deuteronomistic cases.[289] But how can he know that? *The biblical text never says that this is so*, and scattered between this virtue-fear-of-God passages in Deut-2 Kings are texts that clearly use ירא to depict real fear; so one cannot say that there has been a one way evolution in meaning—for ירא throughout the OT (and φοβέω throughout the OT as well as the NT) remains anchored in the meaning of the fear feeling/emotion. The problem is that the Deuteronomistic literary form is understood—according to form-critical dogma—to reflect an advanced state of the cult and its idea of God. So despite much "big picture" contextual evidence (especially having to do with human sinfulness and God's judgment) that still justifies real fear in the many cases of virtue-fear-of-God, Becker simply presses into the semantics of ירא what is required by the assumptions that are behind his method.

In the section on the Psalms' literary form, Becker again pressures all fear-of-God texts—unless local context obviously shows otherwise—to mean something related to the worship of YHWH in the advanced cult. He makes much of the fact that the Psalms in many cases employ the "verbal-adjective" of ירא, and believes that the advanced meaning and the unusual form go hand in hand. But I argued that the verbal-adjective is nothing but a form that one can confidently expect in any non-narrative literature (including in song lyrics and poetry) that simply says something about certain people or groups of

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[288] Acts 17:28
[289] Becker, 1965, 75.

people. That is, the Psalms are much about people or groups of people *who* have this or that quality (e.g., "Happy are *all who take refuge* in him" [my emphasis] Ps 2:12b). The verbal-adjective form, therefore, finds many opportunities for use simply because the text is so often referring to others; it has nothing to do with signaling a significant semantic shift. Becker also points out the fact that these verbal-adjectives are in the *construct state*, and they therefore indicate a state of possession. That is, when the Psalms speak about people who fear God, they are really referring to fearers (no particular object of fear) who are possessed by God. In response I can only say that, while this is grammatically permissible, this rendering (for both singular and plural verbal-adjective cases of ירא) is awkward and highly improbable. The Septuagint and the Vulgate in every case have "God" in the accusative case (i.e., God is the object of the fear) and no English version that I know of translates according to Becker's view.

In regard to the wisdom literary form of Becker's that I discuss last, my main disagreement with his „*sittliche*" ("moral/ethical") idea-type is simply that it overlooks the large-scale contextual tone of God's sovereignty, human absolute contingency, human propensity to sin, and the threat of punishment (from God) that reverberates throughout the OT wisdom books. And if fear-of-God is the "beginning" of wisdom, how can it be (if Becker is right) a "moral attitude" which is arguably the same as wisdom? On the other hand, if fear is understood as an unpleasant feeling that goads a person toward wanting to do what is right (in the eyes of God), then one can better see how fear-of-God can be wisdom's "beginning." Becker's claim that the unusually high number of nouns (יראה) in the Proverbs indicates a semantic development is, once again, making too much out of a run-of-the-mill form. "Fear" (the noun) simply designates the *substance* that is involved when one "fears" (the verb). There is no more semantic difference between noun and verb than that found, for example, with "rain" and "to rain." Yes, the former names the substance and the latter names the action in which the substance is employed; anything of semantic significance beyond that, however, must come from some other source (like context and syntax).

In closing this lengthy section on Becker, several big-picture and common sense items that Becker, in varying degrees, overlooks should be mentioned: first, the fact that the word "fear" (ירא/φοβέω) is used means that the exegete's first understanding of the term should be just that. Second, large-scale context often shows that there is much to fear: human frailty, mortality, and sinfulness, as well as God's omnipotence, anger, and judgment are often very much a part of the context. Third, fear-of-God is never said in the OT or the NT to be a bad thing (nowhere in the Bible does God [or Jesus] ever say "do not fear *me*"); but the lack of fear-of-God is *always* portrayed in a negative light. Because of this, the exegete should be hesitant to empty out of fear-of-God the very element that is

never condemned, but only taught to be something good and beneficial. Finally, even when Becker does designate this or that fear-of-God use as signifying a "numinous" meaning, what are theologians and people in the church to do with an idea that assumes that God is all a projection of the mind?[290] The main problem with Becker's results is that—at the most meaningful level—he has nothing to say to theologians who are *really* theologians—i.e., those who study about the true God whom they really believe to exist *apart from* their own existence. Thinking that God is contingent upon men and not the other way around forms much of the base of form-critical thinking; it is also central to the idea of Otto's „*das Heilige,*" and „*das Numinose.*" Becker does not at all wrestle with this problem, but simply incorporates Otto's terminology and understanding about the "numinous" into his own work. With this as a flawed foundation upon which Becker builds his work, the results from his lengthy investigation of OT fear-of-God are bound to be inaccurate.

Karl Barth

Karl Barth said about fear-of-God:

A wrong kind of fear, not to be confused with the right fear of the Lord, abounds around us. It would be better to call it anxiety. We are afraid of bad and dangerous people, afraid of spooks, afraid of death, afraid of the atom bomb, afraid of the Russians, and especially afraid of ourselves! Because we do not know how to go out and to come in and refuse to admit it! All this fear, this anxiety, is not the beginning, but the end of wisdom. Such fears have nothing, really nothing in common with the fear of the Lord. They have nothing to do with God, the true God, but only with little, apparent lords. In the face of all these fears we may and we must cling to the word of the gospel not to be anxious. Wisdom stemming from the fear of the Lord is the end of all these fears.

Barth goes on to criticize the idea that people fear God because of his power and his justice:

We are afraid of God because he is so great and mighty, and we are so small and weak. We are afraid that he will accuse us like a oversized giant prosecutor, and that he will judge us like some sky-scraping chief justice. We may also be afraid of God because he might send us forever to hell at the end of our days. All such fear has nothing in common with the fear of the Lord.

This shows what Barth thinks fear-of-God is not; it has little to do with the fear-feeling. What fear-of-God is, on the other hand, is a *realization* of God's love, mercy, and grace. "It is nothing short of a discovery when a man is suddenly confronted with this reality. It

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[290] This is not an unfair exaggeration. Otto posits God in the mind (see the section on Otto above) and Becker writes nothing that disagrees with that view. (The blending of God with subjective feeling is seen right away in Becker's table of contents: his chapter three title includes „*Gottesfurcht als Furcht vor dem Numinosen*"; his second division of chapter three is entitled: „*Furcht und Jubel—das Numinose als fascinosum.*")

is not unlike the experience of Columbus who, sailing out for India, suddenly hit upon the continent of America."[291]

Samuel Terrien

Terrien (also writing about the time of Becker) provides a rare and refreshing description of fear-of-God in a lengthy dictionary article—rare and refreshing in that he takes the Bible literature at face value and therefore finds that fear-of-God contains a fair amount of fear. The origin of much of this fear has to do with the fact that "the whole tradition is embedded in the theological concept of Israel's inability or unwillingness to fulfill her mission."[292] So there is a fear-of-God that repels—for fear of punishment; but there is a fear-of-God that attracts—for it is rooted in the love and worship of God. The problem, writes Terrien, is that western minds cannot understand how both can co-exist:

> The OT repeatedly associates the emotion of fear with the complex of faith, trust, love, and communion; and it is perhaps at this juncture that the biblical mode of thinking is most startling to the modern Western mind. For the ancient Hebrew, a member of the holy people, covenanted with a holy god for a unique purpose in history, there is no paradox in the liturgical command, "Serve Yahweh with fear, and rejoice with trembling!" (Ps 2:11)[293]

Westerns (I assume here that Terrien is referring especially to western theologians) tend to disdain any idea of fear (of anything). But even though fear-of-God does become somewhat of a designation for the religion of Israel, Terrien nevertheless warns:

> It would be a grave error, however, to soften the meaning of the expression and to ignore its central element of *mysterium tremendum*. Although many commentators and historians have fallen into this error during the past hundreds years, the fear of the Lord is not merely to be equated with reverence, piety, or religion because it is impossible today to revaluate and again charge these terms with their ancient—but now largely lost—connotation of awesomeness. It is true that biblical religion is summed up in the law to love God absolutely and exclusively (Deut 6:4, 5), but this love, precisely because it is absolute and exclusive, imposes upon man a demand which is never devoid of fearful dimensions.[294]

Even Terrien does not avoid Ottonian terms; but he does so with the following caution:

> The concept of the "numinous" is to be seriously qualified whenever it is applied to Hebrew modes of theological thinking, for the God of Israel, from the time of Moses, at least, is not an impersonal 'numen' but a personal Being who intervenes in the affairs of men and whose self-disclosure is ultimately a gracious uncovering of active will, saving intent, and creative purpose.

This is a valuable disclaimer, and one that is, unfortunately, not heard more often. But after reading one of Terrien's later works in which he champions womanhood and

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[291] Barth, 2006, 438.
[292] Terrien, 1962, 258.
[293] Ibid.
[294] Ibid.

women's rights through pointing out the "numinous" quality of menstruation and sexuality, I do not think that Terrien in his fear-of-God article gives his disclaimer for theological reasons; rather, he is only alluding to the fact that Otto's "numinous" concept differs from what the biblical *literature* says.[295] In other words, Israel recorded a story about a personal God who worked wonders in their midst, and fear before God is a legitimate part of that story—but this is just the story that came down to us. One must keep in mind when reading the OT that Otto's perception of God and the Jewish assertions about God are very different. But as far as what really happened in Israelite history and before, that is a different matter in which Otto's views have a rightful place. From a historical standpoint, the Jewish religious leaders who composed much of the OT paid the high price of disallowing much of what was of numinous value in and before their day in order to build their androcentric cult.[296]

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[295] Terrien, 1982, 99, 100.

[296] Terrien (Ibid., 99) says that the exilic priests and disciples of Ezekiel "codified and promulgated a number of folkloric practices, some of which were ancient, and imposed them upon nascent Judaism as the official law of the restored community. Overreacting to the attraction of the Canaanite cult of the Mother-Goddess, they developed a complex system of purity and impurity which attempted to keep the worshippers of Yahweh from a pseudo-magical participation in the powers of sexuality. Hebrew women, in ancient Yahwism, had enjoyed a religious status equal to that of men." Because of this overreaction of the priestly leaders, Terrien claims that women were excluded from full rights in cult worship, and men were excluded from appreciating the "numinous" quality of many aspects of womanhood—including menstruation: "Again, the prehistoric mentality, which has persisted in many cultures, had perceived menstrual blood as a manifestation of the numinous. The Jerusalem priesthood, overreacting once more to the fascination of the pseudo-magical rites related to the cult of the Canaanite Mother-Goddess, assembled in a legal document now known as the Code of Holiness a complex program of rituals of purity and impurity. This program included three somewhat contradictory prohibitions and prescriptions related to women during and after their menstruation (Lev 15:19-24; 18:19; 20:18)." (p. 100) This unfortunate disregard for the numinous character of women, Terrien further writes, was passed down into the church age: "In spite of the revolutionary boldness of Jesus and of the first generation of Christians, when women had received again the dignity and the privileges of a true human being in the presence of God, the Church Fathers reverted to the strictures of postexilic codes, which had by then been sacralized as the 'Law of Moses.' The inability or unwillingness to view Leviticus in the original environment of its literary inception is partly responsible in Christendom to this day for the male fear of the numinous character not only of women but also of the whole realm of sexuality." (100) Noteworthy here is Terrien's assumption of an evolution of the Israelite cult in which the "Law of Moses" was created much later for cult, political, and—if Terrien is right—androcentric reasons. Implicit in this is the idea that those who view Leviticus in its *biblical* environment are backwards and contribute to the oppression of women. Or, to put it the other way around, one must hold to a critically-reconstructed history of Israel in order to have the highest respect and appreciation for women. The only thing I will say in response is this: painting the OT as mainly a creation of men only serves to gut the bible of its authority. A direct result of this is that people disregard the many rights and protections that the OT *does* give to women, including "love your neighbor as yourself." The loss of respect for these

Whatever the motives are behind Terrien's qualification of Otto's terminology, I am still nevertheless thankful for it. Terrien ends his article with this fine observation:

> It is thus a grave error to maintain, with many moderns, that Christianity, as opposed to Hebraism, has replaced the fear of God by the love of God. The NT, as well as the OT, understands so profoundly the tragic dimensions of love and knows so acutely the awesomeness of the divine presence that it proposes to man no other prospect than the service of God "with fear and trembling" (Phil 2:12).[297]

Horst Balz

For Balz, the obsession with *Angst* (especially as provoked by Kierkegaard and Heidegger) has moved *Furcht* (i.e., fear with an object) almost completely out of the picture—and that has been to the detriment of theology.[298] *Angst* is a by-product of human freedom; in the midst of freedom, *Angst* rises up as humans realize that what happens in the future is only what is *possible*. In other words, they know that neither they nor their futures are of their own making—they are totally contingent creatures. This *Angst* is a warning signal that informs people that not all is well and that something is terribly lacking. But if humans have fear before God, then they will have no objectless fear (*Angst*) or fear of things in the world. So, fear-of-God is ultimately not a problem, but a solution.[299]

Balz defines fear of God in terms that are close to Becker, and he also understands that Otto has more or less correctly identified the feeling (the "numinous") that fear-of-God consists of.[300] Some ANE texts are mentioned that indicate that fear-of-God flowed out of primitive human fear of their environment; but, even though the OT and NT are not unaffected by this primitive fear, these "mythic" ANE texts have not much to do with the biblical fear-of-God texts that depict a human/God relationship that is *founded* not on fear, but on trust and faith.[301] Israel's religion is one of trust in their God and utter dependence on him. To the Israelites, God's love was big—and so was his anger. His "holy and righteous power" is experienced also as "frightening power" („*schreckende Macht*"). The fear-of-God signifies the "primitive shiver before the power of God" as well as compliance to his will.[302] The NT concept of fear is one of "fright" and "horror";

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protections and the loss of belief in the OT God—as well as the loss of the perception of *threat* from his judgment—is the much greater threat to the rights of women.

[297] Terrien, 1962, 259.
[298] Balz, 1969, 626, 627.
[299] Ibid., 644.
[300] Ibid., 630, 637.
[301] Ibid., 636-639.
[302] Ibid., 630, 631.

but the purpose—made plain by much of what Christ did and said—was to relieve people of not only their fear of punishment, but also of their *Angst*.[303]

In general, Balz seems to come from approximately the same understanding of fear-of-God as Becker; but while Becker pays little attention to the "numinous ground tone" that he himself asserts is present in all the developed fear-of-God varieties, Balz sees more value in fear-of-God's numinous roots because it is a critical component of faith and serves to relieve men and women of Angst.

> „Furch vor Gott?" So fragen wir am Anfang. Ja, vor Gott, dem in der Zuwendung seiner Liebe übermächtig packenden und in der konkreten Gegebenheit des Daseins total fordernden—müssen wir jetzt antworten. Unsere heutige theologische Rede vom Glauben muss sich die Frage nach der biblischen Gottesfurcht gefallen lassen. Unsere Verdündigung kann nur dann von der Angst des In-der-Welt-Seins befreien, wenn sie das biblische Furchtmotiv in rechter Weise aufnimmt und neu interpretiert als eine Qualität des Glaubens, der dem Zorn und der Liebe Gottes stets ganz ausgesetzt ist.

Fear-of-God is honest in that it recognizes both the love and anger of God—and no true faith is possible without it; for faith spans that chasm in the human soul of Angst-filled uncertainty, and pins its hopes upon that one who made contingent human beings in the first place. Faith in this world is exercised in an atmosphere less than absolute certainty. Therefore, fear is a reasonable and necessary part of it. This is why Balz can write:

> Ein Verzicht auf die Rede von der Furcht würde einer Entleerung des Glaubensbegriffs überhaupt gleichkommen; Glaube ohne Furcht hätte etwas Entscheidendes verloren, denn er hätte die kontingente Erfahrung der totalen Abhängigkeit von einem Mächtigeren und die je totale Beanspruchung durch einen fordernden Willen aufgegeben; Glaube ohne Furcht wäre enthusiastische Feier des eigenen Selbstbewusstseins und damit Unglaube.[304]

Much more than Becker (and most other modern commentators), Balz takes into consideration the great problem of human *Angst* and contingency, as well as the great biblical truths of God's power and anger (about human sin), and concludes that a fearful feeling before God is justified—and even necessary. He does not see *Angst*/*Furcht* as something in Christian life that has to be simply gotten rid of; the question is "what do we do with fear?" rather than "how do we eliminate it?" His proposal that men and women should allow their fear to be focused upon the only necessary being who made all contingent beings is extremely valuable.[305]

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[303] Ibid., 642.

[304] Ibid., 643.

[305] Despite being a very valuable point, I believe it to be inconsistent with the critical scholarly assumptions that he appears to hold (see top 630). To assert that one must have faith (which in Balz's view should contain fear-of-God) in the biblical God because faith in him is really the only possible solution to human contingency, mortality, and *Angst*, then the person asserting that view must really believe in the reality of the biblical God. But the epistemology that

H. P. Stähli

Stähli's 1971 lexicon article (in THAT) covers all the linguistic forms of ירא, but his detailed presentation is mainly a distillation of Becker's work.[306] In describing the cases that clearly depict a strong emotional/feeling reaction of fear before something/someone, Stähli employs all the Ottonian terms—without "qualification"—that are used by Becker. Out of "numinous" fear, the cultic and moral ideas of fear-of-God develop, but—agreeing with Becker—throughout this development remains a numinous "ground-tone" that is never completely eliminated.[307]

Henri Blocher

Blocher—not unlike Balz—argues for the necessity of fear-of-God in biblical faith. His article is clearly written from the standpoint of faith and belief in the credibility of the biblical witness. "The role of fear of the Lord," Blocher says, "in wisdom is intimately connected with main tenets of Old Testament faith. It agrees with its anthropology, with its unified view of the inner man and its concentration in the heart (cf. Prov 4:23)."[308] In fact, fear-of-God is intimately bound up with the "creational monotheism" that lays out from the beginning the realities of God's necessity and human contingency. Fear-of-God simply flows out of this reality and is an acknowledgement (i.e., knowledge) of the way things really are. Any kind of real wisdom requires a "clear distinction between Creator and creature."[309] And fear-of-God is a force that naturally makes that distinction. But the pagan religions that surrounded Israel, with their "latent pantheism," obviously did not

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underlies *classic* biblical historical criticism in the main disallows any statements that claim to have *knowledge* about the God of the Bible and the works of God as described in the Bible. Many scholars who primarily employ the higher-critical methods in their scholarly work confess strong personal faith; but how does this square with their theological instruction in seminaries and universities performed under the rubric of "science" which presents the biblical history in a way that either explicitly or implicitly questions that which makes the Christian faith legitimate in the first place—that is, the reliability of the biblical testimonies about (for example) God, God's words, God's people, God's prophecies, Christ's virgin birth, Christ's miracles, and Christ's resurrection. Many of these scholars would quite gladly be free of the excessive „Beschränkung" of what is deemed by the academy to be *reasonable* and within the bounds of *knowledge* (see Razinger, 2006); for many no doubt know that their ability to prepare men and women for ministry and to influence the world for good is significantly hampered by the limitations forced upon them—limitations that make them present the Bible in such a way that it *seems* to their students and to the society to whom they speak *as if* they really do not believe the Bible to reflect a substantially truthful testimony about God and his miraculous workings in human history.

[306] Stähli, 1971

[307] Ibid., 771.

[308] Blocher, 1977, 23.

[309] Ibid., 24.

have any true fear-of-God—or otherwise, they would have seen more of a distinction between the creator and the creation.[310] Because of this unreliability of pagan faith, Blocher thinks it a mistake for theologians to look to the ANE nations around Israel in trying to illuminate the meaning of fear-of-God. The development of their religions was far different than how the Israelite faith came to be. The former developed idol worship; Israel developed monotheism. Therefore, one cannot learn anything meaningful about fear-of-God from those who worshipped and experienced fear before gods that did not really exist. According to Blocher, the pagan idea of fear-of-God had nothing corresponding to the Israelite idea that it was the *beginning* of wisdom (Blocher says "the *principle* of wisdom). One does not find in ANE wisdom writings something like, "The fear of Marduk (or Baal or Râ) is the principle of wisdom." In fact there can be no such thing "because Marduk is no god, Marduk is a Nothing!"[311] Blocher mentions that pagan religion can in some ways reflect the general revelation; but, in general, one must be careful not to see too many similarities between pagan and Israelite religion:

> In this light, the existence of scattered similarities to Biblical truths in the ancient Near-East could be considered as glimpses of God's original revelation, with no damage done to uniqueness, and Godfearing teachers of wisdom in Israel could assimilate insights which Egyptians had gained by God's common grace, just as their fathers had spoiled these Egyptians' riches. The weakness of the comparative approach is that it tends to take the field of phenomena as the ultimate reference for judgement. But *Veritas index sui et false*! Reverent reference to the LORD first *is* the principle of wisdom! When one abides by this principle, he can appreciate (and there is plentiful evidence for him then to canvass!) how darkened and distorted the truth of God has been in nations deprived of special revelation.[312]

With this pagan deprivation of "special revelation," one should wonder why the Israelite wise men who set down the biblical wisdom truths would have wanted to borrow from their pagan neighbors any "wisdom" that had to do with the relationship between gods and humans. If they did, then maybe there is some truth to the claim that OT wisdom is, at bottom, pagan. But in Blocher's view, this is highly unlikely.[313]

The Israelite wise men knew, after all, that there was good wisdom and bad wisdom—and pagan wisdom that dealt with how a man or woman can be right with their god would have no doubt been understood as the latter. This distinguishing between good and bad wisdom is mentioned in the OT and is also alluded to in the NT. For example, Paul, in 1 Cor 1:19, 30, uses Isa 29:14 and Jer 9:23, 24 (22, 23) to say that Christ-less wisdom is really no wisdom at all. True (godly) wisdom, says Paul, is "in Jesus Christ, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and

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[310] Ibid.
[311] Ibid., 21.
[312] Ibid.
[313] Ibid., 20, 21.

redemption. Therefore, as it is written: 'Let him who boasts boast in the Lord'" (1 Cor 1:30, 31 NIV). So there is, as Blocher puts it, a "principle" of wisdom, and this principle has to do with the faith that must come first before real wisdom can be had. This principle is knowledge of God as well as humble acknowledgment of the truth of that knowledge. From the OT to the NT, the emphasis of this wisdom principle shifts from fear to faith, and is all about accepting the God-man who "became flesh and lived among us":

> Coming to Christ, taking his yoke, receiving the Spirit which is from God, this is the equivalent of fearing the LORD, and it can be summarized in the word "faith". We suggest that fear can be translated faith because the critical element of "fear" belongs also to faith as soon as the Lord of faith is come down from heaven, a humble-hearted man and obedient unto death: when faith is in Christ and in him crucified, it pours contempt on human pride and it involves the denial of worldly wisdom.[314]

What I like best about what Blocher writes is that reasonable and biblical anthropology and theology are assumed at the start. God is God (Christ is Christ) and humans beings are human beings; as a consequence, all wisdom is contingent upon there first being a knowledge of God and a humble recognition of one's obligation to submit to him. For fear-of-God, however, I would tend to keep a strong emphasis on what the term semantically is rooted in—i.e., fear—and suggest that God does not just use knowledge and choice as a part of faith, but also the emotion/feeling of fear. When one, for example, because of fear of heights is prompted to move away from a cliff towards safer ground, the feeling is not so much *intellectual* knowledge; rather, it is mostly *affective* knowledge that helps him or her get out of harm's way. This fear is automatic in most humans (i.e., it is God-given as a part of human nature) and can rise up and "goad" a person even if that person *knows* (intellectually) nothing about the danger. Humans have the life-preserving capability on earth to experience fear because the earth is not a safe place. A critical question that one exploring the fear-of-God subject needs to ask and definitively answer is, "is God safe?" If there exists anything in the providence of God that has the potential of being unsafe for humans, then fear ought to be understood to be a reasonable first response to that danger. Only if one believes that God is safe *in any event* could one reasonably not make any room for fear. But common sense and the Bible tell us that God is safe only if men and women obey him. Therefore, God *can be* unsafe, and fear, therefore, *can be* experienced before God. With fear-of-God, Blocher puts most of the semantic emphasis on faith; faith is the "principle" of wisdom. Faith is indeed necessary for wisdom; but I think that God can use fear to at least goad the disobedient person towards faith. In this way one might say that fear is the beginning of the "principle" of wisdom.

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[314] Ibid., 27.

In trying to make the case that Israelite wisdom and its fear-of-God concept did not originate in a special sage circle that was far removed from the cult, Barré appeals to the existence of Jewish-like wisdom in the nations that surrounded Israel.[315] Just as the fear-of-God idea was intimately connected to the cult in the ANE, the same situation was likely in Israel. Barré's effort to locate Jewish wisdom in the general OT flow of the YHWH cult is a worthwhile effort—for Jewish biblical wisdom should not be seen as a secular addition that was pressed into the sacred (perhaps based upon Greek influence). Biblical wisdom that is well-blended into the overall biblical flow—and not forced in from the outside—does indeed add meaning and purpose as Barré suggests;[316] but while he may indeed have a point that ANE wisdom was an integral part of ANE cult life, and that ANE worship and Israelite cult worship were in some ways analogous, it must be questioned if the fear that was experienced before the gods of the nations around Israel could have been the same fear experienced before the true and living God who revealed himself to Israel.

While Barré's purpose in his article is to champion the value of OT wisdom—and especially the idea of fear-of-God that is a part of it—his linking of Otto's "numinous" with fear-of-God, as well as his understanding that we can draw eternal truths from the ANE fear-of-God idea, puts this value into doubt. Barré's baseline meaning for OT fear-of-God is thoroughly Ottonian: "[Fear-of-God] does not convey the notion of enervating terror but rather of overpowering awe in the presence of the wholly other."[317] Then Barré writes, "Essentially it represents the basic and proper stance of mortals before the divine."[318] Right away, one should question if fear-of-God is at the same time "overpowering awe" and a "proper stance." What does Barré mean by a "proper stance?" He goes on to speak about this "stance," but not really about the stance *per se*, but about what flows out of this stance: "How was this relational stance expressed? What actions or behavior would have been recognized as fear of the gods and what behavior would have been perceived as contrary to this?" From here, Barré goes on to define fear-of-God more accurately; but one should notice that he has shifted from fear itself to what is a *result* of the fear. These are two completely different categories—one is an emotion/feeling; the other is behavior/action. Because he then goes on to looking at Babylonian, Egyptian, and Hittite texts to (at least partially) answer how this "relational stance [is] expressed," not

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[315] Barré, 1981, 41, 42.

[316] Ibid., 43.

[317] Ibid., 42. Barré cites Otto's 1968 edition of *The Idea of the Holy* (pp. 13-23) at this point.

[318] Ibid.

only will he define OT fear-of-God by actions and not the fear itself, but these actions are to a large extent gleaned from false-god worship as depicted in the ANE texts. As Barré makes his way through these texts, he mentions the following meanings for fear-of-God: awesome respect; no arrogant defiance of the gods (i.e., "hybris"); reverence; respectful and submissive attitude; acceptance of responsibility to worship, to observe feast days, and to make appropriate sacrifices; the cult itself; to stand in the temple.

This multiplication of meanings is quite like Becker's; furthermore, his justification for seeing these meanings is based—like Becker—upon several alleged instances of *synonymous* parallelism. For example, Barré presents these parallel lines of *The Babylonian Theodicy*: "He who waits on his god has a protecting angel. The humble man who fears … his goddess accumulates wealth."[319] To "wait on" one's god in the first clause, says Barré, means to stand before one's god in the temple. This idea is parallel and synonymous to "the humble man who fears" of the second clause. Another ANE example provided by Barré is a Hittite prayer of Amuwanda I: "In Hittite territory alone we unceasingly make … offerings to you. It is only in Hittite territory that we do not cease to fear you, Oh gods."[320] Regarding this, he writes, "It is clear from this passage that "unceasingly make … offerings" is synonymous with "fear" … of the gods. When I read these texts, I do not see how it is "clear" that there is synonymous parallelism here. As has been argued above in the section about Becker (see pp. 80-84, 90-92), parallelism does not have to be synonymous; the idea of the second line may repeat, expand upon, disagree with, or have almost correspondence at all with the parallel first line. The relational possibilities are practically endless. Like Becker, Barré appears to be spring-loaded to see synonymous parallelism in cases in which synonymity will yield a more refined and developed fear-of-God meaning. His case for synonymity could be somewhat stronger with the OT text he considers—2 Kings 17:24-28. Here (in a *biblical* acknowledgment of "ANE" wisdom!), the Assyrian king (in response to the crises of God-sent marauding lions in Israel) commands that an Israelite priest be sent back to the land in order to "teach [the people] the law of the god of the land" (17:27). The next verse then says that—upon arriving there—the priest "taught them how they should worship the LORD." "Worship" here is the NRSV translation of ייראו (lit. "they will fear"). Barré does not say that there exists a synonymous parallel between teaching "the law" and teaching the "worship [of] the LORD"; but he does say that the text is evidence that fear-of-God "cannot be separated from the realm of the cult," and that the mention of fear-of-God "could not mean simply having a certain 'attitude' toward [YHWH]."[321] The

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[319] Ibid. Barré obtains the text from Lambert, 1960, 71.

[320] Barré, 1981, obtains the text from Lebrun, 1980, 133-149.

[321] Barré, 1981, 42, 43.

concepts of "law" and "fear" as used here could indeed be quite similar; but I would say that one could also argue that the priest in following the king's command to teach "the law" decided to first teach the "beginning of wisdom," i.e., the fear of the LORD. That is, the priest endeavored to instill in the people's hearts the attitude that would bring about a willingness to follow the law. The context of this pericope also should be seen in light of vv. 38, 39; here, the people are called away from the fear of "other gods" to the fear of "the LORD your God." This call is based upon the following truth: "[the LORD] will deliver you out of the hand of all your enemies" (v. 39b). As already mentioned, the message here is that God alone is all-powerful—in fact, powerful enough to overcome all enemies. But false gods are dead and powerless to do anything—therefore, there is no reason to fear them. And in those days, there was much of real fear experienced before "the gods": there must have been great fear felt, for example, before the false gods *Adrammelech* and *Anammelech*, to whom the people of Sepharvaim "burned their children in the fire as sacrifices" (2 Kings 17:31; see pp. 84-87 above).[322]

Hans Kramer

In a brief dictionary article about theological Angst, Kramer simply offers fear-of-God "idea types" that are similar to Becker's: „Furcht Gottes ist im AT das Bewußtsein der Abhängigkeit von Jahwe, dem Unbegreiflichen, die Treue zum Bundesgott und der Gehorsam im Sittlichen." In these ways one can say that fear-of-God is the "beginning of wisdom."[323] In the NT, the "perfect love," spoken of in 1 John 4:18, excludes any idea of "fear of failure" or of "punishment." In fact, the fear-of-God idea in the NT becomes "greatly reduced." Kramer's tendency to steer away from the fear feeling/emotion with fear-of-God is seen in his reference to Phil 2:12, 13: „Weil Gott das Wollen und das Vollbringen in den Glaubenden bewirkt, haben sie sich 'mit Furcht und Zittern', das heißt mit Ernst und Sorge—und gerade nicht mit Angst—um das Heil zu mühen." For Kramer, "fear and trembling" becomes "earnestness and worry"; there is no room for fear because God is the one doing his good work in the believer. In reference to 1 John 4:18, the reader

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[322] This tragic phenomenon of people being in great fear before idols is spoken about at length in Jeremiah chapter ten. Here, the LORD says, "[The nations'] idols are like scarecrows in a cucumber field, and they cannot speak; they have to be carried, for they cannot walk. Do not be afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, nor is it in them to do good. There is none like you, O LORD; you are great, and your name is great in might. Who would not fear you, O King of the nations? For that is your due; among all the wise ones of the nations and in all their kingdoms there is no one like you" (vv. 5-7). The point God makes here is the same as in 2 Kings 17:39: because idols are powerless and God is all-powerful, people should not at all be afraid of idols, but, "rather fear Him"—as Christ put it when warning his disciples—"who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt 10:28b).

[323] Kramer, 1993, 673.

is invited to see pp. 219-220. There, I point out that because no one is "perfect in love," then no one can be expected to be completely free of the fear of God's punishment. Regarding Phil 2:12, his translation of μετὰ φόβου καὶ τρόμου is simply not accurate. In general he appears to be willing to bend the meaning of unambiguous fear-of-God texts so that they fit in with the overarching theological idea that God's love absolutely assures the believer's safety. This is arguably a true doctrine—but the exegete should not overlook the many NT passages which are stern warnings given to both believers and unbelievers (see chapter three).

Jan Milič Lochman

This article champions the idea of a *„Jüngsten Gericht"* ("final judgment"); it is not about fear-of-God of God *per se*, but about the universal *Angst* that points to a need for justice as well as final judgment that will provide it. I nevertheless include Lochman's article because the question of fear-of-God and fear of God's punishment should figure predominately into this theme. The "emblem of humanity," writes Lochman, is *Angst*.[324] It is a phenomenon that arises out of human freedom. In this freedom men and woman can plan for the future and choose to live their lives *responsibly*. This is the dignity of human beings; but freedom necessarily produces *Angst*—because humans are constantly aware of the possibility of *„erfüllung"* ("compliance," "fulfillment") or *„Verfehlen"* ("failure"). *Angst* functions as a "life-signal" and a "wake-up call" that alerts the experient that all is not well and safe in the world—and this is indeed the way the world is.[325] *Angst* shows that the world—and all the people in it—are in great need of a final *„Befreiung"* from the injustice and oppression that fill the world. Here is the main point of his article: *the final judgment is for our good, and not for our harm*.[326] *Angst* is a universal phenomenon that cries out for a final judgment of all that oppresses and enslaves; unfortunately, our western world has mainly bought into the idea that the final judgment was only something used by the church to terrify the people into conversion and submission.[327]

Lochman thinks this view is tragically mistaken because it does not understand how evil the world really is. Many in the west have not lived in poverty or under significant oppression; so the awareness of injustice as well as the awareness of the need for justice—especially final justice—in this world is not on their minds. But for those who have lived under great oppression and injustice, the idea of a final judgment brings great

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[324] Lochman, 1993, 77.
[325] Ibid.
[326] Ibid., 82.
[327] Ibid., 79.

comfort and hope. Lochman cites the example of those who lived under Stalinist-brand communism in Czechoslovakia in the 1950s. The people were abused through the "monstrous phenomenon" of the "perverted justice with its manipulating show-trials."[328] Through this, the „Sensucht" was awakened in many for justice to come that would bring righteousness, eliminate arbitrariness, and would free them once and for all. Under communism, God and his law were thrown out, and the highest court one could appeal to was the arbitrary court presided over by the communist rulers—and hope for righteous justice and for relief from their suffering was lost. The results were "hellish."[329] But righteous justice will indeed be provided in the final judgment—for God is good and God is love; he hates those who murder and oppress, and his judgment of them will be strong and complete. Jesus has come not to condemn, but to save. And because of his supreme act of love on the cross, men and women know that he is the *right* judge. [330]

Lochman's call for appreciation of a final judgment is a legitimate response to those scholars who would criticize the biblical God because of his harsh judgment of unrepentant sinners. My only critique of his article would be that he almost seems to border on a liberation theology perspective that understands God's justice mainly as a process to free poor and oppressed peoples. The „Kriterium" for coming successfully through the final judgment is only drawn from Matt 25:31-46: to what extent one is "open" or "closed" to fellow human beings who are in emergency situations will determine one's "fate before God."[331] In his effort to make the final judgment look attractive—i.e., mainly as a „Befreiung", he draws too much attention away from a great biblical reality: for those who reject God and reject God's son, the final judgment is horrible. This downplaying of the fearful side of the final judgment is seen in his criticism of how the church throughout its history depicted the final judgment: for example, the depictions of the lost in Baroque-era paintings are shocking, and the church in general used this theme to manipulate the people.[332] Lochman reacts against this by calling us away from a "dualism" view of the final judgment („die Seligen rechts, die Verdammten links") to a focus upon the benefits that come with a final judgment.[333] Perhaps this positive emphasis on the final judgment is why he does not attribute at least a portion of that *Angst* to the prospect of a final judgment. Lochman rightly explains that *Angst* forces people to see that all is not right in the world—and that the final judgment will one day

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[328] Ibid., 82.

[329] Ibid. Marxism's removal of the notion of a final judgment also had the effect of causing even more oppression and terror because the dissuasive force of the final judgment was no longer present.

[330] Ibid., 84.

[331] Ibid., 86.

[332] Ibid., 79.

[333] Ibid., 86.

make everything right; but he does not address the possibility that *Angst* is to some extent attributable to a sense of being *at risk in a final judgment*. *Angst* in this case is fear of God's punishment ("servile" fear). Lochman does not want people to think in terms of those on "the right" and on "the left"; but in the very „*Kriterium*" text that he cites (Matt 25:31-46), a clear distinction between the saved and the lost is what is in view with the "sheep" and the "goats." Actually, the "both halves" presentation of the final judgment that Lochman wants to move away from is (in an eschatological/soteriological sense) arguably already too weak: despite the truth that Christ came to save and not to condemn, he nevertheless indicated that more people would choose the "damned left" side than the other (see Matt 7:13, 14). If *all* people, as Paul asserts in Rom 1:18-20, "are without excuse" before God, then it follows that this knowledge of the possibility of moral guilt would cause *Angst* to be generated. Because this *Angst* is fear of judgment, then it is fear-of-God—for God is the one who brings the final judgment and who presides over it. *Angst* is then simply a tool that God uses to get people to think about this judgment. It is indeed, as Lochman says, a "wake-up call"; but I would prefer to call it a *warning*.

ANALYSIS OF COMMENTATORS IN VIEW OF THEOLOGICAL AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL REALITIES

I will now comment briefly upon the fear-of-God commentators that have just been surveyed. The comments will be made in reference to a number of points of Evangelical Christian doctrine.

God Created Human Beings and Created Them in His Image

There is no problem with this belief for the pre-critical writers; it is evident that they assume orthodox views of God and human beings. The influence of empiricism followed by idealism in the 18th and 19th centuries took a strong hold on theological studies and one can see the results especially with Otto and Becker. To many casual observers the former appeared to write a book about the holy nature of God ("The Idea of the Holy") and this is probably part of the reason for the book's huge commercial success. But the subject of the study ("the Holy") is not about God, but about any person's religious emotions/feelings. In his effort to find a place for religion within an epistemological atmosphere that assumed the correctness of the empiricism of Kant, he so located "God" in the perceiving subject that "God" and the subject became hopelessly blended. Otto coined the term "numinous" for this ultimate-reality emotion/feeling. The numinous—"a recognized history-of-religion and psychology-of-religion terminus" (notice, not a *theological* terminus)—"posits" the "God" object which "no longer

belong[s] to the perceptual world."[334] Because it is an *"a priori"* category of mind, and epistemologically beyond doubt and without need of explanation or proof, then the final religious truth resides there and not in revelation.[335] To Otto, claims to "supernatural" events are disqualified by both the then "acceptable" empiricist epistemological restrictions as well as his idealist positioning of religious epistemological knowledge in the experient.[336] Even though Otto was trying to find a place for religion after the empiricists all but did away with it, he nevertheless dovetailed his numinous into their already influential "history of religions" theory of religious origins; if religion first came into being according to the feelings and needs of humans, then the combination of the emotions and feelings that prompted "primitive" men and women toward religion must have been the first stirrings of the numinous.

Becker's monumental work is built upon Otto's understanding of the numinous and how it played a part in the development (or, better, the *evolution*) of religion. Becker then added the developmentally-minded ideas of form critics and wound up doing an exhaustive study about the feeling/emotion/orientation/virtue/etc. before a "God" who is "posited" by the subject, but is not really exterior to and different from the subject—and, therefore, not an object of true relationship. Because of this, one can see all through his monograph that the question of how fear-of-God fits *theologically* into a proper relationship with God is not a concern or the topic under investigation. *Gottesfurcht im Alten Testament* is not about fear-of-God *per se*; instead, it is about buttressing the form-critical theories that had become generally acceptable in his day. He thought he could do this by showing that earlier literary forms showed "primitive" numinous fear, while later literary forms showed more refined properties of fear-of-God that were appropriate to the developmental stage of the cult. His method sought to match a literary form with a linguistic form as well as an idea-type. But his literary forms are very general, his linguistic forms are mostly run-of-the mill forms of ירא that do little to justify the wide semantic range that he claims for fear-of-God, and the fear-of-God idea-types are only marginally based upon biblical context; they come instead from the dictates of the form-critical reconstruction of Israel's history. This reconstruction flowed out of the epistemological skepticism already mentioned, and—before being utilized and defended by Becker—was built up into a forceful movement by the only scholar that Becker commends in his forward, Hermann Gunkel. Toward the end of his writing and teaching career Gunkel claimed that it was "childish" to believe in biblical miracles, und boldly pronounced that "the opinion that the Old Testament might be a sure guide to true

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[334] Otto, 1958, 113.

[335] Ibid., 116.

[336] This skepticism of biblical revelation applies, according to Otto, to the facticity of the empty tomb.

religion and morality is not any longer to be maintained."[337] For both Otto and Becker, fear-of-God is something altogether different from what the words (fear/of/God) plainly mean; because of this, their results cannot describe the fear-of-God emotion/feeling that the Bible so often mentions and ought to be had by people as a part of a proper relationship with the living God.[338]

God Created Human Beings to Be in Relationship with Him

Pre-critical commentators thought long and hard about the proper relationship between human beings and the God who made them. The writer of the Shepherd of Hermes, for example, clearly believed that fear-of-God ought to be part of that relationship because it is the "all" of man (the writer quoted Eccl 12:13) in view of God's power, authority, and his coming judgment. But because many critical-era commentators located "God" in the mind, then they really could not write about what one normally understands as a relationship between two persons—because there was no one really exterior to the experient to have a relationship with. At best, one could only claim to have a relationship with an *imaginary* deity. So it is not a surprise that Becker could write a major work on fear-of-God that does little to determine how it functions in order to bring humans closer to the God who made them. As just mentioned, Becker's work is mainly about supporting the form-critical notion that certain literary forms at certain stages of the cult development contain unique linguistic forms which in turn indicate specific meanings. The older forms (from "myths," "legends," "stories," "sagas," etc.) typically use the verb ירא plus an accusative object and the "numinous" emotion/feeling is

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[337] Gunkel, 1916, 2, 3, writes: „Es erscheint uns jetzt kindlich, an das Wunder des Elisa zu glauben, der einmal ein eisernes Beilblatt auf dem Wasser schwimmen ließ. Der moderne Mensch lächelt, wenn man ihm als geschichtliche Tatsachen erzählt, daß einst eine Eselin den Mund geöffnet und gesprochen habe, daß ein Mensch drei Tage lang im Leibe eines großen Fisches geweilt habe und lebendig wieder herausgekommen sei oder daß die ersten Menschen jahrhundertelang gelebt hätten" (2). He goes on to say after a number of other claims against the veracity of the OT: „Also auch die Meinung, das Alte Testament sei ein sicherer Führer zu wahrer Religion und Sittlichkeit, ist nicht länger zu halten" (3). In another work Gunkel has this word for those who believe in the historical accuracy of the Genesis narrative: "And every one who perceives the peculiar poetic charm of these old legends must feel irritated by the barbarian—for there are pious barbarians—who thinks he is putting the true value upon these narratives only when he treats them as prose and history" (Gunkel, 1901, 11).

[338] With the view that "God" is a projection of human emotions/feelings, it is not surprising that the scholars who generally hold to this view are quick to look for other ANE fear-of-God texts in which they also claim to find evidence that fear-of-God evolved. Otto, Becker, Stähli, and Barré go this direction; but Balz says that one cannot compare the fear of the gods of the ANE with the fear before the loving God of the OT; and Blocher makes the case that the ANE god-fearers, with their "latent pantheism," could in no way have had the true fear-of-God, because if they had, they would have distinguished the false gods from the true God.

typically what is in view; the later Deuteronomistic narrative form employs the verb plus YHWH and generally indicates cult loyalty; those who wrote the Psalms also intended fear-of-God to mean something like cult loyalty, but their preferred form was the plural "verbal-adjective" in construct with YHWH or Elohim; the wisdom literary form used fear-of-God to stand for one who was moral („*sittlich*") and used the singular "verbal-adjective" in the construct state with YHWH or Elohim, the noun, and the verb plus Elohim. In each of these alleged idea-types (numinous, cult loyalty, and moral) are a plethora of sub-meanings that multiply far beyond what I think is a reasonable semantic range for ירא.[339] Becker claims that each literary form's primary linguistic form provides evidence of semantic development; but I argued that each linguistic form is simply what one would expect to find in their respective sections of the OT: that is, the older narrative sections simply use the verb to narrate not a few cases of people fearing before an epiphany or before something/someone else; the "Deuteronomistic" section uses the verb plus YHWH simply because it too is mostly narrative ("And David was afraid of the LORD that day" [2 Sam 6:9]), and God's name had by then been revealed at Sinai; the Psalms use the plural "verbal-adjective" (I prefer to call them participles) simply because they routinely mention groups that do this or that or have a particular characteristic (e.g., "happy are all who take refuge in him" [Ps 2:12c])—and the participle naturally fits when a Psalm's writer is commenting about someone else. The linguistic forms of the wisdom literary forms are likewise unremarkable and do not in any way indicate any shift in meaning away from the fear-feeling semantic root. Those texts that indicate, according to Becker, "numinous" fear are in general rightly identified; but he really has no other choice in view of the obvious fear-portraying contexts. In the *virtue*-fear-of-God cases, however, there is usually no immediate context that indicates what is meant by the use of

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[339] *Some* of the meanings possible for fear-of-God that Becker suggests are (many of them indicated by alleged synonymous parallelisms): awe, humility, honor, submission, loyalty, and love before God, not forgetting or forsaking or rebelling against the LORD, membership in the cult, religion, being pro-wisdom, knowledge, God's law and his testimonies and his precepts, serving the LORD, putting away other gods, inclining one's heart to the LORD, hearing the voice of God, not forsaking the LORD, not dealing falsely with God, not forgetting the LORD, not serving Baal or Astartes, heeding God's voice, not rebelling against God's commandments, following the LORD, not turning aside from following the LORD, serving the LORD with all one's heart, not turning aside to useless things, serving God faithfully with all one's heart, not acting wickedly, etc. (see pp. 80-84, 90). Because Becker designates many fear-of-God cases as "numinous" fear, one could to this list also add all the emotions/feelings that Otto understood the numinous to consist of (e.g., fear, dread, horror, terror, overpoweringness, utter dependence, wonder, dizzy intoxication, creeping flesh, icy coldness, grisly-ness, haunted-ness, uncanny-ness, *tremendum*, strange ravishment, etc.).

"fear."[340] In these cases, Becker assigns meanings according to the demands of form criticism and justifies this mainly by only pointing out supposed synonymous parallels with surrounding text. But this semantic influence from outside the text is artificial and methodologically circular—and the appeal to synonymous parallelism is weak at best.[341] If Becker were approximately correct, one would expect that the LXX translation team would have translated the "newer" fear-of-God texts so that their real meaning could be understood in Greek; but in nearly every virtue-fear-of-God case, the LXX translates ירא with φοβέω. In my view, the simplest explanation is most likely the best: fear-of-God first of all consists of the fear emotion/feeling because that is the main meaning for fear as found throughout both testaments. Because Becker's semantic force does not come from the authoritative text, but comes instead from an un-authoritative reconstruction of Israel's history in which "God" and fear-of-God evolved out of fears in the minds of primitive humans, then Becker's professed meanings for fear-of-God in the main do not accurately describe the fear-of-God that a person experiences before the God identified in Scripture.

Human Beings Are Vulnerable

Angst comes as a result of human creatureliness and vulnerability. Humans are "thrown" into the world and there is uncertainty all around. But Balz complains that all the concentration upon *Angst*, especially since the time of Heideggar, has all but ignored what should be the legitimate object of *Angst*—that is, God. *Angst* is certainly a real and justified phenomenon; humans are fearful because they did not will to come into the world, they do not know if things will go bad or well with them (see Eccl 9:1), and the specter of death and the question of life after death is always before them. The solution to this, claims Balz, is faith; but faith must not lose altogether the *Angst* component because

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[340] As a reminder, I designate biblical fear-of-God cases as "virtue" fear-of-God cases when they simply signify a god-pleasing virtue of a man or a woman or a group (e.g., "a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised [Prov 31:30b]), or indicate a positive value in general (e.g., "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge [Prov 1:7a]).

[341] I think Becker's method is "methodologically circular" because what he sets out to prove is already assumed in the method that he employs: his purpose (as stated in the *Gottesfurcht im Alten Testament* foreword) is to add more evidence to support the general lines of form criticism (by showing that certain literary forms will have certain linguistic forms that will indicate certain idea-types), but his method for doing this involves using the "new exegesis" of form criticism (as also stated in the forward) which in the case of the meaning of fear-of-God already has an opinion. The results from this method are seen throughout the rest of the book where the main semantic force for fear-of-God comes not from the biblical context, but from the expectations of form criticism based upon the assumption that fear-of-God evolved from the fear primitive humans experienced before their harsh and unknown environment to the "fear" that advanced monotheists experienced during cult ceremonies.

even with faith, the reality of human absolute contingency remains. In fact, faith without fear would be "an essential loss":

> Glaube ohne Furcht hätte etwas Entscheidendes verloren, denn er hätte die kontingente Erfahrung der totalen Abhängigkeit von einem Mächtigeren und die je totale Beanspruchung durch einen fordernden Willen aufgegeben; Glaube ohne Furcht wäre enthusiastische Feier des eigenen Selbstbewusstseins und damit Unglaube.[342]

Faith is only exercised in uncertainty and darkness. I would add that *Angst* is knowledge (or as Lochman says, a "wake up call") that informs humans in a painful and distressing way that faith in God is needed, and even demanded. Fear-of-God, says Blocher, is perfectly understandable when one considers the realities of theology and anthropology. The words of Balz and Blocher are valuable in that they take up the universal phenomenon of *Angst* and seek to explain its existence as well as the solution for it.

<center>*Human Beings Know about God*</center>

The Bible teaches that all men and women are accountable to God because of their innate knowledge about God and his moral law. If they do not put their faith in God and turn from their sins, they, according to Paul, cannot plead ignorance—for "what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.… so that men are without excuse" (Rom 1:19, 20b NIV). Pre-critical views about fear-of-God include the assumption that men and women throughout time have either ran toward or ran away from God—with no middle ground where one might be completely oblivious to the existence of God. Tertullian understood this doctrine and his understanding of fear-of-God reflects it: "[The soul] doubtless knows its giver; and if it knows Him, it undoubtedly fears Him too, and especially as having been by Him endowed so amply."[343] Critical commentators generally do not wrestle with how fear fits into the emotions and feelings that flow out of the awareness of the general revelation. But Otto—despite not believing in *special* revelation—does provide a possible contribution in that his "numinous" does express *some of* the emotions/feelings that are a reaction to the general revelation.[344] Otto observed the religious emotions/feelings of many people in many religions during his worldwide travels and then included these emotions/feelings in the "numinous" when he wrote *Das Heilige*. The numinous can possess an object of its affections;[345] but with

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[342] Balz, 1969, 643.

[343] Tertullian, 1989, chapter two.

[344] See my discussion about Otto's anti-revelation views on pp. 49-50.

[345] The meaning of Otto's "numinous" is ambiguous; the reader is hard-pressed to tell if Otto is referring to the subject of religious experience, the religious experience itself, or the object of religious experience. My understanding is that "numinous" means all three; but the ontological reality of all these "objects" are located in the mind of the experient.

Otto's idealist and empiricist epistemological restrictions, there is no real (objective) external object to be had.[346] So, the subject can only "posit" his or her own object, and then experience a full range of emotions—including "terror"—in "relationship" with this object. But this is just what God warns against repeatedly in Scripture: one should not go after their own gods (i.e., after their own "objects" of worship) and one should not fear them—because they are powerless to cause any harm or to do any good.[347] One should instead fear only God because only he is real and only he has the power to do any real harm or good. Otto's view is problematic in that he does not accept the truth that a person's "numinous" emotions/feelings (as per the general revelation doctrine) are there to prompt one to look for and establish a relationship with the one *true God*. One could argue that general revelation is *special* revelation because it is God's "Word" (i.e., information) which is given to men and women—therefore, it is a vital part of the God/human relationship. Because Otto does not allow special revelation the "numinous" is forced to go after any other object other than the YHWH and the Jesus Christ of revelatory Scripture—i.e., the "numinous" is forced to go after false gods. Because special revelation and the external, creator-, objective God of special revelation are epistemologically shut out of the "numinous," then Otto's description of the "numinous" cannot represent the "numinous" that one experiences before God. Emotions/feelings that arise in response to the general revelation might be reflected in Otto's numinous characteristics of "*tremendum*," "utter dependence," "fear," "wonder," and "awe"; but the general revelation—because it is a provider of fundamental knowledge about the true God—probably does not provoke emotions/feelings such as "dizzy intoxication," "strange

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[346] Otto's empiricism is reflected in the following quote: "And so we hold that in endeavouring to account for our assurance of the Risen Christ two sorts of interpretation must be excluded, the naïvely supernaturalistic and the rationalistic. The former is that which has recourse to the 'Empty Tomb'. It holds that Christ's tomb was proved to be empty by the evidence of the senses, that the Risen Christ was perceived by the senses, and that the truth of the facts so certified in sense-experience was then handed down by human testimony. On this view the conviction of the resurrection was from the first not faith, but a piece of empirical knowledge. This is the most serious objection that can be brought against the naïve 'supernaturalist' interpretation …." (Otto, 1958, 222, 223.)

[347] On pp. 84-87 above I consider God's calls—in 2 Kings 17:7-41—for the Israelites to come out of the fear of false gods and, instead, to only fear him. I make the case there that people in those times really did experience terrible emotions/feelings as they found themselves in bondage to these gods. But God called them away from this to the fear of only himself with the reasoning that only God alone had the power and authority that was worth fearing (see 2 Kings 17:39). The context of real fear in the employment of these virtue-fear-of-God cases is evident only if one understands the darkness and fearfulness inherent in idolatry. This reality is also the background of vv. 25 and 26 of David's Psalm of thanksgiving (1 Chron 16:8-36): "For great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the LORD made the heavens."

ravishment," "creeping flesh," or "terror." If the knowledge about God imparted to humans by God is considered to be a kind of special revelation, then according to Otto's epistemological restrictions, both revelations would be considered by him to be non-knowledge because they are both revelations that have their origin in the mind of the external God who created humans. Be that as it may, I do not think Otto has in any way any revelation in his mind about the God of the Bible when he lists the characteristics of his numinous; If this is so, the emotions/feelings that comprise the "numinous" are completely *arbitrary*, and, therefore, completely *unpredictable* (because they spontaneously spring up from a knowledge-base of completely *subjective* "truth"). The emotions/feelings can be anything; so it is not surprising then that Otto claims so many sensations and perceptions and emotions for the "numinous." This also accounts for the mysteriousness of the numinous (*mysterium tremendum*)—because, by definition, the object of the "numinous" can never really be found and known. All this also explains Otto's and Becker's and others' willingness to go to ANE texts; because one's religious claim is just as arbitrary and "valid" as another's, then the religious claims made by the nations of the ANE are just as valid as those made by Israel. No one ought to say—if Otto's schema is correct—that one is right and another is wrong; for if both have their own *a priori* "numinous" experiences, then no argument can be made against them—for the truth of the claim is necessarily in the claim. The numinous cannot be extracted out and debated about; it is a categorical imperative that cannot and must not be explained (or even described—although Otto tries his best to do so). By thus presenting the numinous, Becker essentially denies that any challenge can be even made against his idea. But all this goes against common sense and against the information provided by the general revelation that lets us know that *God does exist and that we are not him*. Finally, the general revelation also provides enough knowledge for people to be at least minimally aware of God's goodness. In Psalm 8, the writer says, "from the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise" (NIV); he does not say, "… you have ordained strange ravishment and creeping flesh." There is something of the knowledge of God's goodness that God provides to all; but most "exchange the glory of the immortal God" (Rom 1:23a) for objects of their "numinous" emotions/feelings that God never intended for them to have.

Human Beings Know that They Are Guilty and Will Be Judged

This appears to be generally assumed in pre-critical times. For example, the "shepherd" who visited Hermas professed that "all creation fears the Lord, but all creation does not keep His commandments."[348] According to Tertullian, "The soul doubtless

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[348] Roberts and Donaldson, 1989, 25.

knows its giver," and, because the soul knows of its evil, it fears the displeasure and the judgment of God:

> Whence, then, the soul's natural fear of God, if God cannot be angry? How is there any dread of Him whom nothing offends? What is feared but anger? Whence comes anger, but from observing what is done? What leads to watchful oversight, but judgment in prospect? Whence is judgment, but from power? To whom does supreme authority and power belong, but to God alone?[349]

The pre-critical writers believed in the reality and the authority of God and believed that there was a final judgment to come—therefore, men and women should live circumspectly and honestly before him. Luther says this most forcefully: "Therefore your time in this kind of life must be spent in such a way that you reflect about the fear of God, humble yourself before Him, and remember that you are a son of Adam, sin, death, and damnation to an equal degree with other men …."[350] They also understood that it was perfectly appropriate for men and women to experience the emotion/feeling of fear in response to the awareness of their own guilt before God, and in response to the "prospect" of a final judgment. With the pre-critical writers surveyed earlier, there appears to be no question that fear-of-God contains firstly the emotion/feeling of fear—and that fear is always first associated with the prospect of punishment. Augustine calls the fear of punishment the "beginning of wisdom";[351] Thomas considers both the fear of punishment ("servile fear") as well as the fear of losing relationship with God ("filial fear") to be the "beginning of wisdom."[352] And this is not just a justifiable reaction, but, according to Calvin, a necessary tool employed by God to jar men and women out of their depraved state: "The stern threatening which God employs are extorted from him by our depraved dispositions. For while we are asleep it were in vain to allure us by soothing measures."[353]

But "soothing measures" is what many in the west think religion should only be about. Western society has become in the last century or more quite averse to the biblical God, his authority, his punishment, and the idea that real fear should be experienced before him. Several critical-era scholars acknowledge this prevailing attitude in their works: for example, Bamberger observed that fearing God "is repugnant to modern taste, which regards fear as incompatible with genuine religious sentiment";[354] Becker, in the forward of *Gottesfurcht im Alten Testamentum*, remarked that he would guard against the prevailing tendency of watering down the fearfulness of the OT God (a promise he could

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[349] Tertullian, 1989, chap. 2.

[350] Pelikan, 1965, 181. Luther aimed this remark specifically at Christians who had been called to offices of government.

[351] Schaff, 1956, "Homily Nine on the First Epistle of John," sec. 2.

[352] Aquinas, 1981, 1249, "Question 19: of the Gift of Fear," art. 8.

[353] Calvin, 1972, sec. 7.

[354] Bamberger, 1929, 39.

only partially fulfill because his hands were tied by his form-critical method); finally, Terrien worried about this tendency (and his warning is worth quoting one more time):

> It would be a grave error, however, to soften the meaning of the expression [fear-of-God] and to ignore its central element of *mysterium tremendum*. Although many commentators and historians have fallen into this error during the past hundreds years, the fear of the Lord is not merely to be equated with reverence, piety, or religion because it is impossible today to revaluate and again charge these terms with their ancient—but now largely lost—connotation of awesomeness. It is true that biblical religion is summed up in the law to love God absolutely and exclusively (Deut 6:4, 5), but this love, precisely because it is absolute and exclusive, imposes upon man a demand which is never devoid of fearful dimensions.[355]

One of the major works that was influential in moving people away from the idea of an exterior, supreme God who will judge men and women for their sins, was Otto's *Das Heilige*. Not only did Otto turn "God" into a subjective experience—which makes him no longer a threat because he is no longer an objective reality—but he accused the biblical God (for all intents and purposes) of being evil. In his opinion, the biblical "wrath of Yahweh" possesses "no concern whatever with moral qualities," but is more like

> stored-up electricity, discharging itself upon anyone who comes too near. It is 'incalculable' and 'arbitrary'. Anyone who is accustomed to think of deity only by its rational attributes must see in this 'wrath' mere caprice and willful passion.[356]

In other words, YHWH, in his wrath, is just as likely to do good as he is to do evil. It must be remembered that Otto here is not speaking about his "God" (which is an imaginary "God" "posited" in the mind), but about the God of the Bible.[357]

If church and society are to understand ultimate reality something along the lines of Otto and to minimize or eliminate the biblical idea of God, then, of course, there is nothing to fear from God or a future judgment presided over by God. But, there is much to fear—if this is the way things really are—from human beings; for if there is no God and no moral law that exists apart from human subjectivity, then there is no solution to the world's evils. With no law and lawgiver above and outside of humans, then humans become a law unto themselves—with all the horrific consequences. But in view of the injustice that has been in the world and is in the world today, *men and women should be*

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[355] Terrien, 1962, 258. Despite the use of Ottonian terms, Terrien in this article sounds very orthodox. A later article about the "numinous," however, indicates that his understanding of God is similar to Otto's (see section on Terrien above).

[356] Otto, 1958, 18.

[357] Because Otto's idea of "God" is all a matter of an *a priori* phenomenon of the mind, then there is no objective God to fear and no objective judgment to fear. One could say that in Otto's schema there really is no such thing as evil and sin; if the idea of God as true lawgiver is false, then there is no law by which humans can be judged—only arbitrary human justice is available. Maybe that was the goal that Otto was after: to present "the Holy" one such that guilt shifted from humans to God.

longing for righteous judgment. This is the plea of Lochman who, having lived under the "hellish" conditions of communism in which justice became completely arbitrary, well understood that the final judgment one day would be a *blessing* in that the world and humans would be freed and those who made others' lives miserable would get their just punishment. This plea of Lochman is infinitely more in keeping with common sense and reality than Otto's unfair accusation of the God of the Bible.[358]

God Desires that a Love Relationship Once Again Be Established

The consensus of the pre-critical writers and several of the critical ones surveyed above is that fear ultimately is good and a gift from God. It is a tool that he uses to bring human beings closer to him; it flows out of his love and is only for our good. Augustine and Thomas drew a marked distinction between the negative fear of punishment (what Thomas calls "servile" fear) and the positive fear of losing relationship with God (what Thomas calls "filial" fear). The former, as unpleasant as it is, is simply designed by God to be a warning to a man or woman that a *dangerous* situation exists. The latter is simply the fear that comes from the prospect of losing one's beloved and (gently) goads a person not *to* God (for a person who has filial love for God is already *in* God), but into holding on to his or her Lord even tighter. Servile fear is motivated by the knowledge of God (God's power and God's wrath [but not of his love]) and the feeling of dependence and guilt before God. The object of servile fear is both the prospective suffering as well as the agent who brings the suffering—i.e., God. Filial fear, on the other hand, is motivated by the knowledge of God (God's power, authority, wrath, *and* love) and by love for and adoration of God. The person experiencing filial fear is fearful about the prospect of losing friendship, intimacy, and favor with God.[359] The objects of filial fear are the loss of relationship as well as the one with whom the relationship is lost and who also (ultimately, sovereignly) causes the loss—i.e., God. Servile and filial fear have the following characteristics according to Augustine and Thomas:

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[358] Accusations against God mentioned only tangentially by Otto pale in comparison to those made against God's character by James Crenshaw in a recent monograph. In *Defending God*—a title that I am convinced is deceptively ironic (the book is certainly no theodicy)—Crenshaw declares that the time has come for the theological academy to finally bring the God of the OT to justice for all the evil he has done (see FN 19).

[359] This is where the biblical marriage metaphor is so important (see Isa 62:5; Hosea 1-3; Eph 5:22-33; Rev 19:7; 21:1-4). Just like in a marriage relationship in which a woman deeply loves her husband and is always at least a little anxious about the prospect of losing that intimacy, so the believer who deeply loves God will always feel some anxiousness about the prospect of any kind of degradation in the quality of the relationship.

Servile fear	Filial fear
Augustine	Augustine
*fears lest God come	*fears lest God depart
*does not give boldness in the judgment	*the charity (love) from whence it flows gives one boldness in the judgment
*prepares a place for charity	*the charity from whence it flows drives out servile fear
*it removes "rottenness" from the body	*comes from the desire to embrace God
*is necessary for justification	Thomas
*is not based upon a person's love	*originates in God's spirit
Thomas	*wants to please God
*is not evil because it is end-ordered	*is one of the seven gifts (Isa 11:2, 3) of the Holy Spirit
*originates in God's spirit	*is fear of losing God's fellowship
*is not based upon freedom	*comes also from the prospect of God's punishment
*understands that God is the cause of punishment	*is the beginning of wisdom
*is the beginning of wisdom	*grows as charity grows
*diminishes as charity grows	*remains in heaven
*does not remain in heaven	

The subject of *Angst*, so appropriately brought up by several of the critical-era scholars, surely sheds light on the fear-of-God subject and perhaps upon this just expressed thought. *Angst* is a fear/dread/anxiety phenomenon that is universal—the "emblem of humanity" and a "wake-up call," as Lochman well put it. I do not think that *Angst* can be considered completely apart from fear-of-God—for, as Balz well points out, it points men and women to God. As Blocher puts it, *Angst* forces people to know that they are creatures and not the creator. And when faced with the great evils of this world, we rightfully cry out, as Lochman acknowledges, for help from God and for his righteous judgment. *Angst* has everything to do with the human condition—i.e., separation from God, contingency, vulnerability, death, etc. But the human condition cannot be considered completely apart from God because humans are created by God and their condition is sovereignly decreed by God. Human *Angst* cannot be considered apart from theology and anthropology and soteriology; in other words, *Angst* is a psychological phenomenon sovereignly provided by God for a purpose—and that purpose has much to do with human beings fulfilling God's purpose for them.

Angst might be considered the absolute "beginning of wisdom" in that it purely "goads" humans to look for answers that will bring relief. The concerns of humans that bring *Angst* include concerns of identity ("who am I?"), meaning ("am I doing what I was

designed for?"), food, injury, disobedience before every authority (including God), vulnerability, pain, death, and everything else that goes along with being a creature made by a omnipotent and absolutely holy Creator in a fallen and sinful world. Because the fearful situation of this world is a result of human sin and God's punishment for it, one could argue that *Angst* is in fact fear of God's punishment and ultimately, fear of God. Be that as it may, *Angst* surely points a person in the direction of God by raising to an acute level the need for someone who can help and comfort and explain the unknown. Many psychology of religion scholars (who are not that far away in their epistemological and "theological" views from the "history of religions" scholars) would say that *Angst* prompts a person to search for anything that can help bring relief—and a deity of some kind might be "posited" to help. In other words, fear comes first, and fear "invents" "God." But Christian scholars would say that the knowledge of God, being implanted by God into the hearts of all men and women, is available all along. *Angst* simply taps a person on the shoulder and says, "just a reminder—God is over there, and he is available!" The awareness of God is in people from the beginning, if however vague. But that awareness grows as humans—in the process of growing up—experience more of the world. One might say, "this is just what Otto thought: humans grope their way through the world until they 'discover' God."[360] But I am not speaking about a "numinous" feeling that a people "discover," but about *acknowledging* the God who they already know to exist apart from themselves. Coming to God by the process of "growing up" and learning more about the world is not an inductive process of receiving enough inputs from whatever impresses a person in the world—volcanoes, crocodiles, lilies, human love, big blue eyes, etc.—such that one day that person can admit that he or she has enough evidence to declare that God must exist; conversely, the encounters with evidence for God in the world only fits what a man or a woman already know to be the case. Coming to God can involve very little or very much evidential information. But when a person comes to the point of "belief," he or she is really not at very heart crying out "Eureka!" Rather, that person is simply confessing what he or she knew to be the case all along.

CHAPTER ONE CLOSING THOUGHTS

After this brief survey, one can see that fear-of-God is a very big topic—for both those who consider the subject theologically and those who consider it critically. The subject is big to more conservatively-minded theologians because they recognize that

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[360] Regarding my use of "discovers," it should be remembered that when Otto says that the numinous "remains a pure feeling, as in 'panic' terror … or itself *invents, or, better, discovers*, the numinous object by rendering explicit the obscure germinal ideas latent in itself" (Otto, 1958, 125 [italics mine]; see my p. 48 above), he is using "discovers" ironically. With his theology, "invents" is the more accurate and straightforward term.

fear-of-God—and they mean real fear—can be experienced in all kinds of phases and stages of life, whether one is a believer or not. This only makes sense in view of who God is and who men and women are. They know that fear-of-God is a phenomenon that has much to do with pleasing God—and, therefore, much is at stake—up to and including human eternal destiny. On the other hand, fear-of-God is "big" to the critics in that it can mean so many things. If they are correct, biblical "fear" must be the most elastic word in the Bible—so there is much to say about it. Conservative theologians confess that (theologically speaking) there is much to fear from the God who has power to consign humans forever to heaven or to hell; so they tend to keep the fear emotion/feeling first in mind when handling fear-of-God passages. But the critics appear to have nothing restraining them from going far and wide with how they understand the meaning of fear-of-God. So, the subject is very big for them—*semantically* speaking. After this study, I conclude that the critics come up with incorrect results because their methods are grounded in skepticism. Their results are theologically incorrect; their results are also incorrect from a simple literary point of view—for they have little regard for the biblical context. If fear-of-God and commandment keeping is the "end" and the "all" of humankind—as Qoheleth says—then to study fear-of-God without thinking that God might want to have a say (i.e., to study without the fear of God) is to make a mistake that guarantees that the results will be (once again, according to Qoheleth) "meaningless, and a chasing after the wind."

CHAPTER TWO

FEAR OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Many of the observations that were made in the previous chapter—especially in reaction to Becker's form-critical fear-of-God study—will now be considered within the context of an encompassing analysis of fear texts within the Old Testament. Because most mentions of fear in the Hebrew Bible use ירא, the focus will be mainly upon that word in the statistical analysis that immediately follows.

STATISTICS

Fear is often mentioned in the OT, and fear-of-God comprises a large share of the total of fear texts. The vast majority of passages mentioning some kind of fear employ ירא. ESL counts 436 instances of all forms based upon ירא and there are over 300 instances of fear—or some emotion/feeling related to fear—that are signified by other Hebrew words.[361] Shown below is a reasonably exhaustive list of Hebrew words that denote some kind of fear.[362]

Biblical Hebrew Words for Fear

אמה	חתת
אֵמָה, אֵימָה verb S367 "dread" 17X	חָתַת verb S2865 "broken, afraid, dismayed" 54X
אָיֹם adj. S366 "terrible" 3X	חֵתַת n.m. S2866 "terror" 1X
בהל	חַת n.m. S2844 "terror, dismayed" 4X
בָּהַל verb S926 "disturb, terrify, to hurry" 39X	חִתָּה n.f. S2847 "terror" 1X
בְּהַל, הִתְבְּהָלָה (Aram.) verb S927 "dismay" 11X	חַתְחַת n.m. S2849 "terror" 1X
בֶּהָלָה n.f. S928 "sudden terror, alarm" 4X	חֲתִית n.f. S2851 "terror" 8X
	מְחִתָּה n.f. S4288 "destruction, ruin, terror" 11X

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[361] ESL (in LDLS) counts 314 cases of the verb, 64 cases of the "adjective," 45 cases of the feminine noun יורה, and 13 cases of the masculine noun מורא. LDLS morphological search confirms the same total count of 436; my count of 437 in the table of statistics, however, is explained by my counting of the single use of ירא in 1 Sam 12:18 twice. The verb there has two objects: God and Samuel.

[362] The table includes Strong's (Exhaustive Concordance) numbers, a brief definition from TWOT, and the number of instances of the word. בהל is not used to signify virtue fear-of-God and usually has more a sense of "dismay." Most of the 98 uses of the verb of גור have non-fear meanings ("to abide," "to be a stranger," etc.). BDB gives גור three separate lexical entries, the third having mainly the meaning of "dread" (with a count of approx. 20X). חתת, which mainly means "shattered" and "dismayed," is not used in virtue fear-of-God cases; but see Mal 2:5. שמם primarily means "to make desolate" and can have nuances of "to appall" or "to horrify."

בלהה	פלץ
בַּלְהָה n.f. S1091 "terror, destruction" 10X	פָּלַץ verb S6426 "shudder" 1X פַּלָּצוּת n.f. S6427 "shuddering" 4X תִּפְלֶצֶת n.f. S8606 "shuddering, horror" 1X
בעת	יגר
בָּעַת verb S1204 "terrify" 16X בְּעָתָה n.f. S1205 "terror, dismay" 2X בִּעוּת n.m.pl. S1161 "terrors" 2X	יָגֹר verb S3025 "fear, dread" 5X יָגוֹר adj. S3016 "fearing" 2X
גור	ירא
גּוּר verb S1481 "abide, gather together, fear" 98X מְגוֹרָה n.f. S4034 "fear, terror" 1X מְגוּרָה n.f. S4035 "fear, storehouse" 3X מָגוֹר n.m. S4032 "fear, terror" 8X	יָרֵא verb S3372 "fear, be afraid, revere" 314X יָרֵא adj. S3373 "fearing, afraid" 64X יִרְאָה n.f. S3374 "fearing, fear" 45X מוֹרָא, מוֹרָה n.m. S4172 "fear, terror" 13X
דאג	מצר
דָּאַג verb S1672 "be afraid" 7X דְּאָגָה n.f. S1674 "care, anxiety" 6X	מֵצַר n.m. S4712 "straits, distress" 3X
דחל	ערץ
דְּחַל (Aram.) verb S1763 "to fear" 6X	עָרַץ, מַעֲרָץ verb S6206 "dread, fear, break" 15X עָרִיץ adj. S6184 "mighty, awe-inspiring" 20X
חרד	פחד
חָרַד verb S2729 "tremble, be afraid" 39X חָרֵד adj. S2730 "afraid, trembling" 6X חֲרָדָה n.f. S2731 "quaking, trembling" 9X	פָּחַד verb S6342 "fear, tremble, revere" 25X פַּחַד n.m. S6343 "dread" 49X פַּחְדָּה n.f. S6345 "fear, religious awe" 1X
זוע	קוץ
זָעָה, זוּעַ verb S2111 "tremble, be in terror" 3X זוּעַ (Aram.) verb S2112 "tremble" 2X זְוָעָה n.f. S2113 "horror" 6X	קוּץ verb S6973 "be grieved, loath" 9X
זהל	רתת
זָחַל verb S2119 "shrink back, fear" 3X	רֶתֶת n.m. S7374 "trembling, panic" 1X
חגא	רעד
חָגָא n.f. S2283 "reeling (i.e., in terror)" 1X	רָעַד verb S7460 "tremble" 3X רְעָדָה, רַעַד n.m./f. S7461 "trembling, fear" 6X
חפז	שער
חָפַז verb S2648 "hasten, flee, fear" 9X	שָׂעַר verb S8175 "be very afraid, sweep away" 8X שַׂעַר n.m. S8178 "storm" 4X
חרג	שמם
חָרַג verb S2727 "quake" 1X	שָׁמֵם verb S8074 "be desolate, appalled" 92X שַׁמָּה n.f. S8047 "waste, horror, appallment" 39X

The total count of fear and fear-related texts in the OT is huge, numbering most likely somewhere between 700 and 800.[363] As can be seen, fear was a topic of great concern to the biblical writers; but this is no surprise in view of the theology and anthropology of the Bible: God is creator and omnipotent; humans are created and nearly powerless compared to God. Humans are morally accountable to God and understand that they will be judged. Therefore, men and women fear.

Analysis of Fear Texts Employing ירא

I will now present the results of a more in-depth analysis of all the OT uses of all the forms of ירא. The following table lists all ירא uses in the order that they appear in the Protestant canon. After the verse, the form of the word is shown; instead of cataloguing them according to noun, *adjective*, and verb, I decided—in keeping with my opinion presented in the Becker section—to designate the "adjectives" as participles (see "Becker's Psalms Literary Form" section above).[364] In the "Object" category, the object of the instance of fear is identified—usually God or something/someone in "nature" (i.e., a man, a tribe, a lion, a desert, etc.), an idol in a few instances, or "unclear" if the context is ambiguous as to who or what is being feared. The category entitled "Type" is meant to show which ירא uses are "event" fear-of-God cases and which are "virtue" fear-of-God cases. "Event" cases are those in which the biblical narrative depicts the *event* of a person or a group fearing before something/someone. This is usually a reaction to God or some fearful person or thing (e.g., when the Israelites stood before the quaking and smoking Mount Sinai, they "trembled with fear" [Exod 20:18]), but can also be fear generated in anticipation of some dreadful event (see, e.g., Deut 2:25). "Virtue" fear-of-God cases, on the other hand, are usually not describing *events* of fear; rather, they simply present fear-of-God (and occasionally fear of a person or group) as a virtue. (e.g., "Happy is everyone who fears the LORD" [Ps 128:1]). For the "Meaning" category, unless something contextually indicates otherwise (which in my opinion—as can be seen below—is *never* the case), the ירא instance will be assumed to have the main meaning of "fear." Secondary nuances of meanings (if any) are shown under the category "Second Meaning." Many of these are designated "Abstract" because there appears to be—in

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[363] The wide variation of my numbers here is a reasonable allowance for interpretation of individual texts. As indicated in the table, many of the words are semantically not centered on fear and in many cases may not indicate any emotion/feeling related to fear at all; on the other hand, other words (especially ירא) are semantically centered on fear, but may be interpreted by some to have non-fear meanings. As will be seen with the ירא statistics below, I consider all of the OT uses of ירא to primarily mean fear—but allow for secondary meanings in many cases.

[364] I include all the many instances of נוֹרָא as participles (also understood as participles by BDB, occurring 34X).

addition to the root meaning of "fear"—an additional semantic implication or nuance of one of the more "abstract" meanings of fear (as often suggested by dictionaries and lexica—i.e., reverence, worship, obedience, loyalty, honor, etc.). The last category, "Context," is simply a place to comment briefly upon the general context of each ירא text.

Form, Function, and Meaning of ירא *Texts*

VERSE	FORM NOUN PARTICIPLE VERB	OBJECT GOD IDOL NATURE UNCLEAR	TYPE EVENT OTHER VIRTUE	MEANING ABSTRACT FEAR NONE	SECOND MEANING ABSTRACT FEAR NONE	CONTEXT
Gen 3:10	V	G	E	F	N	Judgment because of original sin
Gen 9:2	N	N	E	F	N	Animal fear before men and women
Gen 15:1	V	U	E	F	N	God's encouragement
Gen 18:15	V	G	E	F	N	Fear of God's displeasure
Gen 19:30	V	N	E	F	N	God's destruction of Sodom
Gen 20:8	V	G	E	F	N	Fear of God's punishment
Gen 20:11	N	G	V	F	N	No fear of God and his punishment
Gen 21:17	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of unknown and death
Gen 22:12	P	G	V	F	A	God demands Isaac for a sacrifice
Gen 26:7	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of death
Gen 26:24	V	N	E	F	N	Esau Threat
Gen 28:17	V	G	E	F	N	Epiphany
Gen 28:17	P	G	E	F	N	Epiphany
Gen 31:31	V	N	E	F	N	Life threatened
Gen 32:7(8)	V	N	E	F	N	Life threatened
Gen 32:11(12)	P	N	E	F	N	Life threatened
Gen 35:17	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of death
Gen 42:18	P	G	V	F	A	Fear of punishment lest J. breaks oath
Gen 42:35	V	N	E	F	A	Fear of Joseph's punishment
Gen 43:18	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of Joseph's punishment
Gen 43:23	V	N	E	F	N	Calming from fear of punishment
Gen 46:3	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of going to Egypt
Gen 50:19	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of Joseph
Gen 50:21	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of Joseph
Exod 1:17	V	G	V	F	A	Fear of God more than Pharaoh
Exod 1:21	V	G	V	F	A	Fear of God more than Pharaoh
Exod 2:14	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of Egyptian punishment
Exod 3:6	V	G	E	F	N	Epiphany
Exod 9:20	P	G	V	F	A	F. of God's punish. more than Phar.
Exod 9:30	V	G	V	F	A	No fear of God's punishment
Exod 14:10	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of death at hands of Egyptians
Exod 14:13	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of death at hands of Egyptians
Exod 14:31	V	G	V	F	A	God showed he is stronger then Egy.
Exod 15:11	P	G	O	F	N	The conquering God is fear-worthy
Exod 18:21	P	G	V	F	A	Awareness of God's punishment
Exod 20:20	V	G	E	F	N	Epiphany and God's displeasure
Exod 20:20	N	G	V	F	N	Great fear used to dissuade from sin
Exod 34:10	P	G	O	F	N	The conquering God is fear-worthy
Exod 34:30	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of Moses and his glory
Lev 19:3	V	N	V	F	A	Parent/child rel. = God/man relation
Lev 19:14	V	G	V	F	N	Law and judgment
Lev 19:30	V	G	V	F	A	Judgment—sanctuary sym. for God

148

Lev 19:32	V	G	V	F	A	Law and judgment
Lev 25:17	V	G	V	F	A	Law and judgment
Lev 25:36	V	G	V	F	A	Law and judgment
Lev 25:43	V	G	V	F	A	Law and judgment
Lev 26:2	V	G	V	F	A	Judgment—sanctuary sym. for God
Num 12:8	V	N	E	F	N	Punishment for not fearing Moses
Num 14:9	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
Num 14:9	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
Num 21:34	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
Deut 1:19	P	N	O	F	N	Terrible and dangerous desert
Deut 1:21	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
Deut 1:29	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
Deut 2:4	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
Deut 2:25	N	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
Deut 3:2	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
Deut 3:22	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
Deut 4:10	V	G	V	F	A	Law and punishment
Deut 4:34	N	G	E	F	N	God's terrifying displays of power
Deut 5:5	V	N	E	F	N	Afraid of burning mount Sinai
Deut 5:29	V	G	V	F	A	Fear to avoid sin and punishment
Deut 6:2	V	G	V	F	A	Fear to avoid sin and punishment
Deut 6:13	V	G	V	F	A	Fear to avoid sin and punishment
Deut 6:24	V	G	V	F	A	Fear to avoid sin and punishment
Deut 7:18	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
Deut 7:19	P	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
Deut 7:21	P	G	O	F	N	God's overwhelming power
Deut 8:6	V	G	V	F	A	God disciplines as a father
Deut 8:15	P	N	O	F	N	Terrible wilderness
Deut 10:12	V	G	V	F	N	Law and accountability
Deut 10:17	P	G	O	F	N	Awesome power of God
Deut 10:20	V	G	V	F	A	God is great and mighty
Deut 10:21	P	G	O	F	N	God's awesome deeds
Deut 11:25	N	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
Deut 13:4(5)	V	G	V	F	A	Law and accountability
Deut 13:11(12)	V	G	E	F	N	God's judgment on idolatry
Deut 14:23	V	G	V	F	A	God's law
Deut 17:13	V	G	E	F	N	God's punishment of sin
Deut 17:19	V	G	V	F	A	Law and punishment
Deut 19:20	V	G	E	F	N	Punishment
Deut 20:1	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
Deut 20:3	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
Deut 20:8	P	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
Deut 21:21	V	G	E	F	N	Punishment
Deut 25:18	V	G	V	F	A	Great judgment on Amalek
Deut 26:8	N	G	E	F	N	Fearful and powerful works of God
Deut 28:10	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
Deut 28:58	V	G	V	F	A	Law and punishment
Deut 28:58	P	G	O	F	N	Awesomeness of God
Deut 31:6	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
Deut 31:8	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
Deut 31:12	V	G	V	F	A	Teach fear-of-God and follow law
Deut 31:13	V	G	V	F	A	Teach fear-of-God and follow law
Deut 34:12	N	N	E	F	N	Moses's amazing displays of power
Josh 4:14	V	N	V	F	A	Fear of leaders in war setting
Josh 4:14	V	N	V	F	A	Fear of leaders in war setting
Josh 4:24	V	G	V	F	A	Fear in view of God's miracle
Josh 8:1	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies

Josh 9:24	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of Joshua
Josh 10:2	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
Josh 10:8	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
Josh 10:25	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
Josh 11:6	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
Josh 22:25	V	G	V	F	A	Law and obedience
Josh 24:14	V	G	V	F	A	Stern warnings to fear and serve God
Judg 4:18	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
Judg 6:10	V	I	V	F	A	Warning in the midst of judgment
Judg 6:23	V	G	E	F	N	Epiphany
Judg 6:27	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of disapproval of people
Judg 7:3	P	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
Judg 7:10	P	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
Judg 8:20	V	N	E	F	N	Boy asked to be executioner
Judg 13:6	P	G	E	F	N	Awesome characteristic of angel
Ruth 3:11	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of unknown people and events
1 Sam 3:15	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of Eli's reaction to God's word
1 Sam 4:7	V	I	E	F	N	Feeling of doom with perceived gods
1 Sam 4:20	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of death and pain and judgment
1 Sam 7:7	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
1 Sam 12:14	V	G	V	F	N	Stern warnings of God's judgment
1 Sam 12:18	V	G	E	F	N	Great fear before God AND Samuel
1 Sam 12:20	V	G	E	F	N	Great fear before God AND Samuel
1 Sam 12:24	V	G	V	F	N	Great judgment and fear
1 Sam 14:26	V	N	E	F	N	Fear before authority's command
1 Sam 15:24	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of people
1 Sam 17:11	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
1 Sam 17:24	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
1 Sam 18:12	V	N	E	F	N	Fear and jealousy before man
1 Sam 18:29	V	N	E	F	N	Fear and jealousy before man
1 Sam 21:12(13)	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of torture and death
1 Sam 22:23	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of being killed
1 Sam 23:3	P	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
1 Sam 23:17	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of Saul
1 Sam 28:5	V	N	E	F	N	Great fear before enemies
1 Sam 28:13	V	N	E	F	N	Fear before Saul and punishment
1 Sam 28:20	V	U	E	F	N	Great fear at prediction of death
1 Sam 31:4	V	U	E	F	N	Great fear at certainty of death
2 Sam 1:14	V	N	V	F	N	Condemnation of lack of fear
2 Sam 3:11	V	N	E	F	N	Fear for life
2 Sam 6:9	V	G	E	F	N	Fear of God's power and judgment
2 Sam 7:23	P	G	O	F	N	God's great and mighty deeds
2 Sam 9:7	V	N	E	F	N	Fear for life
2 Sam 10:19	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of defeat, death, by Israel
2 Sam 12:18	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of possible violent reaction
2 Sam 13:28	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of killing Anmon
2 Sam 14:15	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of people
2 Sam 23:3	N	G	V	F	A	A God-fearing king rules justly
1 Kings 1:50	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of Solomon and death
1 Kings 1:51	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of Solomon and death
1 Kings 3:28	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of Solomon's justice
1 Kings 8:40	V	G	V	F	A	Punishment for sin, and forgiveness
1 Kings 8:43	V	G	V	F	A	Fear in view of God's mighty power
1 Kings 17:13	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of starvation and dying
1 Kings 18:3	P	G	V	F	A	Fear of God more than Jezebel
1 Kings 18:12	P	G	V	F	A	More fear of God than fear of men

2 Kings 1:15	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of death
2 Kings 4:1	P	G	V	F	A	No context
2 Kings 6:16	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
2 Kings 10:4	V	N	E	F	N	Great, great fear of defeat and death
2 Kings 17:7	V	I	E	F	A	Great punishment for idol worship
2 Kings 17:25	V	G	V	F	A	Punishment for failure to fear God
2 Kings 17:28	V	G	V	F	A	Reaction to God's judgment
2 Kings 17:32	P	G	V	F	A	God's law and failure to meet it
2 Kings 17:33	P	G	V	F	A	God's law and failure to meet it
2 Kings 17:34	P	G	V	F	A	God's law and failure to meet it
2 Kings 17:35	V	I	E	F	A	God's law and failure to meet it
2 Kings 17:36	V	G	V	F	A	God's law and failure to meet it
2 Kings 17:37	V	I	E	F	A	God's law and failure to meet it
2 Kings 17:38	V	I	E	F	A	God's law and failure to meet it
2 Kings 17:39	V	G	V	F	A	God's law and failure to meet it
2 Kings 17:41	P	G	V	F	A	God's law and failure to meet it
2 Kings 19:6	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of siege and death
2 Kings 25:24	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of Babylonian threat
2 Kings 25:26	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of Babylonian punishment
1 Chron 10:4	V	U	E	F	N	Terror in sure-death circumstances
1 Chron 13:12	V	G	E	F	N	Fear of God's power and punishment
1 Chron 16:25	P	G	V	F	N	More to fear with God than idols
1 Chron 17:21	P	G	O	F	N	God's great and mighty works
1 Chron 22:13	V	U	E	F	N	Imposing task requiring great courage
1 Chron 28:20	V	U	E	F	N	Imposing task requiring great courage
2 Chron 6:31	V	G	V	F	A	Punishment and redemption
2 Chron 6:33	V	G	V	F	A	God's mighty name and power
2 Chron 19:9	N	G	V	F	N	God-fearing judges avert God's wrath
2 Chron 20:3	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
2 Chron 20:15	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
2 Chron 20:17	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
2 Chron 32:7	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
2 Chron 32:18	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
Neh 1:5	P	G	O	F	N	Fear-provoking characteristic of God
Neh 1:11	V	G	V	F	A	Law, punishment, and redemption
Neh 2:2	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of punishment by the king
Neh 4:14(8)	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
Neh 4:14(8)	P	G	O	F	N	Great power of God
Neh 5:9	N	G	V	F	N	Fear of God averts abuse of brothers
Neh 5:15	N	G	V	F	N	Fear-of-God dissuades from bad rule
Neh 6:9	P	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
Neh 6:13	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
Neh 6:14	P	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
Neh 6:16	V	G	E	F	N	God's great power and favor
Neh 6:19	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
Neh 7:2	V	G	V	F	A	——
Neh 9:32	P	G	O	F	N	Power, judgment, and love of God
Job 1:1	P	G	V	F	A	Job was righteous
Job 1:8	P	G	V	F	A	Job was righteous
Job 1:9	V	G	V	F	N	Fear for good reason: God is a threat
Job 2:3	P	G	V	F	A	Job was righteous
Job 4:6	N	U	V	F	N	Context unclear
Job 5:21	V	N	E	F	N	God's children fear not destruction
Job 5:22	V	N	E	F	N	God's children fear not wild animals
Job 6:14	N	G	V	F	A	Hate goes with not fearing God
Job 6:21	V	N	E	F	N	Fear in view of Job's terrible state
Job 9:35	V	G	E	F	N	God's terror terrorizes Job

Job 11:15	V	G	E	F	N	No need to fear God if Job is clean
Job 15:4	N	U	V	F	A	Context unclear
Job 22:4	N	U	V	F	A	Context unclear
Job 28:28	N	G	V	F	A	Fear-of-God is wisdom
Job 32:6	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of an elder
Job 37:22	P	G	O	F	N	God's awesome majesty
Job 37:24	V	G	E	F	N	Fear before God's power and wrath
Ps 2:11	N	G	V	F	N	Trembling and fearing before God
Ps 3:6(7)	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
Ps 5:8	N	G	V	F	A	Bow down before God who hates sin
Ps 15:4	P	G	V	F	A	——
Ps 19:9(10)	N	G	V	F	A	Fear-of-God related to law keeping
Ps 22:23(24)	P	G	V	F	A	God's power and majesty
Ps 22:25(26)	P	G	V	F	A	God's power and majesty
Ps 23:4	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of pain and death
Ps 25:12	P	G	V	F	A	Human sin and God's grace
Ps 25:14	P	G	V	F	A	Human sin and God's grace
Ps 27:1	V	N	E	F	N	With God, no need to fear the world
Ps 27:3	V	N	E	F	N	With God, no need to fear the world
Ps 31:19(20)	P	G	V	F	A	God's judgment and God's love
Ps 33:8	V	G	V	F	A	God is omnipotent creator
Ps 33:18	P	G	V	F	A	God is omnipotent savior
Ps 34:7(8)	P	G	V	F	A	God is mighty to save
Ps 34:9(10)	V	G	V	F	A	God is the great protector of saints
Ps 34:9(10)	P	G	V	F	A	God is the great protector of saints
Ps 34:11(12)	N	G	V	F	A	God gives long life to God-fearers
Ps 40:3(4)	V	G	V	F	A	God protects his children from harm
Ps 45:4(5)	P	G	O	F	N	God's fearful deeds (Ps. Messianic)
Ps 46:2(3)	V	N	E	F	N	God protects his children
Ps 47:2(3)	P	G	O	F	N	God's mighty power is fearful
Ps 49:5(6)	V	N	E	F	N	Almighty God can save from all harm
Ps 49:16(17)	V	N	E	F	N	Almighty God can save from all harm
Ps 52:6(8)	V	G	V	F	A	The righteous see the evil be judged
Ps 55:5(6)	N	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
Ps 55:19(20)	V	G	V	F	A	They who don't fear God are damned
Ps 56:3(4)	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
Ps 56:4(5)	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
Ps 56:11(12)	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
Ps 60:4(6)	P	G	V	F	A	God protects those who fear him
Ps 61:5(6)	P	G	V	F	A	God has power to protect his people
Ps 64:4(5)	V	G	V	F	N	Those who fear God not do evil
Ps 64:9(10)	V	G	V	F	N	God's wrath makes one fear/ponder
Ps 65:5(6)	P	G	O	F	N	God's awesome deeds
Ps 65:8(9)	V	G	E	F	N	Fear of God's fearful works
Ps 66:3	P	G	O	F	N	Fearfulness of God's deeds
Ps 66:5	P	G	O	F	N	Fearfulness of God's deeds
Ps 66:16	P	G	V	F	A	God's great and mighty power
Ps 67:7(8)	V	G	V	F	A	God has power to bless and save
Ps 68:35(36)	P	G	O	F	N	Awesome is the God of power
Ps 72:5	V	G	V	F	A	All will fall before God—even kings
Ps 76:7(8)	P	G	O	F	N	God is fearsome in his anger
Ps 76:11(12)	N	G	V	F	N	God is fearsome in judgment
Ps 76:8(9)	V	G	E	F	N	God's judgment shuts every mouth
Ps 76:12(13)	P	G	E	F	N	God's wrath provokes fear in kings
Ps 85:9(10)	P	G	V	F	A	God's wrath is not on those who fear
Ps 86:11	V	G	V	F	A	God delivers from the grave
Ps 89:7(8)	P	G	O	F	N	God is absolute sovereign

Ps 90:11	N	G	V	F	N	Fear justified in view of God's wrath
Ps 91:5	V	N	E	F	N	With God, there is nothing to fear
Ps 96:4	P	G	O	F	N	God is fearsome
Ps 99:3	P	G	O	F	N	God is fearsome; let all men tremble
Ps 102:15(16)	V	G	V	F	A	God's anger and God's grace
Ps 103:11	P	G	V	F	A	God is slow to anger, full of love
Ps 103:13	P	G	V	F	A	God is slow to anger, full of love
Ps 103:17	P	G	V	F	A	God is slow to anger, full of love
Ps 106:22	P	G	O	F	N	God can destroy and he can save
Ps 111:5	P	G	V	F	A	God is the gracious provider
Ps 111:9	P	G	O	F	N	God is loyal and trustworthy
Ps 111:10	N	G	V	F	A	God's power and awesomeness
Ps 112:1	P	G	V	F	A	God fearers are happy; not evil men
Ps 112:7	V	N	E	F	N	With God, no need to fear the world
Ps 112:8	V	N	E	F	N	With God, no reason to fear enemies
Ps 115:11	P	G	V	F	A	Fear God instead of idols
Ps 115:13	P	G	V	F	A	All-powerful God blesses God fearers
Ps 118:4	P	G	V	F	A	God-fearers triumph through God
Ps 118:6	V	N	E	F	N	No need to fear men when with God
Ps 119:38	N	G	V	F	A	God-fearers receive God's promises
Ps 119:63	V	G	V	F	A	Importance of following God's law
Ps 119:74	P	G	V	F	A	Importance of following God's law
Ps 119:79	P	G	V	F	A	Importance of following God's law
Ps 119:120	V	G	E	F	N	Fear of God and his judgment
Ps 128:1	P	G	V	F	A	Happy are all who fear God
Ps 128:4	P	G	V	F	A	Happy are all who fear God
Ps 130:4	V	G	V	F	A	Forgiveness in the midst of great sin
Ps 135:20	P	G	V	F	A	God's power and justice
Ps 139:14	P	G	O	F	N	Humans are fearfully made by God
Ps 145:6	P	G	E	F	N	God's deeds are fearful
Ps 145:19	P	G	V	F	A	God's compassion on God fearers
Ps 147:11	P	G	V	F	A	God's compassion on God fearers
Prov 1:7	N	G	V	F	A	Context does not comment
Prov 1:29	N	G	V	F	A	God-fearers avoid calamity and panic
Prov 2:5	N	G	V	F	A	Wisdom equated with fear-of-God
Prov 3:7	V	G	V	F	A	Fearing God necessary for success
Prov 3:25	V	N	E	F	N	God will strike the wicked
Prov 8:13	N	G	V	F	A	Fear-of-God is to hate evil
Prov 9:10	N	G	V	F	A	Fear-of-God is beginning of wisdom
Prov 10:27	N	G	V	F	A	Fate of God-fearers vs. evildoers
Prov 13:13	P	G	V	F	A	Blessings vs. destruction
Prov 14:2	P	G	V	F	A	——
Prov 14:16	P	U	V	F	A	——
Prov 14:26	N	G	V	F	A	God-fearers have confidence/refuge
Prov 14:27	N	G	V	F	A	God-fearers have life and not death
Prov 15:16	N	G	V	F	A	God-fearers are more content/happy
Prov 15:33	N	G	V	F	A	Fear of God and humility related
Prov 16:6	N	G	V	F	A	One avoids evil by fearing God
Prov 19:23	N	G	V	F	A	Fear of God is life
Prov 22:4	N	G	V	F	A	God-fearers are rewarded with life
Prov 23:17	N	G	V	F	A	Fearing God gives hope
Prov 24:21	V	G	V	F	N	God can bring disaster and ruin
Prov 24:21	V	N	V	F	N	King can bring disaster and ruin
Prov 31:21	V	N	E	F	N	With God no reason to fear the world
Prov 31:30	P	G	V	F	A	——
Eccl 3:14	V	G	V	F	A	God's absolute sovereignty
Eccl 5:7(6)	V	G	V	F	A	God's anger and destruction of works

Eccl 7:18	P	G	V	F	A	Death and destruction for the proud
Eccl 8:12	P	G	V	F	A	Long life for God fearers
Eccl 8:12	V	G	E	F	N	Long life for God fearers
Eccl 8:13	P	G	V	F	N	The wicked have shorter lives
Eccl 9:2	P	N	E	F	N	Same fate comes to all
Eccl 12:5	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of heights as death approaches
Eccl 12:13	V	G	V	F	A	Duty and judgment
Isa 7:4	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of enemies
Isa 7:25	N	N	E	F	N	Fear of briars and thorns
Isa 8:12	V	N	E	F	N	One should fear God's judgment
Isa 8:12	N	N	E	F	N	God's judgment upon Israel
Isa 8:13	N	G	V	F	N	God's judgment upon Israel
Isa 10:24	V	N	E	F	N	God's punishment through Assyria
Isa 11:2	N	G	V	F	A	The messiah will have fear-of-God
Isa 11:3	N	G	V	F	A	The messiah will have fear-of-God
Isa 18:2	P	N	O	F	N	God's judgment
Isa 18:7	P	N	O	F	N	God's judgment
Isa 21:1	P	N	O	F	N	God's judgment and destruction
Isa 25:3	V	G	V	F	A	God's punishment and mercy
Isa 29:13	V	G	V	F	A	God's judgment
Isa 33:6	N	G	V	F	A	Fear-of-God is Zion's treasure
Isa 35:4	V	N	E	F	N	God's vengeance
Isa 37:6	V	N	E	F	N	Judgment upon king of Assyria
Isa 40:9	V	N	E	F	N	God's power and protection
Isa 41:5	V	N	E	F	N	God's judgment
Isa 41:10	V	N	E	F	N	God's judgment
Isa 41:13	V	N	E	F	N	God's judgment
Isa 41:14	V	N	E	F	N	God's judgment
Isa 43:1	V	N	E	F	N	God's judgment and restoration
Isa 43:5	V	N	E	F	N	God's judgment and restoration
Isa 44:2	V	N	E	F	N	God's judgment and restoration
Isa 50:10	P	G	V	F	A	Fearers of God vs. the wicked
Isa 51:7	V	N	E	F	N	God's protection vs. his punishment
Isa 51:12	V	N	E	F	N	Justice vs. grace
Isa 54:4	V	N	E	F	N	Overflowing wrath vs. eternal love
Isa 54:14	V	N	E	F	N	Overflowing wrath vs. eternal love
Isa 57:11	V	N	E	F	N	Dread and fear of idols vs. God
Isa 57:11	V	G	V	F	N	Dread and fear of idols vs. God
Isa 59:19	V	G	V	F	N	God's wrath and judgment
Isa 63:17	N	G	V	F	A	Fear-of-God same as a hardened heart
Isa 64:3(2)	P	G	O	F	N	Judgment causing nations to tremble
Jer 1:8	V	N	E	F	N	God's word and his judgment
Jer 3:8	V	G	E	F	N	Great sin and God's judgment of it
Jer 5:22	V	G	V	F	N	Wickedness and punishment
Jer 5:24	V	G	V	F	A	People's rejection of God's provision
Jer 10:5	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of God vs. fear of idols
Jer 10:7	V	G	V	F	N	Fear of God vs. fear of idols
Jer 17:8	V	N	E	F	N	God's people have no fear of world
Jer 23:4	V	N	E	F	N	God's people have no fear of world
Jer 26:19	P	G	V	F	A	Hezekiah feared God's punishment
Jer 26:21	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of death
Jer 30:10	V	N	E	F	N	God's promise of restoration
Jer 32:21	N	U	E	F	N	Great terror in midst of the exodus
Jer 32:39	V	G	V	F	A	God's promise of restoration
Jer 32:40	N	G	V	F	N	Fear-of-God dissuades one from sin
Jer 40:9	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of the Babylonians
Jer 41:18	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of the Babylonians

Jer 42:11	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of the king of Babylon
Jer 42:11	P	N	E	F	N	Fear of the king of Babylon
Jer 42:11	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of the king of Babylon
Jer 42:16	P	N	E	F	N	Fear of death and punishment
Jer 44:10	V	G	V	F	N	Great idolatry that God hates
Jer 46:27	V	N	E	F	N	After punishment comes restoration
Jer 46:28	V	N	E	F	N	After punishment comes restoration
Jer 51:46	V	N	E	F	N	After punishment comes restoration
Lam 3:57	V	N	E	F	N	Reassurance in times of God's wrath
Ezek 1:18	N	G	O	F	N	Fearful characteristics of epiphany
Ezek 1:22	P	G	O	F	N	Epiphany
Ezek 2:6	V	N	E	F	N	God's punishment of evil people
Ezek 2:6	V	N	E	F	N	God's punishment of evil people
Ezek 2:6	V	N	E	F	N	God's punishment of evil people
Ezek 3:9	V	N	E	F	N	God's punishment of evil people
Ezek 11:8	V	N	E	F	N	God's punishment of evil people
Ezek 30:13	N	U	E	F	N	God's judgment on Egypt
Dan 1:10	P	N	E	F	N	Fear of king's punishment and death
Dan 9:4	P	G	O	F	N	God's awesome power and judgment
Dan 10:12	V	G	E	F	N	Epiphany
Dan 10:19	V	G	E	F	N	Epiphany
Hos 10:3	V	G	V	F	A	Apostasy and God's punishment
Joel 2:11	P	G	O	F	N	The day of the LORD
Joel 2:21	V	N	E	F	N	Restoration after God's judgment
Joel 2:22	V	N	E	F	N	Restoration after God's judgment
Joel 2:31(3:4)	P	G	O	F	N	The day of the LORD
Amos 3:8	V	G	V	F	N	One should fear before lions and God
Jon 1:5	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of death
Jon 1:9	P	G	V	F	A	God's anger and punishment
Jon 1:10	V	N	E	F	N	Fear of death
Jon 1:10	N	N	E	F	N	Great fear before raging storm
Jon 1:16	V	G	V	F	N	Fear of God's wrath and of death
Jon 1:16	N	G	E	F	N	Great fear before God
Mic 7:17	V	G	V	F	N	Judgment upon the nations
Hab 1:7	P	N	O	F	N	God's punishment through Babylon
Hab 3:2	V	G	V	F	A	God's wrath and mercy
Zeph 2:11	P	G	O	F	N	Terrible judgment against nations
Zeph 3:7	V	G	V	F	N	Terrible judgment against nations
Zeph 3:15	V	N	E	F	N	Restoration after judgment
Zeph 3:16	V	N	E	F	N	Restoration after judgment
Hag 1:12	V	G	V	F	A	God's punishes wrong priorities
Hag 2:5	V	N	E	F	N	Restoration after judgment
Zech 8:13	V	N	E	F	N	Restoration after judgment
Zech 8:15	V	N	E	F	N	Restoration after judgment
Zech 9:5	V	G	E	F	N	God's punishment of nations
Mal 1:6	N	G	V	F	A	Disobedience in worship
Mal 1:14	P	G	O	F	N	God's anger at poor quality sacrifices
Mal 2:5	V	G	V	F	A	God's anger at tribe of Levi
Mal 2:5	N	U	V	F	A	Judgment of the Levites
Mal 3:5	V	G	V	F	A	God's judgment
Mal 3:16	P	G	V	F	A	Fear-of-God and salvation linked
Mal 3:16	P	G	V	F	A	Fear-of-God and salvation linked
Mal 4:2(3:20)	P	G	V	F	N	Blessed God-fearers vs. the damned
Mal 4:5(3:23)	P	G	O	F	N	Terrible day of the LORD

The following table breaks down this information according to individual books (only the totals are given):

Form, Function, and Meaning of יָרֵא Texts—Book Totals

BOOK +total	FORM NOUN PARTICIPLE VERB	OBJECT GOD IDOL NATURE UNCLEAR	TYPE EVENT OTHER VIRTUE	MEANING ABSTRACT FEAR NONE	SECOND MEANING ABSTRACT FEAR NONE
Genesis 24	N 2 P 4 V 18	G 8 N 15 U 1	E 21 V 3	F 24	A 3 N 21
Exodus 15	N 1 P 4 V 10	G 11 N 4	E 6 O 2 V 7	F 15	A 6 N 9
Leviticus 8	V 8	G 7 N 1	V 8	F 8	A 7 N 1
Numbers 4	V 4	N 4	E 4	F 4	N 4
Deuteronomy 44	N 5 P 8 V 31	G 25 N 19	E 23 O 6 V 15	F 44	A 14 N 30
Joshua 11	V 11	G 3 N 8	E 6 V 5	F 11	A 5 N 6
Judges 8	P 3 V 5	G 2 I 1 N 5	E 7 V 1	F 8	A 1 N 7
Ruth 1	V 1	N 1	E 1	F 1	N 1
1 Samuel 22	P 1 V 21	G 4 I 1 N 15 U 2	E 20 V 2	F 22	N 22
2 Samuel 10	N 1 P 1 V 8	G 3 N 7	E 7 O 1 V 2	F 10	A 1 N 9
1 Kings 8	P 2 V 6	G 4 N 4	E 4 V 4	F 8	A 4 N 4
2 Kings 19	P 5 V 14	G 9 I 4 N 6	E 10 V 9	F 19	A 13 N 6
1 Chronicles 6	P 2 V 4	G 3 U 3	E 4 O 1 V 1	F 6	N 6
2 Chronicles 8	N 1 V 7	G 3 N 5	E 5 V 3	F 8	A 2 N 6
Nehemiah 14	N 2 P 5 V 7	G 8 N 6	E 7 O 3 V 4	F 14	A 2 N 12
Job 17	N 5 P 4 V 8	G 10 N 4 U 3	E 7 O 1 V 9	F 17	A 7 N 10
Psalms 82	N 9 P 43 V 30	G 67 N 15	E 20 O 13 V 49	F 82	A 44 N 38

Proverbs 23	N 14 P 4 V 5	G 19 N 3 U 1	E 2 V 21	F 23	A 19 N 4
Ecclesiastes 9	P 4 V 5	G 7 N 2	E 3 V 6	F 9	A 5 N 4
Isaiah 34	N 7 P 5 V 22	G 11 N 23	E 20 O 4 V 10	F 34	A 7 N 27
Jeremiah 24	N 2 P 3 V 19	G 8 N 15 U 1	E 17 V 7	F 24	A 3 N 21
Lamentations 1	V 1	N 1	E 1	F 1	N 1
Ezekiel 8	N 2 P 1 V 5	G 2 N 5 U 1	E 6 O 2	F 8	N 8
Daniel 4	P 2 V 2	G 3 N 1	E 3 O 1	F 4	N 4
Hosea 1	V 1	G 1	V 1	F 1	A 1
Joel 4	P 2 V 2	G 2 N 2	E 2 O 2	F 4	N 4
Amos 1	V 1	G 1	V 1	F 1	N 1
Jonah 6	N 2 P 1 V 3	G 3 N 3	E 4 V 2	F 6	A 1 N 5
Micah 1	V 1	G 1	V 1	F 1	N 1
Habakkuk 2	P 1 V 1	G 1 N 1	O 1 V 1	F 2	A 1 N 1
Zephaniah 4	P 1 V 3	G 2 N 2	E 2 O 1 V 1	F 4	N 4
Haggai 2	V 2	G 1 N 1	E 1 V 1	F 2	A 1 N 1
Zechariah 3	V 3	G 1 N 2	E 3	F 3	N 3
Malachi 9	N 2 P 5 V 2	G 8 U 1	O 2 V 7	F 9	A 6 N 3
TOTAL 437	N 55 P 111 V 271	G 238 I 6 N 180 U 13	E 216 O 40 V 181	F 437	A 153 N 284

Finally, the following table breaks the numbers down according to event and virtue types of fear.

Form, Function, and Meaning of יר‎א Texts—Summary Table of Event and Virtue Fear-of-God

TOTAL OT EVENT FEAR INSTANCES	FORM NOUN PARTICIPLE VERB	OBJECT GOD IDOL NATURE UNCLEAR	MEANING ABSTRACT FEAR	SECOND MEANING ABSTRACT FEAR NONE
216	**N 13** **P 16** **V 187**	**G 34** **I 5** **N 169** **U 8**	**F 216**	**A 5** **N 211**
TOTAL OT VIRTUE FEAR INSTANCES	FORM NOUN PARTICIPLE VERB	OBJECT GOD IDOL NATURE UNCLEAR	MEANING ABSTRACT FEAR	SECOND MEANING ABSTRACT FEAR NONE
181	**N 41** **P 56** **V 84**	**G 170** **I 1** **N 5** **U 5**	**F 181**	**A 148** **N 33**

Observations from Statistics

Based on the data above, a few general observations that will work against Becker's evolutionary thesis will now be made. The first thing to notice is that fear is a significant and consistent theme throughout the OT. According to my calculations, there are 216 cases of event fear and 181 cases of virtue fear that are scattered throughout the OT. Of the event fear cases, 34 have God as their object; of the virtue fear cases, 170 have God as object. Event fear cases use the verb more often than virtue fear cases; this can easily be explained, however, by the fact that event fear cases are mainly found in narrative sections of the OT (including the prophets who "narrate" many future events). Many of the virtue fear cases, on the other hand, are found in the Psalms and in the Proverbs where there is little narrative. In the event fear cases, the meaning of ירא‎ remains clearly centered on the emotion/feeling of fear (with varying degrees of intensity) throughout the OT. Virtue fear is also found throughout the OT; even in critically reconstructed histories of the OT's composition and compilation, virtue fear cases are understood to exist in "early" material.[365] As can be seen by the statistics, virtue fear can use the verb, participle, and noun. Going from one to the other does not indicate any significant semantic shift beyond the core meaning of fear.[366] Becker's form-critical opinion that a

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[365] According to M. Noth, Exod 14:31 is from the J source; from the E source are Gen 20:11; Exod 1:17, 21; 9:20, 30; 18:21; 20:20 (J and E texts according to M. Noth's theory listed in Soulen and Soulen, 2001, 51, 89, 90.

[366] Bamberger, 1929, 39, claims that the virtue fear-of-God cases in the OT all stress the "objective side of religion." According to my estimation (as reflected in the stats above), all the

change from one to the other signals a semantic shift from fear to something more abstract is simply wrong. The difference in linguistic forms is merely a function of each section's literary goals. This has already been discussed in response to Becker above, but a quick summary is perhaps in order.

The problem with Becker is that he assumes as valid the form-critical idea that each major section of the OT was written by a person or persons in order to accomplish some political and/or cultic goal (this "goal" being a large component of the "literary form" [or "genre"]), and that each of these sections has its own unique linguistic "signature." Because the form-critical view contains quite a strong element of the understanding that the writers were to a significant extent *authors* (i.e., not compilers or recorders [of history]), then it follows that each section would have a unique signature of linguistic use. This unique linguistic use will correspond to whatever theological views had become prevalent at the time of the writing of the section. For example, when Becker sees the high number of verbs in Deut-2 Kings, he understands this as the "signature" of the person and/or persons who created the work and as "evidence" that some significant semantic shift of ירא had taken place in the development of the religion and in the development of the fear-of-God idea. But this view is most likely not correct. It should be said right away that the Deut-2 Kings use of the verb (which Becker deems to generally mean something related to "loyalty" to the cult) is *not remarkable*; it is simply the linguistic form that is common to narrative. In fact, Genesis through 2 Kings—being mainly narrative—contains a fairly steady rate of about 78% (verb rate for all ירא instances in Gen-Num is 78%; Deut-2 Kings is 79%). The verb rate for the Major Prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel runs at an un-surprising 70%. The similarity between the major narrative OT sections and the prophets is based largely upon their common mission *to describe events*: Exodus records that Moses feared when God spoke to him from the burning bush; Isaiah records that Egypt will one day fear with trembling when the day of the Lord comes. So it is no surprise that these large sections of Scripture would, first, tend to possess many verbs and, second, would tend to contain high percentages of "event" fear-of-God—for the narratives (whether historically describing events of the past or prophetically describing events of the future) are in the business of describing *events*. The "event" and "virtue" fear-of-God types for these OT sections are as follows: Gen-Num: 61% event and 35% virtue; Deut-2 Kings: 63% event and 31% virtue; Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel: 65% event and 26% virtue. As can be seen, the verb

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OT virtue fear-of-God cases stress the subjective side of the Israelite religion—i.e., the fear emotion/feeling.

distribution of ירא and the functions of ירא are quite consistent in sections of the OT that contain extended sections of narrative.[367]

The ירא demographics, however, of the Psalms and of the Proverbs are—as Becker rightly points out—quite different. But this is not to be explained by a complicated critical reconstruction of Israel's history which assumes that later writers put fear-of-God into a more refined light through the use of their own specialized language of the day; rather, the reason Psalms and Proverbs are heavy with—respectively—participles and nouns is because their literary mission is not to present a simple historical narrative. The Psalms often comment upon what happens to certain people or groups ("blessed are those *who* …."; "cursed are those *who* …."); the Proverbs also speak about the fate of certain people (especially the "wise" vs. the "fool"), but they especially concentrate on "wisdom" and "fear of the LORD" as *topics* in their own right ("the fear of the LORD teaches a man wisdom" [Prov 15:33 NIV]). In view of these literary features, one would therefore expect to find many participles of ירא in the Psalms and many nouns of ירא in the Proverbs; and that is just what is found: 52% of all the ירא instances in the Psalms are participles (total participles number 43 out of a total ירא count of 82) and the Proverbs employ the noun in 61% of the ירא cases (14X out of 23X). Also, because the Psalms are much about commenting upon the virtues of this or that person, and the Proverbs are focused upon living virtuously, then one would not be surprised to find fear-of-God in these books often used as a virtue. This is indeed the case: virtue fear-of-God cases comprise, respectively, 60% and 91% of instances of ירא in the Psalms and the Proverbs. There is nothing in the change from verb to participle or noun that warrants any semantic change more than what changes in grammatical form usually admit.

In fact, the local context and wider context of the OT virtue-fear-of-God passages in general indicate that the idea of virtue-fear-of-God remains quite tied to the emotion/feeling of fear all the way through. Virtue-fear-of-God is always a virtue, is never condemned, and there is no OT text that says that virtue-fear-of-God has evolved into something other than fear. Rarely do the virtue-fear-of-God passages have any local context that would inform the reader what is meant by "fear." Most passages are not unlike Ps 34:9(10): "O fear the LORD, you his holy ones, for those who fear him have no want." In this case, a command is given, and a benefit is stated; but what "fear" *is* is not said. Becker makes up for this lack of information by suggesting that many adjacent or nearby lines of text are in synonymous parallel with the line containing the fear-of-God concept. This supposed evidence for more abstract translations of ירא can be called into question at several levels: first, were all of the parallels really intended originally to be

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[367] The Minor Prophets are not too far from these percentages: verb, 58%; event, 36%; virtue, 45%.

poetic parallels? Second, if many were intended as parallels, how does one know the kind of parallel that was intended in each case? Among the many parallels that Becker cites, he assumes that all are more or less *synonymous* parallels; but this simply disregards many other possibilities that could really be the case: parallel cola might emphasize and expand upon a virtue-fear-of-God colon, or the virtue-fear-of-God colon might emphasize and expand upon the parallel cola in an almost unlimited number of ways. For example, Becker understands the fear imperative in Deut 6:13 ("the LORD your God you shall fear") as synonymous to the two following cola: "him you shall serve, and by his name alone you shall swear." According to Becker, fearing God here means serving the cult (in a "cultic adoration" sense), and—by swearing by his name—"the recognition and worship of divinity …."[368] But this verse could just as easily be mentioning three independent phenomena that should be features of worshipping, or the second and third cola could simply be actions that flow out of the fear emotion/feeling that precedes them.

I am not saying that parallels to virtue-fear-of-God do not exist; they most certainly do. I just want to point out that parallelism can be of many kinds, and the exegete should be hesitant to interpret parallel texts such that fear-of-God ends up meaning something quite far removed from fear. On the other hand, interpretation of parallel texts that uphold the well-established and consistent semantic anchor of ירא ought to be preferred. The opportunity to go one way or the other is contained within many virtue-fear-of-God passages; Ps 2:11, for example, admonishes the reader to "serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling" (NIV). One might be tempted to find a semantic association between "fear" and "serve" and "rejoice"; but the much more likely parallel to "fear" is "trembling" because of its close relation to fear and because the general context of this verse is about the (messianic) son's great wrath and punishment. Serving and rejoicing, then, should be both accomplished with a high level of the fear emotion/feeling. In the case of this verse, parallelism exists between colon A ("serve the LORD with fear") and colon B ("rejoice with trembling"). "Serve" and "rejoice" are not synonymous, however, but simply describe two very different actions that are a part of proper YHWH worship; "fear" and "trembling" are technically not synonymous either—the first is the emotion/feeling itself, and the second is the physical reaction to it. But it is clear that

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[368] Becker, 1965, 94. This is a good example of where the interpretational power for "fear" is coming from. Even though Becker cites "serve" and "swear" as "synonymous" with "fear," the clarification he first gives regarding the meanings of "serve" and "swear" shows that the synonymity is really between fear/serve/swear *and* the pre-determined meaning of the verse according to sweeping form-critical assumptions. This reveals that Becker is not really that concerned about poetic nuances that might indicate one meaning for "fear" or another; in fact, the mentions of fear-of-God (as a virtue) as well as all the associated "parallels" are all forced to mean what the form-critical consensus says was the prevailing emphasis of the day. In the case of Deut 6:13, this means that fear/serve/swear means "cult loyalty and [the] adoration of YHWH."

serving the LORD and rejoicing before him ought to include trembling (that comes from fear) and to include fear (that manifests trembling).

Any suggested parallel that drives meaning far away from the fear emotion/feeling should be resisted—especially in cases in which the fear text is within a wider context of God's fearful anger and judgment. As can be seen in the table above that covers all the OT cases of ירא, I discern contextual elements in nearly all of them that could be considered fear provoking. Given those elements, I am very hesitant to find parallels—like Becker does—that takes ירא away from the fearful context and to more abstract concepts (loyalty, reverence, obedience to the law, piety, etc.) that may or may not have anything to do with fear. And, as I have mentioned a number of times before, the exegete ought to be hesitant to follow Becker's tactic of finding so many synonymous parallels in so many virtue-fear-of-God texts is just for the reason that this results in a highly unlikely semantic expansion of ירא. If Becker is right and all these synonyms to ירא really do exist, then ירא is all but semantically useless for normal communication; for any given use—if the immediate context does not clearly indicate something otherwise—would only confront readers with a baffling array of possible meanings that might be intended by the writer/speaker. But this surely should not be the case with ירא, just as much as it surely is not the case with how "fear" is used today; for whatever implications, shadings of meaning, or nuances that "fear" might in any given conversation possess, we typically understand the word to mean the fear emotion/feeling unless something in the context or syntax clearly informs us otherwise. But with ירא, Becker and others take the opposite position: ירא means something different than fear unless something in the context makes a fear designation unavoidable.

While most of the OT virtue-fear-of-God texts do not have *local* context that would lead the reader to understand the use of "fear" one way or another, there does exist a number of texts that contain local contexts that do reveal—at least in these texts—what is meant by fear-of-God.[369] It should be pointed out first that there are several passages in the Proverbs that appear to literally say what fear-of-God *is*: Prov 1:7 records that "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge"; Prov 8:13 says that "the fear of the LORD is hatred of evil"; Prov 9:10 declares that "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom"; Prov 14:27 states that "the fear of the LORD is a fountain of life"; Prov 15:33 teaches that "the fear of the LORD is instruction in wisdom"; and Prov 19:23 professes that "the fear of the LORD is life indeed." "Is" is used most straightforwardly in 1:7 and 9:10; fear-of-God really *is* the beginning of knowledge and wisdom. On the other hand, with 8:13, 14:27, and 15:33 the writer cannot be thinking of exact identity, but that

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[369] By "local" context, I mean context that is contained within the same verse in which the mention of fear is found and/or the several verses surrounding it.

the "hatred of evil," "a fountain of life," and "life indeed" are the *consequences* of a god-fearing life. These are no more fear-of-God than the Mosaic Law *is* life (see Deut 32:47) or an ice axe *is* life for mountain climber who climbs Mount Everest.[370]

VIRTUE FEAR-OF-GOD ירא TEXTS WHOSE CONTEXTS INDICATE FEAR

Virtue-fear-of-God texts that have local contexts that quite clearly indicate the emotion/feeling of fear are the following (all use ירא unless otherwise noted):

Gen 20:11: when Abraham said regarding Abimelech's kingdom that "there is no fear of God at all in this place," he clearly referred to no fear of God's retribution should Abimelech kill Abraham for his wife. As it turned out, Abraham was wrong: the officials (v. 8) of the king (and perhaps the king as well) were very much afraid once God had warned Abimelech in a dream, and they quickly sought to make the situation right in response to the fear.[371] It may be that vv. 8 and 11 are in a sort of ironic parallel.

Exod 20:20: the reason God put "the fear of him" upon the people—obviously referring to people's fear and trembling as they stood at the base of Mount Sinai—is clearly stated at the end of v. 20—"so that you do not sin." The local context of the fear emotion/feeling being used as dissuasion from sin is backed up by the wider context of God's perception of the people as "stiffnecked" (32:9) the people's sin of idolatry (chap. 32), and God's punishment of it (32:27, 28).

1 Sam 12:18: this text is somewhere in between event fear and virtue fear; it is probably a mixture of both. The fact that v. 18 is bracketed by two other virtue-fear-of-God texts (vv. 14 and 24) adds some weight to the opinion that "all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel" is meant to be taken not only as a response to God's punishment in the destruction of the years crops, but especially as a virtue that they should have been practicing before, but failed to do so. That "fear" here is real fear—and not one of the abstract virtues—is made sure by the use of מאד; "great fear" certainly makes sense (vs. great reverence or great loyalty or etc.) in light of the local and wider circumstances.[372]

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[370] See my FN 282.

[371] If one should accept the v. 11 translation suggested by Skinner, 1910, 318 ("there is no piety in this place"), then the probable inference to v. 8 would mean that the same meaning should be understood there too: "and the men were very much pious"; but that would not fit the context at all. It is better to go with "fear" in both verses and, with that, let v. 11 reveal to the reader that Abraham was wrong: Abimelech and his men indeed did fear God and his punishment. Matthew's opinion (re. Gen 20:11) that "Fear of God … means in this context conformity to a moral code of behavior … not the absence of religion" is just as awkward and over-complicating of the narrative (Mathews, 2005, 256, 257).

[372] The Exod 20 and 1 Sam 12 passages discussed here are remarkably similar with regards to the fear topic: In the two present manifestations of God that terrorize the sinful people, there is

2 Chron 19:7, 9: King Jehoshaphat appointed judges, telling them to "let the fear of the LORD be upon you" and, in v. 9, to act "in the fear of the LORD." The use of פחד (v.7) clearly refers to a fearful emotion/feeling—especially with its use of "upon you"

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some level of repentance, the prophets (respectively, Moses and Samuel) attempt to calm their fears by saying "do not fear," and there is a final reference to the value of fear-of-God. That the fear emotion/feeling is being referred to in Exod 20:18 and 1 Sam 12:18 is obvious—for the people in both cases were clearly in a state of extreme fear. But some believe that the fear that has the power to dissuade one from sin (Exod 20:20b) and that is commanded to be practiced (1 Sam 12:24) is something altogether different from the fear emotion/feeling (otherwise, as Bamberger, 1929, 39, 40, suggests, Moses would be contradicting himself). I do not think this at all must be the case: the raw emotion of fear is used quite effectively by God to get the people's attention. In other words, it has an effective utility (to jar people into understanding who God is, to have them come to grips with their own sinfulness, and to dissuade them from further sin) which can be to some small extent voluntarily exercised by people as a preemptory act against sin. In these two instances, fear is used as a "wake up" call: reasoning with the people had run its course and something stronger was needed. After the terrible epiphany (Exod 20) and crop-destroying wrath of God (1 Sam 12:18), the people—in great fear—realized that God was angry and that they had best repent. According to Davis, 1994, 123, the fear drove home the reality of their situation more than would have been possible without it; and this opened the way to repentance. Moses and Samuel—being the good shepherds/fathers that they were—saw their change of heart (i.e., the fear had accomplished what it was supposed to do) and immediately sought to calm their fears. God is, after all, ultimately not about judgment, but about grace. As Peterson, 1999, 72, well puts (in addressing the 1 Sam 12:20 text): "Nothing we do puts us outside the power of God's grace to forgive and reconcile. A thousand years later Jesus embodied what Samuel preached: Do not be afraid.… Yes, you have sinned, but don't let your sin paralyze you with guilt; don't let your sin dupe you into thinking you are irredeemable; don't for a minute suppose that God has called it quits on you. It is God's business to save you, and God is not giving up (12:20-22)." The danger of fear is that one can be driven into despair. Nevertheless, fear has its place and God is willing to use it. With the utility of fear in mind, one can better understand that despite Moses's and Samuel's calls to "not fear," there is nevertheless some value in an ongoing experience of fearfulness of God and of his punishment. Moses (in Exod 20:20b) and Samuel (in 1 Sam 12:24) when speaking about fear could be referring to reverence or obedience; but in view of the ability of the fear emotion/feeling to dissuade from sin (they had just witnessed this ability in action), there is no reason to suppose that God would not be willing to use it again—albeit in an attenuated form—as an ongoing sin-avoidance tool. That this was "real fear" (Birch, 1998, 1064) is further suggested by the forecast of doom in 1 Sam 12:25: "But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king." In both of these passages, the people are, as McKane, 1963, 87, rightly observes, "warned," and the tone that is clearly heard throughout is one of "threat." Between the epiphany, the mighty displays of God's power and wrath, and the threatening tone of these two passages, Davis, 1994, 123, 124, is correct when he challenges those who question the utility of fear-of-God: "Why then did Paul write Colossians 3:6 after Colossians 3:5? What matters is whether there is a true basis for fear. If there is reason to tremble, we ought to tremble. Neither the church nor individual Christians should be above truthful terror. If God grants us a sight of our own sin and of his displeasure, we can be sure he does not do so merely to see us tremble but to see us tremble and be restored. In 1 Samuel 12 we see both the kindness and the severity of God (Rom 11:22); Yahweh intends fear as the way to faithfulness (vv. 20-25)."

(עליכם) which would not at all be expected if worship or obedience or the like was intended.[373] The calls to be in fear of God in vv. 7 (פחד) and 9 (יראה) are most likely in synonymous parallel—especially considering that both commands are given to groups of judges in order to dissuade them from administering perverse justice. The wider context makes clear that Jehoshaphat's aim was to steer the people away from sin and God's wrath (v 10)—something that could only be realized if each of the people's judges had a proper fear of God.

Ps 2:11: serving "the LORD with fear" is in parallel with rejoicing "with trembling." "Fear" and "trembling" are in close semantic relationship, and—seen in view of the son's "wrath" that can be "quickly kindled"—clearly signify a very fearful state.[374]

Ps 64:4, 9 (5, 10): the antithetical parallel in v. 4 shows that a lack of fear and killing a "blameless" man are somehow related. That this lack of fear is referring to fear-of-God is made most probable by v. 9 which also through the use of parallelism presents two actions for those who, on the other hand, do fear: "they will tell what God has brought about, and ponder what he has done." The wider context shows that these two verses present a contrast between those who do not fear God and those who do, and the fearful promise of judgment for those who do not fear (v. 7: "But God will shoot his arrows at them; they will be wounded suddenly) indicates that God is the implied object and that the fear emotion/feeling is here in view. More abstract meanings of fear would seem quite out of place in these two verses—especially in v. 4.

Ps 90:11: the wrath of God is suggested here to be proportional to the fear of God. Fear is something that is "due"—i.e., it is a virtue—in view of the fact that God becomes angry when human's sin. "Anger" and "wrath" are both part of the local context, and they indicate that "fear" should be taken as real fear and a high level of it at that.

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[373] פחד is used elsewhere to signify virtue-fear-of-God: see Ps 36:2; Ps 119:161; Jer 36:24; Hosea 3:5; Mic 7:17.

[374] Dahood, 1966, 14, says that this text reminds the rebel kings of vv. 1, 2 that "they too are appointed for the inevitable hour [of death]" and, therefore, should "accordingly acknowledge the supreme suzerainty of Yahweh and live in fear of incurring his wrath." The "reverence" translation of Barnes, 1979, 24, nevertheless contains a significant component of fear: "Serve the LORD with fear: with reverence, and with deep apprehensions of the consequences of not serving and obeying him. That is, serving him in not opposing, but in promoting his purpose of establishing a kingdom under the Messiah, with the deep apprehension that if you do not do it, he will arise and crush you in his wrath." Alexander's "religious awe" is also not devoid of great fear: "Serve the Lord with fear, religious awe, not only on account of his tremendous majesty, but also in view of his vindicatory justice and destroying power." He also understands the "trembling" of the second colon to be "employed as an equivalent or parallel to fear itself" (Alexander, 1864, 18).

Prov 24:21: the son, here, is told to "fear the LORD and the king" and not to "disobey either of them." In view of the "disaster" and "ruin" that "both can bring" (v. 22), "fear" in v. 21 is most likely signifies real fear.[375]

Isa 8:13: The LORD tells Isaiah (v. 12) not to fear or dread what is typically feared and dreaded; rather, the prophet is told that only the LORD—who alone is to be regarded as holy—is the one to be feared and dreaded. Verse 12 is in synonymous parallel with v. 13: the fear/dread of v. 12 is clearly referring to the fear emotion/feeling and the improper objects of that fear; the fear/dread of v. 13, however, takes the simple negative commands of v. 12 and states them positively by including the name of the one who should be the "object" of fear and dread—i.e., the LORD.[376] In other words, the fear/dread that is commanded to be manifested before God is the same fear/dread that is commanded not to be manifested before inappropriate objects. Because any abstract notion of fear is highly unlikely in v. 12, it is also unlikely to be the case in v. 13.[377]

Isa 57:11: the inappropriate "dread" and "fear" before idols is contrasted in this verse with the appropriate fear of God. Given that one of the most infamous and notorious idols, Molech, is mentioned in v. 9, and also that people would experience much dread and fear in false god worship, one can with certainty understand "fear" and "dread" in v. 11a as real fear. The contrast in v. 11b that points out the lack of legitimate fear—i.e., fear towards God—continues with the same subject of the fear emotion/feeling, but implies that the people's manifestation of it had been misdirected up till then.

Jer 5:22: in the midst of the theme of Israel's and Judah's disobedience and downfall, God rhetorically asks, "Do you not fear me?" followed by "do you not tremble before me?" these two questions are nearly identical. This is made especially likely by God's claim to omnipotence which comes in the second part of the verse and which provides justification for an affirmative answer to the two questions: yes, God should be

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[375] Waltke, 2005, 287, 288, understands that "both" in v. 22 refers to the LORD and the king (i.e., they are the ones who can bring "disaster" and "ruin"), and that vv. 21 and 22 are a warning against getting caught up in political intrigue.

[376] The fear/dread referred to in v. 12, says Kidner, 1994, (Isa 8:12, 13), most likely refers to the fear/dread that king Ahaz and his people experienced before the threat of the Damascus/Samaria attack (7:2), and/or before the later Assyrian threat (8:7, 8).

[377] Calvin, 1948, 278, 279, nevertheless sees "reverence" as the main characteristic of the "fear" and "dread" of v. 13: "Though [Isaiah] speaks not only of fear but of dread, yet he does not mean that the Jews should be filled with horror at the name of God, so as to desire to flee from him, but merely demands from them reverence for God, and uses both words in order to express continuance." Calvin jumps over the milder fear that could be legitimately exhibited before God and used by God as a means of prodding people towards him. The concept and parallelism is nearly identical in Matt 10:28: there, Jesus' call for the disciples not to fear their persecutors is clearly set in contrast with a call to only fear God. "Fear" here (φοβέω) is obviously nothing more than the emotion/feeling of fear (see chapter three).

feared; and yes, one should tremble before him. "fear" and "tremble"—in view of God's power to control nature and God's power to judge and punish—are synonymous in that they are both based upon the fear emotion/feeling.

Jon 1:16: were this verse without the previous story about the storm and the terror of the sailors, one might say—if one were to use Becker's criteria—that "feared the LORD" and "offered a sacrifice to the LORD" are synonymous, and, therefore, "feared the LORD" must mean something like "worship" or "obedient service" or the like. But the presence of "great fear" (יראה גדולה) in v. 16a and the previous context and syntax plainly show that the sailor's previous extreme fear of the storm (and for their lives) comes to be focused (in v. 16) on the "object" of the one who created and calmed the storm—YHWH.[378] It should be noted that the adverbial use of "great fear" does not have semantic influence upon "the men feared"; it only intensifies the action of the verb (thus the NRSV's "then the men feared the LORD *even more*" [emphasis mine]). And it is

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[378] Various Jonah 1:16 commentators resist leaving "fear" at its semantic root: Boice, 1983, 225, "respected"; Laetsch, 1956, 228, "awe and amazement," "adoration"; Pusey, 1907, 106, "great awe"; Wade, 1925, 128, "worshipped"; Wolff, 1986, 121, "worship," "obedience," "trust." Butler, 2005, 275, understands the fear as transforming in v. 16 into worship, but nevertheless allows room for some "terror" to remain. I would instead keep the emphasis here on fear and understand that other mental/emotional states might be connoted. There are several reasons for this: first, as mentioned in the main text above, v. 5 obviously is referring to the fear emotion/feeling and v. 10 clearly escalates that fear by the use of the גדול modifier. Verse 16 simply adds "the LORD" which syntactically means that the escalated fear already referred to has now found an object. Every other case of ירא plus גדול (or מאד) in the OT depicts the fear emotion/feeling, and this case should be understood as no exception. Second, it is unlikely that ירא and יראה as employed in vv. 10 and 16—with their syntactic identity—would represent such radically different (and, arguably, mutually exclusive) states of mind/heart (i.e., great fear and great worship). Third, even though the storm ceased, the sailors knew that the cause of the storm—and, therefore, the cause of their fear—was still present, and now, more real than ever. They had just witnessed YHWH's anger and could not really know if that anger would perhaps next be directed at them. What Jonah told them turned out to be true, and the storm did stop—but many questions about YHWH still remained. Therefore, the sailors could not really worship YHWH "in spirit and in truth," but, at best, only stand in fearful awe of his power and wrath. The terror of the crashing waves and towering swells, the dread at the certainty and nearness of death, the appalling conditions aboard the severely damaged ship, and the discovery that a real and living God was behind it all—in response to one man's wrongdoing—was sufficient to instill a terror that few people today can understand. When that terror discovered its object—YHWH—it might have resulted in groveling and even some primitive worship. That terror also goaded them to immediately offer sacrifices and vows (i.e., they were so in shock that they would give anything and say anything in order to keep YHWH's anger away from them). Were these sailors really converted? No one can say; but as I try to explain elsewhere (see pp. 84-87) pagan worship was full of dread and fear, and much of the dread and fear that the sailors experienced before their own gods was probably shifted over in very short order to YHWH. And such an experience—as powerful as it was—could not provide enough information about YHWH for the sailors to fully and purely worship him. But they could fear him, and this was a good step toward worship.

interesting that what could be taken as a parallel—i.e., "offered a sacrifice"—actually has no bearing whatsoever upon the semantics of יָרֵא or יָרְאָה.[379]

Mic 7:17: the prophet professes that the day would eventually come when the nations would repent and finally turn to God. The process of this is seen in vv. 16 and 17 as the nations suffer shame and poverty and, as a result, "come trembling out of their fortresses" and—literally quoting the MT—"they will be in dread (יִפְחָדוּ) and they will fear (וְיִרְאוּ) before you." This future event, of course, will be an *event* of fear; but the dread/fear that will have YHWH as its focus is clearly understood here as an appropriate (i.e., virtuous) response. For this reason, I catalogue both "dread" and "fear" here as virtue-fear-of-God cases.[380]

These virtue-fear-of-God cases that strongly indicate the emotion/feeling of fear are quite diverse in their grammatical makeup and they come from both older and newer parts of the Bible. The texts employing forms of יָרֵא are: Gen 20:11; Exod 20:20; 2 Chron 19:9. Ps 2:11 and 90:11 use יִרְאָה, Isa 8:13 uses מוֹרָא, Prov 24:21 employs the imperative verb + YHWH, and 1 Sam 12:18; Ps 64:4(5), 9(10); Isa 57:11; Jer 5:22; Jon 1:16; and Micah 7:17 all use the imperfect verb with God either as the explicit or implicit verbal object; only Micah 7:17 employs מִן before the object (in this case "you," which refers to God)—a situation that shows that מִן (or מִלִּפְנֵי/מִפְּנֵי) is not necessary for יָרֵא + Elohim/YHWH to indicate the fear emotion/feeling. It should not be overlooked that פַּחַד is also employed twice (2 Chron 19:7 and Mic 7:17)—once as a noun, and once as a verb—to stand for virtue-fear-of-God. The reason I point out these features is only to show that one general "idea type"—in this case, the fear emotion/feeling before God presented as a virtue—is not tied to any one linguistic form or to any particular place in the OT (or, as Becker would say it, to any "literary form").

One important truth that the use of פַּחַד in 2 Chron 19:7 illuminates should also be mentioned: the virtue-fear-of-God text here clearly tells the reader that real fear—even dread—of God is legitimate and even necessary for the proper administration of justice.[381] The lexica keep the semantic range of פַּחַד much tighter than יָרֵא, centering it mainly on "fear" (DBLSD) and "dread" (BDB). This text clearly shows that *the fear*

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[379] See my comments on Jonah 1:16 at p. 66.

[380] The older commentators are more willing to let fear be fear. For example, Keil, 1986, 514, says regarding the fear presented in this text: "The heathen will submit themselves to Jehovah in the humblest fear." Achtemeier, 1996, 366, on the other hand, interprets the fear here as "awe and obedience."

[381] Ps 36:1(2) says that the wicked have "no fear [פַּחַד] of God before their eyes." When one considers the information in 2 Chron 19:7 and in this psalm, one cannot avoid the conclusion that no פַּחַד of God has no place in the life of the believer; for if a believer has no פַּחַד of God, he or she would be deemed—by the rule of Scripture—"wicked." And if that believer happens to be a judge, he or she would be considered one that perverts justice.

emotion/feeling with God as its object is a virtue—and not just a minor one, but a virtue that when practiced can bring about the administration of good and godly—i.e., righteous—judgment. The lesson to be learned is this: if real fear of God is indeed a virtue, then perhaps real fear is the virtue that the virtue-fear-of-God texts that use ירא intend to signify. The use of ירא might have overtones or nuances of more abstract meaning that פחד does not; but if real fear and dread is suitable for those providing leadership in places of great authority (e.g., judges), how much more suitable is it for everyone else. At least the chronicler believed this to be so; but from a Scriptural standpoint that upholds the inspiration, inerrancy, and authority of all Scripture, what the chronicler says here must be taken very seriously. Presented here is the truth that it is desirable to experience and be led by (or goaded by) some fearful emotion/feeling before God. Because this is so, there is no reason for the exegete to expend great effort to try and move virtue-fear-of-God texts that use ירא toward abstract meanings that have little or nothing to do with the fear emotion/feeling—unless the context plainly shows otherwise; but this is hardly (if ever) the case.

NON-ירא FEAR-OF-GOD CASES THAT INDICATE REAL FEAR

ירא is the main Hebrew word for fear, but—as has just been seen in the case of פחד—it is not the only word that can signify fear. In this section, I will mention a number of texts that employ words other than ירא to indicate fear. These texts relate in one way or another to my theme that the fear emotion/feeling before God is a legitimate part of OT worship.

אימה: as part of the ceremony of God (Gen 15) giving a solemn and unconditional oath to Abram (which included God's self-imposed death penalty—indicated by the firepot and the torch passing between the pieces of the slain animals—if he did not uphold the promise)—a "terrifying darkness" descended upon Abram (v. 12). This was not directly fear-of-God; but it was apparently God's will to use the "terrifying darkness" to make a deeper impression upon Abram. God was deadly serious about his promise to bless him, and he wanted Abram to be deadly serious in his understanding of this promise. From what the psalmist writes in Ps 88, it appears that God likewise uses "troubles" (v. 3), "wrath" (vv. 7, 16), "dread assaults" (v. 16), and "terrors" (אימה v. 15 [Heb. v. 16]), in the midst of a believer's life (at least in the midst of the life of the believing writer) in order to accomplish his will as one's "life draws near to Sheol" (v. 3).

גור: in Ps 33:8 are "fear" (ירא) and "dread" (גור) in an approximate synonymous relationship: "Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him." Most versions translate גור as "stand in awe" in this verse; I believe a more precise and literal rendering would be "stand in dread" as גור is semantically centered

upon fear and dread ("awe," in today's American parlance, has lost much of the fear component). In any case, fear and dread (or awe) before God are understood by the psalmist as universal virtues that the whole earth should practice. The emotions/feelings referred to here are, as in many other texts, justified by the mention of Gods omnipotence (see vv. 9-11).

רגז: in the process of repentance and coming to the LORD, the nations—according to Micah 7:17—come "trembling" (ירגזו) as they turn to the LORD in "dread" and "fear." The four verbs in the verse—"lick" ["dust like a snake"], "tremble," "dread," and "fear," present an obviously fearful state of affairs. One searching for synonymous parallels here could not stray much beyond the core meaning of fear.

חרד: in Ezra 9:4 and 10:3 those who "tremble" (BDB) before God's—respectively—"words" and "commandment" are understood to be aware of the sin of marrying foreign wives and are willing to repent. Their "trembling" is clearly a virtue. Isa 66:3 also makes clear that the one who "trembles at [God's] word" and is "humble and contrite in spirit" is virtuous—in fact, the one upon whom God will "look." And Hos 11:10, 11 says that when God roars like a lion, his "children" will come trembling from "the west," and come trembling like "birds from Egypt" and "like doves from the land of Assyria." As with other "trembling" passages, the picture here is one of repentance and turning back to God.

חתת: in the course of praising the Levites, God indicates through the prophet Malachi that they both feared and "stood in awe" (נחת) of God as well as God's name. The syntax of the MT is somewhat perplexing: the text (מוֹרָא וַיִּירָאֵנִי וּמִפְּנֵי שְׁמִי נִחַת הוּא) after the first clause of v. 5 literally appears to say "[in] fear he will fear me, and before my name he will be dismayed." For חתת BDB has the general definition of "be shattered, dismayed," but in this instance of the Niphal verb, BDB understands the meaning as "and at my name he is put in awe." In any case, the obedience of the Levites was in some way bound up with fearful awe—perhaps even to the point of being "shattered" or "dismayed"—before the LORD, and all this was understood as a virtue.

ערץ: in Isa 2:19 and 21 God uses "terror" (פחד) and "the glory of his majesty" in the process of turning people away from idolatry (v. 20)—all as "he rises to terrify the earth" (לַעֲרֹץ הָאָרֶץ בְּקוּמוֹ [in both vv. 19, 21]). ערץ typically indicates "to tremble" (BDB) and most likely means here that God, in his quest to rid the world of idols, will cause peoples on the earth to shake in fear.

פחד: next to ירא, פחד ("dread, be in dread" BDB) is the most often used word for fear in the OT. A number of OT uses clearly show that that fear before God is a commendable virtue. As already mentioned in the previous section, פחד, as used in 2 Chron 19:7, plainly signifies fear/dread of the LORD and is a virtue that the Israelite

judges must have in order to judge righteously. Ps 36:1(2) mentions that "there is no fear of God" before the eyes of the wicked. As said elsewhere in this work, a lack of fear-of-God is always put in a bad light; conversely, fear-of-God—whether of the virtue kind or of the event kind—is never portrayed as something undesirable. Ps 120:119 literally says, "My flesh has goose bumps (DBLSD; or "bristles" BDB) for fear (פחד) of you, and I am afraid (ירא) before your judgments." The writer is one who loves God's laws—i.e., he is a *virtuous* man—and his fear here is in no way seen as out of place in his loving obedience to the LORD. The same can be said for his fear before the words of God in v. 161. In a rather remarkable passage that appears to uphold the value of fear in general (Prov 28:14), the proverbs writer says "Happy is the man that feareth alway." This translation (from the KJV) translates the phrase literally, as does the NRSV: "Happy is the one who is never without fear." The NIV perhaps over-interprets by adding "the LORD" as the object of the fear; "the LORD" as verbal object is probably intended to be understood by the proverb writer, or it could simply be referring to fear in general. Whatever the case, fear is indicated as a virtue and at the same time as an emotion/feeling that brings a significant blessing (i.e., happiness). Isa 60:5 is not much different: in the joyful day when the nations come to the light of the LORD (vv. 2, 3), the hearts of the Israelites shall "fear" when their dispersed people come flowing from the nations. The use here is not of the virtue variety, but of the acceptableness of fear as a part of joy in view of what the LORD has done (or will do). Once again, a lack of fear is connected with evil in Jer 36:24; King Jehoiakim disdained the prophetic Word of the LORD (which had been dictated by Jeremiah and written upon a scroll) by burning the scroll upon which the words were written in a fire in his palace (v. 23). This act was evil, and the king's desire to imprison Jeremiah—through whom the condemning words had come—was also evil. V. 24 records that neither the king nor his servants feared or tore their clothes when Jeremiah's prophecy was read to them. This could mean that the king did not fear God, the words of God, or the Babylonians about whom the prophecy referred to. Perhaps a blend of all three is intended. One thing is sure: lack of fear here is linked with arrogant pride, condemnable behavior, and a lack of appreciation for God's Word and for his inevitable judgment. Finally, fear before God is part of the process of Israel (Hos 3:5) and the nations (Mic 7:17) coming to faith in God. Both passages have the interesting feature of פחד being related to LORD—its usual object—not with a direct object marker, but the preposition אל; thus, the NRSV translates the clause as "they shall turn in dread to the LORD" and the NIV "they will turn in fear to the LORD." The syntax of פחדו (Hos 3:5)/יפחדו (Mic 7:17) (with God as a kind of indirect object towards whom the action of the verb flows) is unique. But the overall context (especially of "trembling" and "fear" in

Mic 7:17) makes it clear that God is both cause and the object of the fear and that the fear is understood to be a virtue.[382]

EXCURSUS: THE FEAR-OF-GOD UNDERSTANDING OF QOHELETH

Much has been said about the OT fear-of-God idea (and some about the NT idea as well—see just above). As can be seen, it is a significant biblical topic; and there are many different opinions of what fear-of-God meant in biblical times. But I would like in the next few pages to think about what fear-of-God means to people today, both inside and outside the church. The thoughts that will now be written down will be generated through an exegetical analysis of the fear-of-God passages of the book of Ecclesiastes.[383] The observations and opinions of Qoheleth are quite suitable for this task because what he writes is theologically toward (or at) the end of the OT. In other words, in Ecclesiastes one sees the limits of the old covenant and the awakening of a great yearning for the new one—that is, for Jesus Christ. This frustration with the old is very much tied up with Qoheleth's frustration with all that was "under the sun." The old covenant led him to understand that much of God's ultimate reality for him and for the Israelites had much to do with things under the sun; especially for king Qoheleth, that meant the עולם promised land and the עולם Davidic kingdom. But having set his hopes on these, it did not take long for him to learn that these—as he understood them under the old covenant—were but dust in the wind.[384] And the older he became and the closer to death he drew, the

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[382] After surveying a number of Hebrew words for fear (in addition to ירא), Clines, 2003, 69, writes: "This survey of the semantic field of words for 'fear' shows that the ירא word group belongs to a wider group of words for 'fear' which behave very similarly. I find no evidence for distinguishing among these terms. Though in two cases (בהל and perhaps דאג), there is or may be evidence of a semantic development, in no case do words of this semantic field demonstrate a semantic development from 'fear' to 'respect', still less to 'act justly' or 'show appropriate religious behaviour'. Most occurrences of the 'fear of God' use the ירא word group, but פחד is also used in exactly the same senses, and no distinction can be found between the two terms. The fact that the other terms are not much evidenced in a religious sense of 'fear of God' is merely accidental, I would suggest.

As far as the 'fear of God' is concerned, I conclude that, while no doubt to fear God implies also to be in awe of him and to show him respect, and while those who fear God engage in appropriate ethical and religious behaviour precisely because they fear the consequences of not doing so, these can only be connotations of 'fear'; the terms for 'fear' studied above mean no more or no less than the emotion of fear."

[383] Eccl 3:14; 5:6

[384] Delitzsch, 1968, 184, writes: "The Book of Koheleth is, on the one side, a proof of the power of revealed religion which has grounded faith in God, the One God, the All-wise Creator and Governor of the world, so deeply and firmly in the religious consciousness, that even the most dissonant and confused impressions of the present world are unable to shake it; and, on the other side, it is a proof of the inadequacy of revealed religion in its O. T. form, since the discontent and

172

more intense grew the feeling that it had all been הבל. So Qoheleth craved something more than all he did and experienced under the sun. Therefore, he can awaken in any man or woman the craving for something more; in every generation human beings all begin life at zero and end at zero—for, as Qoheleth himself taught us, "What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun" (1:9 NIV). All human beings—just like Qoheleth—must go through this process of learning that "life under the sun" is breathtakingly meaningless (perhaps "absurd" might be better) when life is lived apart from God and lived not in accordance with his moral law.

But the claims of Qoheleth only have their deep significance because what he said is now in the Church's canon of Holy Scripture, and this has been the case for a very long time. In the time of Christ's first advent, the Scripture—which "cannot be broken" (John 10:35 NASB)—most likely included Ecclesiastes, and the early church accepted it along with the other Jewish holy books right from the beginning.[385] How Ecclesiastes came to be recognized by the Jews as Scripture—and when—is not known today.[386] The earliest allusions to it are perhaps in Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon, but some still question this.[387] Several fragments of Ecclesiastes were found at Qumran and have been dated to

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the grief which the monotony, the confusion, and the misery of this earth occasion, remain thus long without a counterbalance, till the facts of the history of redemption shall have disclosed and unveiled the heavens above the earth. In none of the O. T. books does the Old Covenant appear as it does in the Book of Koheleth, as 'that which decayeth and waxeth old, and is ready to vanish away' (Heb viii. 13). If the darkness of earth must be enlightened, then a New Covenant must be established; for heavenly love, which is at the same time heavenly wisdom, enters into human nature and overcomes sin, death, and Hades, and removes the turning-point of the existence of man from this to the future life. The finger of prophecy points to this new era. And Kohelth, from amid his heaps of ruins, shows how necessary it is that the heavens should now soon open above the earth."

[385] Krüger, 2004, 32, lists several allusions to Ecclesiastes in the NT: Rom 3:10 (Eccl 7:20); Mark 2:18-20 (Eccl 3:1-8); James 1:19 (Eccl 7:9); Matt 6:7 (Eccl 5:1); Luke 12:13ff (Eccl 5:9-6:9); 1 Tim 6:7 (Eccl 5:14). Krüger also mentions that NA27 consider a portion of Rom 3:10 to be a direct quote of a portion of Eccl 7:20 (see "*loci citati vel allegati ex Vetere Testamento*" p. 789): NA27 (Rom 3:10) as well as Rahlfs (Eccl 7:20) both have οὐκ ἔστιν δίκαιος ("there is not a righteous one"). Because Qoheleth's way of signifying the universal depravity idea is unique (אין צדיק), NA27 is most likely correct. One more NT text should be considered. Jesus might be referring to Eccl 11:5 when he gently admonishes Nicodemus in John 3:10: "You are Israel's teacher … and do you not understand these things?" The commonality of the themes of wind, womb, human limited knowledge, and God's sovereignty in Eccl 11:5 and John 3:3-10 is remarkable (this is also noticed by Hengstenberg, 2001, 35).

[386] Murphy, 1992, xxii, writes that "… we are in total ignorance of the nature of the canonical process."

[387] Regarding similarities of ideas in Sirach and Ecclesiastes, Murphy (Ibid., xlvi) claims that "there is no serious sign of dependency" between the books. After reviewing other proposed similarities, he concludes that "it is not possible to prove dependence in either direction. The data are simply ambiguous, and some of the similarities could easily derive from a common source."

the mid (or earlier) second-century BC.[388] But possible allusions of Sirach and the fact that the Qumran community chose to store up a copy (or copies) of Ecclesiastes do not necessarily mean that the book was considered to be Scripture. But later (ca. 80 AD) Josephus quite likely understood the book as one of the twenty two books which made up their Scripture, and (ca. 90 AD) the rabbis setting down and commenting upon the oral law obviously understood Ecclesiastes as one of the books that had for some time been regarded as sacred.[389]

Ecclesiastes also has applicability for today because it is a canonical *wisdom* book; that is, it exists in the Christian canon as a valid source of wisdom that a Christian can mine today in order to live an excellent life before God. The wisdom in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes is to a significant extent portrayed as the wisdom of Solomon—and this gives the books an aura of value, for Solomon was recorded to have been profoundly blessed with the wisdom of God (1 Kings 3; 2 Chron 1). Solomon was the wisest man in the world and people from all over the earth sought his audience (1 Kings 10:24; 2 Chron 9:23). And many throughout the ages could relate to those kings and queens as they too came to the feet of Solomon—that is, to Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs—for wisdom. Even though the name of Solomon is not mentioned in Ecclesiastes, it is nevertheless clear in the introduction that Qoheleth and Solomon are *intended* to be

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About the alleged dependence of Wisdom of Solomon on Ecclesiastes, Murphy writes: "the message of Wisdom may not be envisioned solely in terms of Ecclesiastes. There is simply no necessary connection" (xlviii).

[388] Muilenburg, 1954, who did the paleographic evaluation on the DSS fragments of Ecclesiastes states: "It goes without saying that the Hebrew Book of Qoh. must now be dated before c.150 B.C., and how much earlier we cannot yet say on the basis of the evidence afforded by the fragments. In any event we must reckon with the possibility that Qoh. had attained canonical status, or something approaching it, in the Essene community by the middle of the second century B.C."

[389] Of the twenty-two books referred to by Josephus, 1987, he claims that "five belong to Moses, which contain his laws and the traditions of the origin of mankind till his death. This interval of time was little short of three thousand years; but as to the time from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, who reigned after Xerxes, the prophets, who were after Moses, wrote down what was done in their times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life" ("Against Apion," bk. 1, secs. 39, 40). Regarding early rabbinic mentions of Ecclesiastes, a number of discussions that raise various questions about the inspired status or the usefulness of Ecclesiastes were recorded; but, as Fox, 2004, xv, points out, "In none of their discussions were the Rabbis actually deliberating whether to grant or deny Ecclesiastes canonical status. This was already a fact for them. These discussions were an intellectual exercise whose purpose was to raise the difficulties the book presents in order to resolve them" (see Fox, 2004, xiv, and Murphy, 1992, xxiii, for the rabbinic sources where these discussions are recorded).

understood as the same person.[390] Other than employing the enigmatic name "Qoheleth," the testimony regarding author, lineage, and place given in 1:1, 12 is not unlike that in a number of biblical books as well as in extra-biblical literature as well.[391] Especially in view of the absence of debate about authorship among the early Christian-era rabbis, and in consideration of the near-universal assumption up to the modern age that Qoheleth was Solomon, the scholar today has some justification to suspect that the writer of Ecclesiastes *intended* that the whole work (minus, perhaps, the introduction and epilogue that speaks of Qoheleth in the third person) be understood as originating from Solomon and, ultimately, from God—for when Solomon asked for wisdom, God gave it to him in abundance (1 Kings 10:24).[392] If the book has many voices speaking in it, then one would be justified in doubting the continuity of the king Qoheleth persona throughout; but despite the twists and turns, apparent contradictions, sudden topical shifts, and the almost-bi-polar declarations of life's futility while at the same time uplifting the value of living

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[390] Most commentators would say this is so at least in 1:2-2:26 (see, e.g., Childs, 1979, 584; Loader, 1986, 19; Fox, 2004, x); after that the opinions of the author (who is a wise sage who lived in inter-testamental times) are no longer presented through the Qoheleth-as-Solomon mask, but only through Qoheleth. But I would say that the mood set by Solomon-Qoheleth at the beginning continues till the end and that there is no literary sign (with the possible exception of the epilogue) to tell the reader that a major character shift has occurred. If there is one, the readers of Ecclesiastes for about two millennia or more—both Jews and Christians—did not recognize it. The same Qoheleth who struggles in chapters one and two with the determinism, meaninglessness, and lack of God's justice in life, is the same Qoheleth of the rest of the book: complaining continues regularly throughout (see FN 394); themes that concern kings also continue through the book (see Eccl 4:13-16; 5:1-7; 5:8, 9; 5:11, 12; 7:21, 22; 8:2-6; 8:8b; 9:13-16; 10:4; 10:5-7, 16, 17; 10:20) as well as texts that seem to echo the life and times of Solomon (Eccl 1:5-7; 2:4-7 [naturalist]; 1:13-18 [wisdom]; 2:4-6 [building]; 2:7 [slaves]; 2:8a, 9 [gold and silver]; 2:8b [harem]; 1:4-11; 3:1-8; 12:1-7 [poetry]; 3:16, 17; 5:8; 8:11 [justice]; 5:1-7 [temple]; 5:4-7 [vows]; 5:10-17; 61-9 [wealth]; 7:20, 26-28 [depravity]; 3:14b; 5:7; 7:18; 8:12, 13; 12:13 [fear-of-God]; 1:15; 4:5, 6, 9-12; 5:3, 10, 11, 12; 6:9a, 11; 7:1-12, 16-19; 9:17, 18; 10:1-4, 8-10, 12-14a, 15, 18, 19; 11:1-7 [proverbs]).

[391] See Koh, 2006, chapter three, for a presentation of ancient near eastern texts whose introductions are similar to the introduction of Ecclesiastes.

[392] The early rabbinic comments and debates about Solomon, according to Christianson, 2007, 89, usually do not mention the author—but when they do, Solomonic authorship is assumed. Luther is often mentioned to be the first to question Solomonic authorship, but Delitzsch, 1968, 190, and Christianson, 2007, 95, point out that the editions that contain these parts of Luther's „*Tischreden*" are suspect, and Luther might have been referring to Ecclesiasticus (my own perusal of Luther's commentary on Ecclesiastes [see Pelikan, 1972] shows that he never assumed any other author other than Solomon). While Didymus the Blind (died ca. 398 AD) might have wondered about the sources of certain verses in Ecclesiastes, and some medieval Jewish scholars believed that Ecclesiastes consisted of disparate fragments of Solomon's wisdom collected by Hezekiah's court scholars, the first to challenge Solomonic authorship in a substantial way was the Dutch lawyer, statesman, and theologian Hugo Grotius (d. 1645—see Christianson, 2007, 95, for details and sources).

life to the fullest, there remains in Ecclesiastes a constant tone of a strange mixture of frustration and faith. Delitzsch says that in Ecclesiastes, "there appears everywhere the same view of the world"—and I think he is right;[393] but this "same view of the world" is the view expressed by Qoheleth, "king in Jerusalem," and this view has explanatory power for the book's many knots and riddles.

Perhaps the entire book is a riddle set within the literary form of a complaint (*Klage*). While this may or may not be so, the wisdom to be gained from Qoheleth certainly does not always jump out at the reader from every verse. Much of what he says is at the immediate literary level plain enough; but one gets the sense that there is more present than what first meets the eye. However one might designate the book, it cannot be denied that Qoheleth complains often and bitterly.[394] He is exceedingly vexed by the utter meaninglessness that he feels in regards to the life that God has given him—so his positive advice in life (found in the *carpe diem* texts) appears concessionary.[395] Many of Qoheleth's observations and opinions do not seem to be based upon revelation, and so, the reader is hesitant to trust everything he says (e.g., that there is no life after death—see 9:5, 6). And despite this, the book is ever goading readers onward towards priceless truths.[396] It could very well be that this is why the book was eventually considered by the

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[393] Delitzsch, 1968, 188.

[394] Complaining is found in 1:2-9, 11, 13-18; 2:1, 2, 11, 12, 14-21, 23; 3:9-11, 14, 16, 19, 20; 4:1-4, 7, 8; 5:8, 13-17; 6:1-8, 10, 12; 7:1, 13-15, 20, 23, 24, 26-29; 8:7, 8, 10, 14, 16, 17; 9:1-3, 5-16; 10:1, 5-9, 14; 11:5, 8, 10; 12:1-8.

[395] Whybray, 1982, 87, suggests that Qoheleth recommends a "whole-hearted pursuit of enjoyment" in the following verses: 2:24a; 3:12; 3:22a; 5:17; 8:15a; 9:7-9a; 11:7-12:1a. He writes, "It may first be noted that these texts are arranged in such a way as to state their theme with steadily increasing emphasis and solemnity." But Qoheleth cannot be arguing for the principle of *carpe diem* because this is just what he did—as he records in chapter two—but found "meaningless" and "a chasing after the wind" (2:11 NIV). In fact, he hated life (2:17) because of this. Qoheleth does see value in the simple pleasures of life (i.e. eating and drinking and enjoying one's wife); but, in the end, Qoheleth—in exasperation (see 6:12)—appears to have the opinion that even these simple pleasures get overwhelmed by the general pall of meaninglessness which falls over life "under the sun." Qoheleth's injunction to "enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this meaningless life that God has given you under the sun—all your meaningless days" (9:9) seems to almost be mocking the idea that one can really find contentment if the wider scenario is so gloomy. This statement invites a reply like: "how can I enjoy life— even life with my wife—if it is so meaningless and absurd and we all in the end die like animals?" Any emphasis put upon *carpe diem* is partially or completely attenuated by the spectre of death and the threat of judgment (see 3:17 and 11:8, 9 [and see 12:13 section below]).

[396] In Eccl 12:10, Qoheleth is said to have written words that were "upright and true" (NIV). Regarding ישר דברי אמת, Fox sees this as a superlative phrase and translates thus: "the most honest words of truth" (Fox, 1977, 97). According to Krüger, "words of delight" and "words of truth" are used synonymously, both being what Qoheleth sought to find/write. (Krüger translates 12:10: "Qoheleth sought to find pleasing words and to correctly record true words." [Krüger, 2004, 207, 210]). The "truth" of Qoheleth's words are sometimes not at the immediate literal level

Jews to be holy: Solomonic authorship did not make it holy (his reputation was questionable anyways [see 1 Kings 11; Neh 13:26]), and the epilogue could not make the distressing words of Qoheleth any more palatable.[397] But those who had a say in the matter perhaps recognized the good effect of Ecclesiastes—the good effect of goading the reader/listener towards God. Even with Qoheleth's perceived lack of meaning in life, and despite his observation that life is full of pain and hardship and culminates inevitably in death, Qoheleth demonstrated that faith in God nevertheless was realizable and appropriate.[398] Job was a model of faith for those who might be bitter through loss; but Qoheleth was a model of faith for those who have gain, but find in it dissatisfaction and a sense of emptiness.

Those who first recognized that Ecclesiastes was valuable and worthy of sacred status, however, must have nevertheless been unsettled by Qoheleth's cutting against the grain of Torah-based wisdom.[399] Whatever role the Law played in his life, it certainly did not make him happy and content. In fact, Qoheleth was miserable, and life seemed pointless—certainly not what ought to be the experience of one who lives according to the Law! So, among the many complaints in Ecclesiastes is this implicit complaint that becomes apparent as one reads the book through: the Law given to Moses had failed to provide meaning, ultimate answers, and life-satisfaction to those who were obedient to it. In this way, Ecclesiastes made Jewish readers/hearers ready to receive something new that would bring them beyond the meaninglessness of life "under the sun" and out of the utter hopelessness of death.[400]

(e.g., that the dead have "no further reward"—9:5). This is somewhat like some of the opinions expressed by Job's three friends—they should be taken with a grain of salt. But both Job and Ecclesiastes, through questionable opinions expressed within each, nevertheless goad readers toward apprehending great truths about God, humanity, and their relationship.

[397] According to Hengstenberg, 2001, 33, the Talmud (Tractate Schabbath, f., 30, b. [Hengstenberg's source designation]) records that some early rabbis thought that the book was originally recognized as valuable because (in the rabbis words) its beginning and end are words of the law." My view is that the whole book surely must have been under discussion in those days when the book was transitioned to scriptural status, and that the *whole* book must have been perceived to have been valuable.

[398] Qoheleth's many mentions of death (see 1:11; 2:18, 21; 3:2, 19-21; 4:2, 3; 5:16, 18; 6:3, 6, 12; 7:1, 2, 15, 17, 26; 8:8, 10, 13; 9:2-6, 10; 11:8; 12:1-7) are meant, in my view, to generate fear in the hearts and minds of his readers and thereby generate in them a desire for a solution to the fear of death and to death itself.

[399] It is obvious that Qoheleth is a Hebrew who, as Krüger, 2004, 25, points out, presupposes the Torah—but with a somewhat liberal interpretation.

[400] Loader, 1986, 15, writes, "We can view the Preacher as a painter who offers a realistic portrayal of human life as it looks apart from Christ. The more severe his words, the more terrified the readers are; the more effective his reproduction of life, the more the readers sense their own helplessness.… So we can regard the book as a poetic forerunner of the first part of the

The contexts of the fear-of-God texts of Ecclesiastes—to which we now turn—are also part of Qoheleth's wisdom that negatively goads; but they influence the reader in the fairly straightforward way of providing information about God and his sovereignty, human beings and their dependency, and the judgment in which God will bring all the deeds of men and women to account. In these passages, Qoheleth is not complaining about what he has simply observed; instead, he is repeating theological and anthropological truths that had long since been known from the Torah. But Qoheleth does this in a way that takes a step toward more formalized doctrine and that jars the Jewish religionist who had become comfortable with the idea that he or she was made righteous through adherence to the law. The contexts of each of the fear-of-God texts show the following:

3:14: God is omniscient and omnipotent; human beings are not.

5:7(6): God is the ultimate authority, far above humanity.

7:18: Men and women all do evil—even when they try to be righteous.

8:12, 13: Men and women who do evil will tend to have their lives cut short.

12:13: God is the ultimate judge of all the deeds of human beings.

Fear-of-God is appropriate and beneficial in view of these realities. The specific nuances of each fear-of-God text and how this applies to the church will now be discussed.

Eccl 3:14: Fear God because He Is Sovereign

The fear-of-God text of Eccl 3:14 is bound up with the idea that God is absolutely sovereign and men and women are absolutely dependent upon him.[401] In the local context

Heidelberg Catechism—how great our misery is—that cries out, as it were, for a new dispensation: a deliverance from the misery of meaninglessness." Regarding the life-after-death question, Qoheleth does indicate some ambivalence about it by his questions found in 3:21 and 6:12, for the rhetorical questions there suggest the answer, "no one knows—except God." Also, "under the sun" is mentioned along with the death theme at several points (6:12; 9:3; 9:6; 9:10, 11), which may be Qoheleth's way of saying that this is only what he *empirically* observed.

[401] This unforgettable little poem contains an introduction and seven Bible verses. In the following discussion about the poem, I use the following terminology (using v. 2 as an example): Colon—"a time to be born"; Bicolon (consisting of two cola)—"a time to be born and a time to die"; Couplet (consisting of two bicola)—"a time to be born and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted." The biblical verses match the couplets (total of seven), so we can see that there are fourteen bicola and twenty eight cola—the same number of cola, as Loader interestingly points out, as the much more modern Petrarchan (14th century) sonnet. (Loader, 1969, 241. Also see Loader, 1986, 34, 35, for a very informative and less technical description.) Each bicolon consists of cola that mention positive and then negative (or vise-versa) phenomena of human existence.

"a time to be born" (colon A—something positive); "and a time to die" (colon B—something negative)

of this pericope, the necessary and contingent ontological statuses of, respectively, God and human beings, are strongly suggested in the poem of 3:1-8.[402] As the NASB accurately renders 3:1, "There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven." The word for "appointed time" has the sense of—and is used elsewhere for—a time that some authority decrees for some event to occur.[403] Qoheleth

Meanwhile, the two bicola of each couplet (i.e., in each Bible verse) run more or less parallel to each other:

> "a time to be born and a time to die;" (bicolon 1 theme: life [something positive] and death [something negative])
> "a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted." (bicolon 2 theme: life [something positive] and death [something negative])

The seven couplets go on to cover the "whole range of human activity" (Eaton, 1983, 34). Loader sums up the idea and mood of the poem well: "In this regard we can again be in agreement with the Preacher. No matter how advanced the development of human capacities, science, and technology may be, man cannot guarantee his own happiness. But there is also something very unsatisfactory about the poem. There is a restlessness like that of a weaver's shuttle in it, a persistent uncertainty in the back-and-forth movement of its ideas. It is a restless and unfathomable sea in which the human lifeboat tosses about. Rest is possible only at anchor—and that is what the gospel of Christ offers" (Loader, 1986, 38). That "anchor"—in my view—is perhaps prefigured at the end of the poem (3:8b) where the desirable/undesirable order of the bicolon is unexpectedly switched such that "war" is not the last word, but "peace" (שלום). To consider this in view of the promise made to David, the meaning of Solomon's name, and how the Messiah is described in both testaments, is to suspect that Qoheleth—or perhaps better, the Holy Spirit working through him—had something very important to say here. Any change in the expected syntax of a biblical text is often exegetically significant. Here we have a sudden change in the poetical structure that indicates some sort of exegetically critical point.

[402] In other words, the poem appears to support the following: the essence of God includes his *necessity*; that is, he is the "independent, indestructible, incorruptible, uncaused eternal being" who can "never be caused not to be" (Angeles, 1992, 202). Human beings are the opposite—i.e., they are *contingent* beings. It follows then that they are destructible, corruptible, caused, temporal, and can be caused not to be. These philosophical terms are, of course, not a part of Qoheleth's vocabulary; but the realities of God and of human beings which they denote resonate throughout Ecclesiastes.

[403] זמן ("appointed time," "time"—BDB)—is used in several contexts in which a particular time is decreed by a high authority. In the case in Neh 2:6, Nehemiah, based upon the king's request, sets a זמן to return from Jerusalem to Susa. Esther 9:27 records that the Jews decided to celebrate the heroic deeds of Esther and Mordecai over a period of two days "according to the written instructions *and according to their appointed time*" (וכזמנם [trans. NKJV]) annually the festival of Purim. The word, as used in these texts, has the feel of something decreed in the context of important events and high authority in which people are under compulsion to do certain things at the certain appointed times in the future. It is interesting how these uses of זמן, as well how it is deployed in Eccl 8:5, all depict times that have been "appointed" as a result of the actions and decisions of kings: Nehemiah—at the king's request—sets a time for him to return; Mordecai issued letters to the Jews to celebrate "feasting and gladness" based upon the decree of King Ahasuerus to let the Jews protect themselves and seek revenge upon their accusers; In Eccl 5:6, there is an "appointed time" that comes about from the sovereign proceedings of the king that

then lists those events that men and women find themselves subjected to while existing in life "under the sun." The first bi-cola of v. 2 establish the confines within which all the other events must fit: "a time to be born, and a time to die."[404] Needless to say, no one has any say over the day of one's birth, and one does not choose the day of one's death (suicide, of course, is an exception). "You are not your own" (1 Cor 6:19); in other words, someone else made us, put us on planet Earth, and "has appointed [our] pre-appointed times" (Acts 17:26 NKJV). Birth and death, in Qoheleth's view, are events appointed by God; but all other human events are too: love and marriage and sex are sovereignly ordained by God, as are laughing and healing and dancing. The unpleasant phenomena of hate, killing, and war are also God-appointed—and Qoheleth here does not comment upon which are good or evil; he just says that they will be.[405]

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men and women who appear before the king must conform to in order to have the best chance of favorable outcomes. These uses of זמן illumine the way we should go exegetically with its instance in 3:1.

[404] But see my remarks about Eccl 3:17 below in FN 466.

[405] There are some commentators who tend to see in the poem more of the ability of humans to do things and therefore have some measure of control over their destinies—as long as these things are done at the appropriate "time." Blenkinsopp, 1995, 57, 58, is one who leans this way. He understands 3:1-8 to be a somewhat orthodox wisdom statement—influenced by Stoicism, and originally not a part of Ecclesiastes—on the ability of human beings to coincide their actions with the favorable times afforded by "fate" in order to bring about favorable outcomes. There is a problem, however, with this view: the favorable/unfavorable phenomena of verse 2a (being born and dying) are not at the disposal of people. To solve this, he interprets the Qal infinitive ללדת literally ("to give birth") but—in keeping with Stoic teaching (and practice!)— he suggests that למות (lit. "to die") be taken to mean *suicide*. (Ibid., 57. Blenkinsopp mentions that the founder and his successor [Zeno and Cleanthes] of the Stoic school both committed suicide [59]) With this adjustment and all 28 Cola depicting those phenomena that are at the disposal of human beings, the poem, according to Blenkinsopp, "seems to proclaim the conventional message of the sages, and incidentally of contemporary Stoic philosophers, that we have the resources and knowledge required to exercise control over our lives by doing things at the right time, a message which Qoheleth refutes in the following verses (especially 3.10-11, 16-18)" (Ibid., 57, 58). A number of things can be said in reply: is this little gem of biblical verse—with its exquisite symmetry and gentle ebbing back and forth between titanic themes of love and hate, birth and death, war and peace (and even making love and refraining from doing so [if that is what v. 5 involves])—only a kind of Greek-based philosophy inserted into the book for Qoheleth to argue against? What one argues against is usually made to look not so attractive. But someone put a lot of love, deep thought, and poetic care into this poem; therefore, it seems that the message would be something of significant substance and also a message that Qoheleth thought worthy enough to include. The poem has also been one of the more memorable—if not the best remembered—parts of the book. If the author of Ecclesiastes drew the poem out of Stoic-influenced thinking because he wanted to refute it, then he terribly miscalculated how the reading public would take it. But this could not have been the case; a non-fragmenting approach better explains the poem and its place within the context of Ecclesiastes: Qoheleth throughout his work depicts human beings as being unable to control their destinies (See 1:9, 10; 2:11, 17, 25; 3:11, 14, 15, 17; 5:19; 6:1-6;

So humans are limited in their ability to change the circumstances which befall them. Therefore, there is not much—if anything—to be gained from working hard in order to improve one's "lot." As Qoheleth several times asks (laments), "What gain have the workers from their toil?" (3:9—see also 1:3; 2:22; 5:16) The rhetorical question most likely expects the answer, "none," because "time and chance happen to them all" (9:11b). But this is a terrible burden for men and women because God has set a sense of the עולם ("passing of times" [Eccl 3:11]) in their hearts and thereby made them aware of the past and the future.[406] By being aware of the past, a person knows that there was a time when he or she was not—and that realization leads to the awareness that someone must have brought him or her into existence. By being aware of the future, a man or woman knows that there is continued life to be had, but anxiety arises because he or she does not know how it will go (see 9:1). As life is lived, experience demonstrates that life is unpredictable and difficult to control—and the knowledge of the future termination of life is especially distressing. With this "eternity" in their hearts, men and women know that they are not of their own, that God is the agent by which they have come into being, and that God is Lord over all events—but they do not know what God is doing and why.[407] As Qoheleth says, "yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end." This image of God inserted by God into human hearts gives men and women the ability to know God, but to not know him completely. The miracle of עולם allows human beings to deduce God's reality from the general revelation—such that they are, as Paul writes, "without excuse"—and, at the same time, to know that God is far beyond them, and his wisdom "far off, and deep, very deep."[408] In this human situation in which all is contingent upon

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7:13, 14, 23; 8:5-8, 16, 17; 9:1, 2, 11-16; 11:1-6, 9; 12:1-8, 14), and "time and chance" (9:11) cruelly fall upon them all (9:12). The same view is most likely also contained within the poem of 3:1-8.

[406] "Passing of times" suggested by Jenni, 1953, 26, 27.

[407] "Eternity" suggested by Eaton, 1983, 81.

[408] Murphy, 1992, 35, writes, "The interpretation of העלם has been a *crux interpretum*." I think he is right as the commentaries spend quite a lot of space talking about the meaning of this word. Furthermore, it seems be central to Qoheleth's description and understanding of humans and therefore central to understanding the relationship between them and God. What is this עולם "given" into the hearts of humankind? The opinions on this range quite widely—several examples being: eternity, desire for eternity, ever new repetition, duration, the world, spatiality, obscurity, ignorance, darkness, and toil (these last three with emendation). (these were culled from the lists of Ogden, 2007, 59, 60; Eaton, 1983, 81; and Murphy, 1992, 34) Despite this diversity, the greater numbers of commentators have leaned toward some sort of *duration* time concept vis à vis the *point* idea of time provided by עת (see 3:1-8, 11a). Ogden, 2007, 60, is right to point out that this fits the book's context best: "Given the temporal setting of the chapter, we should resist any attempt to offer a solution which falls outside [the time] field of reference. Thus we shall accept the meaning, 'a consciousness of the eternal.'" Eaton, 1983, 81, concurs: "'Eternity', by far the commonest meaning, fits the context well, for the whole passage has been concerned with God's

God's sovereign will, the best that human beings can do, in the view of Qoheleth, is to find contentment in the basic pleasures of life—eating, drinking, work, and marriage—but to know that these things and the enjoyment of them are only made possible by God.[409] Men and women can and should enjoy life, but they can only do so insofar as God allows; for the feelings of pleasure and contentment cannot be humanly self-generated.

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scheme of 'times.'" This is in keeping with the BDB overall translation of עולם ("long duration," "antiquity," or "futurity"; and with 3:11 specifically, "age [duration] of the world."). Although Jenni, 1953, 26, 27, (in his thorough study of עולם in the OT) admits significant challenges with trying to pin down the meaning (in 3:11) of the word, he nevertheless „in Ermangelung einer besseren Lösung" goes with „Zeitenablauf" ("the passing of times") or „die ausgedehnte Zeit" ("the stretched-out time").

But that being said, "eternity" still might be the most suitable translation based on a more precise understanding of the *function* of this knowledge—something that Machinist, 1995, 171, 172, perceptively brings to light: "But in an admittedly difficult passage, 3:11, Qohelet seems once more to have taken the meaning [of עולם] to a new level of abstraction and self-consciousness. Here *'ôlām* is not simply 'eternity', but the 'ability to consider and reflect on the concept of eternity', which God has put into the minds (*lēb*) of human beings 'so that' (*mibbĕlî 'ăšer*), paradoxically, they are able to see that they cannot discover the nature of God's own pattern of activity, his *ma'ăśeh*. In other words, *'ôlām* in 3:11, like 'wisdom' (*h□okmâ*) elsewhere in the book (e.g., 1:13; 2:21 within the context of 1:12-2:23; 7:23; 9:10; cf. also *h□ešbôn* …), seems to be the capacity God gives humans to be able to discover the limits of their understanding. The word *'ôlām*, it would appear, allows the discovery of limits precisely because it gives human beings an awareness of the 'eternal' that lies beyond" (transliteration style his). I think Machinist gets to the real essence of עולם as used in 3:11 and in the process provides the justification for using a more theologically (and philosophically) loaded word like "eternity." The *substance* of what God puts into the hearts of human beings is mysterious—"who can understand it?" But the *function* of it is to open their eyes to the reality of their situation. This reality, as Loader, 1986, 39, 40, points out, is not only the awareness of the possibility of eternity (i.e., time extending out into the future without end), but also the awareness of the determined events that force their way into human lives: "If then God has set the temporal world order in the human center of reflection, that means he forces man to occupy himself, in his mind, with the unceasing succession of the fixed dispensations of fate that come upon him.… Man cannot escape the torment of his fate, for God has made it a part of his nature to think about it …." The "burden" given by God mentioned in v. 10 most probably consists of these two realities that humans are made aware of. The knowledge of "eternity" results in anxiety because men and women are aware of the concept of an unending future (i.e., of eternity), but they do not know if they will be a part of it. Anxiety ("torment") also comes as a result of their knowledge about their inability to control their lives—either in the present or in the future.

[409] Enjoyment is said to be a gift of God in 2:24, 25; 3:13; 5:18-20. Qoheleth's emphasis on enjoying life (2:24; 3:12, 13, 22; 5:18, 19; 8:15; 9:7-10; 11:8, 9) should be considered alongside 6:12a ("For who knows what is good for mortals …?"). Also to be kept in view is that all enjoyment occurs in an overall atmosphere of הבל (9:9; 11:8), impending soul annihilation (9:10; 11:8 [but see 3:21; 12:7]), and impending judgment (11:9).

God determines the times and seasons of human existence and—through the placing of עולם into the heart—makes human beings know that he is the determiner of all events. But not only are men and women aware that God *does*, but whatever he does is unchangeable. Qoheleth laments that all human achievement is meaningless—in fact "there was nothing to be gained under the sun" (2:11b); on the other hand, "whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it" (3:14a). And Qoheleth believes that God does this so that men and women might fear him. The MT of the last clause in 3:14, והאלהים עשה שיראו מלפניו, can be literally translated, "and the God does so that they [human beings] will fear before him." The Bible versions here translate ירא variously—e.g., "respect" (NCV), "revere" (NIV), "stand in awe" (NRSV), and "fear" (ESV, NASB, NKJV). This text could reflect some or all of these; but the use of the preposition מלפני—which, like מן and מפני, is employed to denote that something is occurring before (or sometimes "from before") someone—emphasizes that fear is being experienced before a very specific object (in this case, God).[410] Real fear combined with awe—and perhaps with a by-product of reverence—is also made more likely by Qoheleth's portrayal in chapter three of God's power and knowledge vis-à-vis human limitations.[411] God pre-ordains all and is transcendent; but this is tempered by the understanding that God in accordance with the times and seasons that he decrees does give wonderful gifts—from the miracles of life (3:2a) and love (3:8a) to the joys of eating, drinking, and happiness (3:12, 13). In other words, because God is omnipotent and sovereign, human beings fear him and are in awe of him; because God gives men and women all that is good, they love and revere him. Both of these combine in worship. But "worship" is most likely getting beyond what Qoheleth intended to say in 3:14. When one seriously contemplates *omnipotence* and *omnipresence*, and also seriously considers that

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[410] In the numerous OT mentions of fear that are not virtue fear-of-God cases, ירא and מלפני/מפני/מן + fear object is often employed to clearly signify the fear emotion/feeling. But when virtue-fear-of-God instances employ this form, BDB shifts the meaning from being "afraid" to "stand in awe of." From the context and grammar I can understand that awe could indeed be a part of what is being signified; but just because God becomes the object, I do not see how BDB can justify such a semantic shift—unless there is a bias already present that resists understanding that fear exhibited before God can be a legitimate emotion/feeling. Even Becker, 1965, 254, perceives in Eccl 3:14 a "stronger trait of numinous fear" because of the employment of מלפני (but this is in addition to the "moral" [„*sittliche*"] fear-of-God idea that he understands as predominant in the OT wisdom literature). See my FN 499.

[411] Curtis and Brugaletta, 2004, 131, agree that fear-of-God has much to do with understanding who God is and who human beings are: "The fear of the Lord, which comes out of a clear understanding of who God is and what He is like, together with a clear understanding of who we are as human beings created by God, involves a full-orbed understanding about God that is informed by His revelation of Himself to people. Although attributes of God such as His power, majesty, and holiness are often related to the fear of the Lord, His kindness, compassion, and forgiveness are no less related to the concept."

the God who possesses these attributes is the highest authority who will judge all men and women (a fact that Qoheleth explicitly mentions in 3:17 and 11:9 [see also 12:14]), then the semantic centering of Eccl 3:14's use of ירא on real fear is made much more likely.[412]

Loader writes that because of the limited revelation in Qoheleth's time, men and women were "without direction or goal" and had "no destination." Furthermore,

> without the future of Christ no other posture is in fact conceivable.… When the resurrection of Christ broke through the endless circular movement of history, a direction and a destination was set for human life. Labor then becomes meaningful because in the new circumstances it becomes *service*.[413]

Those in the church praise God for this "direction" and "destination" and accept with joy their toil on earth because they know that it has ultimate meaning through the faith in the One with whom they will spend eternity. But does this mean that fear-of-God is no longer necessary in the Church? Qoheleth did not know about the redemption and eternal life that would be provided through Christ. He also did not know that the Word of God would become flesh (John 1:14) or that God would send his Holy Spirit into believers to teach (John 14:26), strengthen (Eph 3:16), and encourage (Acts 9:31) them. For Christians, God is not as far away as he was to Qoheleth; and yet, the realities of God's sovereignty and human contingency that Qoheleth was aware of are also realities today. God makes his home in people who have been—as Jesus described to Nicodemus—"born again" (John 3:3); at the same time Christ is seated "at the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens" (Heb 8:1) and "all authority in heaven and on earth" has been given to him (Matt 28:18). Christians are "God's chosen ones, holy and beloved" (Col 3:12); and yet, it is not for believers to "know the times or periods that the father has set by his own authority" (Acts 1:7). Human contingency even extends to salvation—for faith in Christ is a gift only made possible by the sovereign God (John 3:5-8; 6:44). The reasons for fearing God that Qoheleth gave in chapter three are still reasons to fear God today—for in him, there "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). It is perfectly natural to fall in fear before the king of kings who made the universe (the universe which still cannot contain him—1 Kings 8:27): James, John, and Peter fell down "overcome by fear" when they heard God's voice (Matt 17:6), and John fell in fear "as though dead"

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[412] About the meaning of ירא in Eccl 3:14, the commentaries vary: for example, for Lohfink, 2003, 62, fear-of-God here "is silence before the divine mystery, which is closed to human understanding"; Garrett, 2001, 300, notes that humans are "altogether contingent beings, and our only appropriate response is reverence"; Fox, 2004, 24, says "Koheleth's unpredictable and aloof deity provokes real fear and consternation, not only pious reverence." Perhaps Loader, 1986, 41, sums it up best: "God's dispensations are such that human beings stand in awe of him. This fear of God is not a form of piety; it is terror and a shrinking from him. No other possibility exists in the face of a power that man cannot affect and does not understand."

[413] Loader, 1986, 42.

(Rev 1:17) at the feet of the ascended and glorified Christ. And it is perfectly appropriate to feel some of the same fear, wonder, and awe when Christians today contemplate the glorious majesty of God.[414]

Eccl 5:7 (6): Fear God because He Is the Highest Authority

In this injunction to fear God is reflected the moral authority that God has over human beings. This authority is assumed in 5:1-6 (4:17-5:5) through a number of references to the obligations that were incumbent upon Israelite men as they worshiped at the temple. But before mentioning these, I should say that this passage—like Eccl 3:1-14—first assumes the realities of God's sovereignty and human contingency. But this is not argued for here, but simply stated in one terse and memorable epigram: "God is in heaven, and you upon earth; therefore, let your words be few" (5:2b [5:1b]). This should not be taken as absolute: what Qoheleth says here can be interpreted in view of the Israelite idea that God's glory should under favorable circumstances reside in the temple. When the Ark of the Covenant was first brought to the newly built temple, the "glory of the LORD filled the temple" (favorable circumstances—see 1 Kings 8:11); but then the Spirit of God later left the temple because of the nation's rebellion (unfavorable circumstances—see Ezek 10). With the visitations that God had made to his people as well as the many promises of God to dwell with his people, even in times of unfavorable circumstances, the Israelites in general certainly did not understand God as European Deists did much later—i.e., as being absolutely transcendent and uninvolved with human affairs. The understanding of the Israelites after the time of Moses was always sliding on a scale somewhere between the two extremes mentioned by Solomon at the temple dedication: "The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!" (1 Kings 8:27) Sometimes they perceived God's presence as within the temple and close at hand; at other times, they felt like God had abandoned them altogether—but even so (at least with the ones who had not given up all hope), they remembered God's promises and understood that God was always willing to re-establish the relationship should the people repent and humble their hearts and pray (2 Chron 7:14). This was in fact the main thrust of Solomon's temple dedication prayer: if the people

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[414] After both of these instances of falling in fear before God, Jesus says "do not be afraid." In these cases as well as all the others in the OT and NT in which people fear before God and are then told not to be afraid, the Lord never says "do not be afraid *of me*." As I have said before, God never condemns displays of some fear before him; but when the Bible depicts someone or some group as having no fear before God, it is always presented as evil. All these instances of God's admonitions not to fear in response to cases of event fear-of-God must be interpreted in light of the many OT and NT admonitions to fear God as well as the various texts that condemn a lack of fear-of-God (see Marshall remarks, in my FN 505; also see FN 487).

sinned but then later humbled their hearts and turned back to God, Solomon entreated God to hear their prayers and, "from heaven, [God's] dwelling place," and "forgive" (1 Kings 8:30—see also vv. 34, 36, 39, 43, 45, 49).

In general, it appears that Qoheleth understood God as being far away in the heavens instead of being close by in the temple. In Qoheleth's view, even though God is omnipotent, there is enough chaos and injustice in the world for him to sense that God is distant and detached. Over against this remote God are men and women—"under the sun" and "on earth"—who are weak and corrupt, and can at the drop of a hat become a stench in God's nostrils. But maybe Qoheleth does not really understand God to be so far away. One thing that might be noticed in this passage is the echo of the phenomena of king, palace, and protocol. How Qoheleth views the place of God and the proper relationship to him is affected by his understanding of the place of the king and the conduct of people when they are in his presence.[415] Eccl 8:2-6 is a rough parallel to the passage at hand: the matters of king, oaths, and proper conduct before the king are of concern to Qoheleth, and the same concerns echo in Eccl 5:1-6 (4:17-5:5)—but the "king" in this case is God. As I have argued for above, Qoheleth is never far away from presenting his views from the perspective of a king. As the king had his palace and the "proper time and procedure" (8:5b NIV) for everything that occurred there, so God has his temple before which one should carefully tread and come to "listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools …." (Eccl 5:1 [4:17] NIV) But this talk of *location* is in one respect superfluous: theologically speaking, God is omnipresent. But more to the point, communication—which defines relationship—is what is important. If there is no communication with God, then God would appear—at least from the human perspective—to not be present (i.e., he is

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[415] The author of Ecclesiastes presents Qoheleth as being an Israelite king (Solomon) in the beginning of the work (1:1, 12; 2:4-9, 12) and the rest of the work at times appears to assume that a king is nearby (4:13-16; 5:8, 9; 7:27; 8:2-6; 10:16, 20; 12:9, 10). One might understand this king as one of the Hasmonean rulers—but the *terminus ante quem* of the mid- to early-second century BC (based upon the paleographic dating of the Ecclesiastes Qumran fragments [see Muilenburg, 1954]) makes this unlikely. The author of Ecclesiastes could, of course, simply be writing with a fictional united monarchy setting in mind. But if he is in fact referring to the conditions in his day, it is difficult to see how the ruling authority—as it is presented by Qoheleth—could be one of the Greek, Persian, or Babylonian kings who ruled a far distance from Jerusalem. Krüger assumes Jerusalem under Ptolomaic rule to be the setting in which Ecclesiastes was composed (second half of the third century BC). His dating is based upon (in addition to linguistic factors and subjects under discussion in the book) "its references to political and social circumstances"; But these, writes Krüger, are "by no means clear" (Krüger, 2004, 19. The "Tobiads" [Joseph and Hyrcanus] and/or the high priests during the time of waning Ptolamaic influence are perhaps reflected, suggests Krüger, in Eccl 1:12-2:26 [p. 20]). My opinion is that beyond the opening texts that refer to Solomon (Eccl 1:1, 12; 2:4-9), the texts in Ecclesiastes that depict situations of royalty are of too general a nature to indicate specific times or specific kings. As Murphy appropriately remarks, "the text is simply too vague to support historical reference …." (Murphy, 1992, xxii)

somewhere else). But Qoheleth assumes in Eccl 5:1-6 (4:17-5:5) that the people come to the temple in order to have an experience of and a relationship with God—albeit one in which the less human words spoken, the better. Listening and offering sacrifices (5:1 [4:17]),[416] uttering words before God (5:2 [1]), making vows to God, being considered a fool by God (5:4 [3]), and being the object of God's anger because of unfulfilled vows, all presume that a relationship exists and communication really does occur between God and worshippers—and that this communication happens at the temple. But whatever nearness that Qoheleth might understand about God should not detract from the fact that Qoheleth thinks of God as almighty and human beings as weak and flawed creatures who understand God to be massive, unmovable, and, in the main, unknowable.

But with Eccl 5:6 [5] the fear that is commanded is also provoked by the moral authority that God has over men and women. Evil is a concern (5:1 [4:17], 6 [5]) and, to avoid it, one should guard one's steps and be ready to listen instead of offering sacrifices of fools (5:1 [4:17]). One should also not be hasty in thought or speech before God (5:2 [1]), not make vows to God that one cannot fulfill (5:4 [3], 5[4]), and not make the excuse before God (or his "messenger"—probably the priest) that he really did not mean to make the vow—for if he does, God will be angry and punish him (5:6 [5]).[417] When the awesomeness of God's power and works is contemplated, as well as the authority that flows from these, then one begins to understand the gravity of life "under the sun." As Ellul well says, "approaching God and entering into a relationship with him is a matter of infinite seriousness. If you cannot listen, be silent (humble yourself), and keep your promises, it would be better not to approach this God."[418] Loader also mentions the peril that Qoheleth perceives in worship of the almighty God: "God is an enormous power before whom people must stand in awe. For that reason it is perilous to take part in the worship of this God, and it is better just to listen quietly than to take part unthinkingly."[419] In view of the propensity to worship amiss, Eaton concurs that "… the worshipper is treading on dangerous ground. The remedy is to *fear God*."[420]

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[416] According to BDB זֶבַח (n.m.) is a "general name for all sacrifices eaten at feasts." It is probably not inappropriate here to draw a parallel to Christian worship which remembers and appropriates the sacrifice of Christ through the partaking of the bread and the wine. As the Israelites were admonished to conduct themselves circumspectly and with some fear before God as they brought their sacrifices, Christians ought to have the same mind as they claim forgiveness through the blood of Jesus Christ.

[417] One thinks of Jephthah (Judg 11:30-40) who fulfilled his vow even though it meant killing his daughter. The command of Christ to not swear at all but simply fulfill one's "no" or one's "yes" (Matt 5:33-37) also indicates how serious God is about intentions of the heart and honoring one's word.

[418] Ellul, 1990, 273.

[419] Loader, 1986, 58.

[420] Eaton, 1983, 100.

The meaningless things that are an affront to God—like too many words said before him in the temple—can be avoided if one just fears God.[421] Qoheleth, in 5:7 [6] employs the imperative יְרָא, and the direct object marker makes clear that the commanded fear should have God as its object: אֶת הָאֱלֹהִים יְרָא (lit. "Fear the God!"). Using Ottonian terms, Murphy writes that this fear is a "basic reverence for the numinous, the distance from the Wholly Other …."[422] Krüger's understanding is similar:

> [I]t is clear that this "fear of God" also includes here the numinous element of "fear *before* God." A point of the exhortation to "fear God" at the close of 4:17-5:6 lies in the fact that in the view of the text the (temple) cult is apparently not *eo ipso* already an expression of the "fear of God"; rather, the "fear of God" functions here as a *criterion* for judging cultic practices and a *guideline* of behavior *in* the cultic realm.[423]

Krüger's last point is valuable: there is something about this fear that is not piety, cultic loyalty, or religious obedience (or even the religion itself), but something more foundational by which the religious practices of worshippers can be judged. If this fear-of-God were something more abstract (i.e., more developed), the command to practice it would seem out of place in the pericope's context: what Qoheleth says is not a gentle encouragement given to mature worshippers to fan their worship of God to the next level; rather, Qoheleth scolds those who come to the temple for acting like fools. They speak rashly, break their vows, and make dishonest excuses in the process. If someone acts like a fool before the king in his court, a wise person would probably not whisper to the fool, "worship the king!" but more likely whisper, "you'd better be afraid of the king and quit acting like a fool—or you might lose your head!" Likewise, those acting like fools before God's throne are in danger—and the emotion/feeling of fear is meant to alert one to that danger and also be an unpleasant goad that forces one away from the danger. The fear that Qoheleth commands in Eccl 5:7 (6) (very much from the perspective of his office as "king in Jerusalem") is mainly fear of the titanic and demanding God and fear of his anger and punishment (which corresponds approximately to the "numinous" fear that

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[421] Crenshaw, 1987, 118, writes: "Despite the ambiguous syntax, the final command leaves nothing to the imagination. This imperative, 'Fear God,' concludes Qohelet's remarks about cultic obligations. Fear of God results in few words, faithfulness in paying vows if one ever resorts to them, and generally in conduct that does not invite punishment."

[422] Murphy, 1992, 49. Two fear-of-God uses in Ecclesiastes, suggests Murphy, capture "the quality of the numinous. These are 3:14 and 5:7 [6]. Regarding the latter, he writes: "The command to fear God appears in the 'liturgical' context of 5:6. It is a conclusion from several admonitions that advise caution relative to speech and making vows before God. The temper of the advice is clear from 5:1—God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few. In short, God is dangerous for humans to deal with in a casual way" (Ibid., lxv).

[423] Krüger, 2004, 110. Becker on this verse holds on to the

Murphy and Krüger mention above [but see my strong reservations about this term in the Otto section of chapter one]).[424]

The ontological realities of God and humans as well as the moral authority that God has over human beings that justifies Qoheleth's call to fear-of-God are the same realities that exist today. God's sovereignty was emphasized in chapter three. Here, the reality of God's moral authority is added—and the appropriate reaction by people then as well as now is some healthy level of fear. A Christian today should be aware of the grandeur and majesty of God as well as his eternal wisdom and ultimate authority. The Christian should possess a certain sobriety in his or her worship that respects God by behaving wisely and circumspectly before him and by carrying out all that he or she has vowed to do—for Christians are still part of the sum of humanity that is an "evil generation" (Luke 11:29; see also 1 Kings 8:46; Ps 14:1-3; Eccl 7:20; Rom 3:23; 5:12; 1 John 1:8, 9). And even though Christians are commanded to "be perfect as [their] heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt 5:48), all, nevertheless, fall short of this goal and are susceptible to acting like "fools" before God. When a Christian thinks deeply about God and human depravity, the honor that he or she will feel towards God will be inseparable from fear—as Ellul insightfully points out:

> We can translate this word as "respect," if we keep both ideas together: fear in the sense of respect, and respect in the sense of fear. We do not want to suggest mere "respect" in the sense of the courtesy we owe our superiors …. "Fear" in the biblical sense, then, involves being conscious of something of infinite seriousness: recognizing and approaching the Wholly Other. For "fear-respect" necessarily involves approaching the one who is infinitely distant from us. But an approach presupposes a desire, a will, a hope, and an anticipation."[425]

While Christ has brought the God who is "infinitely distant from us" into the hearts of those who accept him, Christians should not let this truth cause them to let their guard down, to take their faith lightly, and to forget that Jesus Christ is not just the "lamb of God" (John 1:36), but also the "lion of the tribe of Judah" (Rev 5:5) who is the

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[424] Qoheleth treats the subject of vows (once again, a subject for a king) with deadly seriousness. Not only will God be angry (קָצַף, "be wroth"—BDB) at vows that are broken, but he will also punish by destroying the vow-breaker's work (Eccl 5:6b [5b]). There may be also an overtone of filial fear-of-God that Qoheleth might intend here; for even though his words are quite blunt, Qoheleth would have likely understood that some worshippers—even though acting like fools at times at the temple—would have been really trying to serve and worship God and could be motivated by not only the fear of punishment, but also the fear of losing God's favor.

[425] Ellul, 1990, 275. His use of "Wholly Other" is from Otto. As with "numinous," I question the value and accuracy (as a means to describe God) of the term—at least as it is understood and employed by Otto (see Otto section in chapter one). My attempt here to understand the fear-of-God passages of Ecclesiastes demonstrates how affected the scholarly world is by Otto.

"consuming fire" (Heb 12:29) that will one day clean his threshing floor with "unquenchable fire" (Luke 3:17). "Thus our impatience with God," as Eaton says,

> is rebuked by God's greatness compared to man's smallness. Mankind must always be a suppliant, never an equal. To restrain the tongue is the Preacher's way of wisdom. The point was later embodied in the Lord's Prayer, where the twin truths that God is 'Father' but 'in heaven' guard against craven fear on the one hand and flippancy on the other.[426]

Eccl 7:18: Fear God because Men and Women Are Evil

This pericope associated with this verse teaches the virtues of humility and temperance in view of the reality of human depravity. It begins (in 7:15) with Qoheleth once again bringing the reader face to face with his or her inability to influence the world—for God is the one ultimately in control. Even though a person might try his or her best to be righteous, this will not necessarily bring about longer life; in fact, wicked people might very well outlive the righteous. Verse 15 fits with Qoheleth's pessimistic opinion that stands in some tension with orthodox wisdom: the way things go for people "under the sun" is distressingly not in accordance with their deeds; there is the "righteous man perishing in his righteousness" and the "wicked man living long in his wickedness" (NIV). This is what Qoheleth has observed *from time to time*.[427] So Verse 15 once again reminds the reader that his or her ability to control the future is tenuous at best; God alone is sovereign.

To discern what Qoheleth goes on to say in vv. 16-18, we must first understand his view about universal human depravity as stated in v. 20: "There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins" (NIV). The reality of human depravity is delivered in this verse in three ways: first, אדם אין צדיק ("there is not a righteous man") is a unique OT phrase that is picked up by Paul in order to bolster his case for universal depravity (See my FN 385); second, אדם אין … אשר יעשה טוב ("there is not a man who does good") mirrors phrases in Ps 14:1, 3 and Ps 53:1, 3 that make the same point (also employed by Paul in Rom 3:12);[428] third, אדם אין … אשר … ולא יחטא ("there is not a

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[426] Eaton, 1983, 98, 99.

[427] Krüger, 2004, 140, writes, "The observation formulated in v. 15 deals critically with the conviction that a righteous man lives a long time, whereas an evil doer is quickly destroyed. The reference to (more or less numerous?) individual cases … in which this is not true does not so much call into question the connection, assumed in this conviction, between behavior and result as such, as it points out that we have here at best a rule to which there are also exceptions and not an absolute and seamlessly valid conformity to a law."

[428] In Rom 3:10, 12, Paul could be drawing from a variety of OT texts simultaneously. Rom 3:12's οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ ποιῶν χρηστότητα ("there is no one who shows kindness") quotes from Ps 14 (MT: 14:1b, 3b. LXX: 13:1b, 3b) and/or Ps 53 (MT: 53:2b, 4b. LXX: 52:2b, 4b) and/or elements of Eccl 7:20 (אדם אין … אשר יעשה טוב ["there is not a … man … who does what is right"

man … who … and never sins") repeats the same idea—but, this time, in the way Solomon expressed it at the temple dedication (see 1 Kings 8:46). The use of חטא (verb, "to sin"—DBLSD) with the double-negation syntax is unique to these two texts (along with 2 Chron 6:36, the parallel text to 1 Kings 8:46) and presents to the reader in yet another way the universal depravity idea.[429] Qoheleth, by declaring this idea in so strong a fashion, puts the first observation listed in v. 15 in question: if "there is not a righteous man on earth," how could he really say that the man he observed to perish before his time was really righteous? By seeing 7:15 in the light of 7:20, one can see that the whole notion of achieving (or being) righteous is, for Qoheleth, unattainable—and this makes all the consequences of life "under the sun" unpredictable and potentially unpleasant.[430] A deed done even by the most "righteous" person finds its origin in the murky waters of the human soul and can therefore not guarantee a favorable outcome (for "every deed" is subject to God's judgment—see 3:17; 9:11; 12:14). So, Qoheleth goes on to advise moderation (vv. 16, 17) and to profess that the fear-of-God is the best attitude of the heart to bring this about (v. 18).

But what kind of "moderation" is this? Some have understood this call to reflect the influence of Aristotle's "golden mean" which the philosopher offered as a means of achieving the most fulfilling and virtuous life. But Aristotle did not apply moral categories to this mean: what was evil was evil in any case (murder, for example) and should always be avoided. Instead, human phenomena that could have too much or too little (e.g., courage, laughing, anger) were best subject to the mean.[431] But Qoheleth here

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NIV]). On the other hand, Rom 3:10's οὐκ ἔστιν δίκαιος ("there is no one who is righteous") quotes Eccl 7:20a (אדם אין צדיק), although Paul also might be aware of Ps 143:2b: כי לא יצדק לפניך כל חי ("for no one living is righteous before you").

[429] The parenthetic reminder in 1 Kings 8:46 (כי אין אדם אשר לא יחטא) is nearly identical to the components of Eccl 7:20 that express the same idea (כי אדם אין ... אשר ... ולא יחטא). This is additional evidence that the author of Ecclesiastes intended the Solomonic presence to be felt beyond the first two chapters.

[430] The overpowering tendency to sin is also alluded to in 7:21, and universal depravity seems to be the subject in 7:28, 29.

[431] Aristotle, 1985, 45. "But not every action or feeling admits of the mean. For the names of some automatically include baseness, e.g. spite, shamelessness, envy [among feelings], and adultery, theft, murder, among actions. All of these and similar things are called by these names because they themselves, not their excesses or deficiencies, are base.

Hence in doing these things we can never be correct, but must invariably be in error. We cannot do them well or not well—e.g. by committing adultery with the right woman at the right time in the right way; on the contrary, it is true unconditionally that to do any of them is to be in error." Choi, 2002, and Seow, 1997, 254, both argue that Qoheleth's call for moderation does not necessarily reflect Greek influence. They site the Semitic *Proverbs of Ahiqar* (7th or 6th century BC [Choi's and Seow's source is Lindenberger, 1985]) as demonstrating that concepts of moderation and humility were known in Semitic-speaking lands well before the incursion of

appears to suggest a "golden mean" for *moral* issues—and this is a tough pill to swallow for Christian exegetes who try to interpret this passage. So what is going on? In my view, Qoheleth's term צדיק (adj., "just, righteous"—BDB) is indeed morally loaded when he writes, אל תהי צדיק רבה ("do not be too righteous"). צדיק (also צדק) is used several times in Ecclesiastes to signify moral goodness (see 3:16; 5:7 [6]; 7:15; 8:14). Qoheleth—even if he were influenced by Greek thought—is still an Israelite who understands life in terms of God, temple, and the Mosaic Law (the latter never explicitly mentioned, but the reality of which always resonates in the background). The moral import of צדיק is strongly evident in v. 15 (especially as it is held in opposition to another morally loaded term: רשע [adj., "wicked"—BDB]) as well as in v. 20 where the "righteous" man is said not to exist. So צדיק is a morally significant term—but can there be degrees of צדיק? 7:20 would seem to say no: a person is either righteous or a person is not. 7:15 only depicts two categories of people: the righteous and the wicked—with no degrees of either. Perhaps v. 16 is meant to be taken the same—but with this ironic twist: the reader is warned אל תהי צדיק הרבה ("be not righteous *overmuch*").[432] This suggests at first glance that the quality/quantity of צדיק can increase; but, actually, Qoheleth is commanding against something that he actually knows can never be attained. Qoheleth here writes *as if* the adjective of צדיק can signify a little or a lot of righteousness; but this is not what he really believes can be the case. Rather, this is what he believes his audience might assume to be the case. In other words, he observes that many people are prone to think that they can be *more* righteous (than someone else) and even *be* righteous (see Prov 20:9). But verse 16a warns these readers to forsake this journey before it begins. They might as well run after a desert mirage than pursue righteousness *with the intention of having more of it or of actually achieving it*.[433] So Qoheleth is not suggesting an Aristotelian "golden mean" for the simple reason that "righteousness" cannot be manifested in degrees.

According to Qoheleth (in v. 18a), the best way to proceed along life's path is to keep the admonishments of vv. 16 and 17 firmly in mind: one should not be too wise or righteous in one's own eyes, and one should not let one's guard down and thereby fall into excessive foolishness and sin. As Seow well points out, "humility and restraint" are called for.[434] "The one who fears God will come out with both of them" (v. 18b NASB).

Greek influence in the fourth century BC (Choi also mentions Egyptian, Buddhist, and Confucian sources that might have brought the "golden mean" idea into Israel before the Greeks [pp. 372, 373]).

[432] Translation from Owens, 2001, Eccl 7:16.

[433] The undertaking to achieve perfection is, in the words of Fox, 2004, 49, "presumptuous." Murphy, 1992, 71, calls it "foredoomed."

[434] Seow, 1997, 254. Regarding the fear-of-God instance here, Seow writes, "The fearer of God is one who knows the place of humanity, both human potential and human limitations. For Qohelet in this passage, the fear of God is the recognition of human limitations and the acceptance

Qoheleth here argues for humility and an honest assessment of the facts: "God is in heaven and [humans] are on earth" (Eccl 5:2 [1]). God is sovereign and human beings are temporal and weak—and hopelessly bound to sin. The knowledge of these realities provokes fear in human beings; but the fear itself is "knowledge," in that it informs the experient that there are threats in the world and that all is not well. Krüger writes:

> To what extent the fear of God helps one do justice to both recommendations … is not clear at first glance. Verse 20 (with a look back to chap. 3) suggests that for human beings the fear of God contains a realistic estimation of one's possibilities (cf. v. 17) and limits (c.f. v. 16) in behaving "wisely" and "justly." The "fear of God" is then, in any case, to be distinguished from "righteousness" and "wisdom" and ranked above them.[435]

If fear-of-God is to be "ranked above" righteousness and wisdom by Qoheleth (I think Krüger is right), then, it is most likely not obedience to the cultic laws (the *sittliche* fear-of-God idea) that Becker suggests for this and other wisdom fear-of-God texts.[436] There is something much more foundational in view here—and it is the same or closely related to the "beginning of knowledge" and the "beginning of wisdom" that the Proverbs mention, respectively, in 1:7 and 9:10.[437] I agree that this fear-of-God is knowledge, but "knowledge" that finds its source in the fear emotion/feeling. Fear-of-God here should

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of divine will" (255). The comments of Andrews, 2001, 300, are also apropos: "The human dimension of realism is authenticity. To be 'real' is to acknowledge strengths and weaknesses, embrace the elemental 'earthiness' (the *humus* in humility) in our finitude, and to live with energy and esteem within the limitations of who we are. Authenticity assumes imperfection, sinfulness, failure—for 'surely there is no one on earth so righteous as to do good without ever sinning' (7:20). According to Ecclesiastes perfectionism is the opposite of wisdom." Wardlaw, 1982, 228, however, thinks that Qoheleth's call to moderation will be taken by some as a license to steal: "But there are none to whom this favorite caution is of more essential service, than those professors of religion, of whom, alas! The number is not small, who, disliking 'the offence of the cross,' are desirous to keep on good terms with both Christ and the world; and who cover from others, and try to cover from themselves, the real principle of their conduct, by prudential maxims of imposing plausibility, and some of them in the terms of Scripture. The wisdom of the serpent, they say, is recommended to us, as well as the harmlessness of the dove."

[435] Krüger, 2004, 141.

[436] Becker, 1965, 253. Earlier, I have argued that the fear-of-God semantic distinctions that Becker makes based upon differences in linguistic forms are inappropriate. In the case of Eccl 7:18, the use of a singular "verbal-adjective" is evidence, in Becker's opinion, that a *sittliche* meaning is in view (that is, this virtue fear-of-God instance denotes a person who lives in a morally excellent fashion). But I would say that the use of the singular participle is only a function of grammar appropriate to what Qoheleth wants to say: when Qoheleth says something *about* an individual person who fears God, then the singular participle is quite naturally employed ("for *the one who fears* God comes forth with both of them"). As far as the core meaning of ירא is concerned, a shift from the pure verbal to a verbal-adjectival form is not—unless context dictates otherwise—significant (see "Becker's Psalms Literary Form" section above).

[437] See pp. 111-112 for some thoughts about how fear-of-God is a "beginning" of knowledge and wisdom.

first be described in terms of the psychological and physiological nature of that fear which informs the experient that dangers await if he or she proceeds down the path of over-righteousness (i.e., of "righteous" pride and arrogance) or the path of sinning intentionally. This emotion/feeling which dissuades one from religious pride is, once again, mainly servile fear (that is, fear of God's punishment)—although Qoheleth might intend some element of filial fear (the fear of losing God's favor and fellowship) to also be understood.[438]

This servile fear ought to be recognized by the church as being exceptionally valuable in the mission of goading people away from the sin that Jesus condemned so harshly and so often: the sin of religious pride (mainly found in the scribes and Pharisees of his day—see Matt 23:1-36). The Pharisee who followed the law to a tee but looked down his nose at the repentant tax collector praying nearby went home from the temple unjustified according to Jesus (Luke 18:9-14). Paul warned against Christian pride in this way: "For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned" (Rom 12:3).The fear-of-God that Qoheleth mentions here has much to do not only with the generation of knowledge, but also with the wonderful ability to instill humility in men and women. And this results in the willingness, in humility, to "regard others as better than [our]selves" (Phil 2:3).[439] Fear of God, writes Calvin, is

> that trepidation which takes possession of our minds whenever we consider both what we have deserved, and the fearful severity of the divine anger against sinners. Accordingly, the exceeding disquietude which we must necessarily feel, both trains us to humility and makes us more cautious for the future[440]

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[438] Crenshaw, 1987, 156, calls this use of fear-of-God as "awe in the presence of dreadful power, the numinous."

[439] Humility, writes Ellul, 1990, 115 (perhaps a bit hyperbolically), involves de-centralizing ourselves: "Faith represents another area in which self-centeredness has made victims of us all. Our private understanding of Scripture is vanity. If I am to comprehend revelation, I must listen to others. I must also struggle against the nagging temptation to substitute my interest or my person for the center of revelation: the person of Jesus Christ! If I fail to realize that I am vanity, the ideas that preoccupy me (such as my personal salvation) or interest me (revolution, for instance) become the basis of my interpretation of Scripture. Thus the Bible becomes a sort of mine in which I hunt for my answers and arguments! Remember when you do this that you and your ideas are only vanity. Listen to something besides yourself."

[440] Calvin, 1972, book 3, chap. 3, sec. 15. On the other hand, Thomas understands that humility is born out of filial fear: "Poverty of spirit properly corresponds to fear. Because, since it belongs to filial fear to show reverence and submission to God, whatever results from this submission belongs to the gift of fear. Now from the very fact that a man submits to God, it follows that he ceases to seek greatness either in himself or in another but seeks it only in God." (Aquinas, 1981, "Question 19: of the Gift of Fear," 12th art.)

In Eccl 7:18, Qoheleth *allows* for sin in the lives of the faithful, but he certainly does not *command* it. He simply admits that there a point of diminishing returns in the religious life: one should try to follow God's laws; but if one tries too hard, pride is inevitably manifested—and the honest worshipper ends up worse off than before.[441] Fear-of-God is a corrective to this problem for it helps one see things as they really are. This was true back in Qoheleth's day, and is also true today. Fear-of-God instills humility in the heart of a Christian and, with that, helps him or her avoid the sin of religious pride.[442]

Eccl 8:12, 13: Fear God because It Brings Benefits

Up till now, fear-of-God in Ecclesiastes has been justified by the differences between God and human beings as well as the moral accountability that the latter has before the former. Now Qoheleth brings up another reason to fear God—but one that is less excellent, yet a real reason just the same: it is good to fear God because life will go better for the God-fearer than for the person who does not fear God. This text, however, comes in the midst of a pericope that bitterly laments the prevalent atmosphere of injustice that God allows to exist upon earth (see 8:9-12a, 14). These unjust phenomena are deemed by Qoheleth to be הבל. So this orthodox confession (of what he "knows") seems out of place—especially in view of the overall trend of the book to question the standard wisdom principle of retribution (i.e., that the bad get what they deserve, and vise-versa). Some think that 8:12b, 13 is a gloss.[443] Many more, in order to relieve the tension, however, understand that Qoheleth here quotes standard wisdom that he goes on to refute in v. 14. The meaning of the text in this case goes something like this (quoting Lohfink's translation of vv. 12b, 13 [and the first word of v. 14]): "Of course I recall the saying: Those who fear God will prosper, because they fear before him; The lawless will not prosper, and their life, like a shadow, does not last, because they do not fear before God. However ...."[444] Those exegetes who offer this interpretation do not see how

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[441] Krüger, 2004, 141, 142, puts it this way: "Read with the hindsight of v. 20, the advice of vv. 16-18 also now appears in a new light: for if a person in his conduct of life absolutely *cannot* avoid making mistakes and 'sinning,' he can only strive to be unjust as seldom as possible (v. 17). Being 'too righteous' (v. 16) would then consist in closing one's eyes to one's own fallibility and in striving for a completely 'sinless' way of life—or at least evoking the external appearance of a faultless and error-free conduct of life. Such excessive righteousness can then easily lead to mercilessness toward other people."

[442] At the same time, the fear of winding up with some religious pride while trying not to sin should not preclude one from resisting sin with all one's might. The general biblical teaching is that sin is something that people should strive to "master" (Gen 4:7)—even to the point of "shedding blood" (Heb 12:4). One should fight the "good fight of faith" (1 Tim 6:12) and not let the inevitability of sin cause one to take an attitude of *resignation* to it.

[443] E.g., Crenshaw, 1987, 155.

[444] Lohfink, 2003, 107.

Qoheleth could suddenly change his tack and sail along with prevailing Israelite wisdom—especially in the context of the הבל that Qoheleth has already deemed everything to be (including the phenomenon of injustice that he observes all around [vv. 10, 14]). Loader understands Qoheleth's surprisingly orthodox statement here as an answer that Qoheleth foresaw would be made (by those holding to more orthodox wisdom) in response to his claims of injustice in vv. 9-12a; but he sets up this "answer" in vv. 12 b, 13 in order to "torpedo" it in v. 14.[445] If this is the case, then Qoheleth is teaching in vv. 12b, 13 that advantages to fearing God are really all an illusion and, therefore, הבל.

I can understand the pressure to make Qoheleth more consistently negative—but I do not think it is necessary in this case. There are several reasons why. First of all, that this really is Qoheleth's view is supported by the consistent use of "I know" throughout the book. As Fox points out, *what Qoheleth "knows," he affirms*.[446] In other words, he does not offer something that he knows to be the case in order to call the truthfulness of it into question. Secondly, there are many twists and turns in Qoheleth's thinking throughout the book—not just here in the present text. These "twists and turns" have prompted many commentators to try to make Qoheleth more consistent by either making him more orthodox or by making him less orthodox than he really is. This has been noticed by Fox:

> Whereas earlier commentators found Koheleth's skeptical assertions difficult to accept at face value (and sometimes attributed them to a student or a fool), modern interpreters find it hard to credit him with his expressions of faith. Yet Koheleth's problem is precisely that he holds both to what he observes and to what he believes (in his words, what he says he "knows").[447]

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[445] Loader, 1986, 101. Also amazed at Qoheleth's about face is Ellul, 1990, 181: "This is absolutely staggering! This man who questions everything, this antiestablishment person who goes to the bottom of things, now comes up with a platitude that flies in the face of reality." But Ellul does not go on—despite his surprise at Qoheleth's sudden orthodoxy—to suggest that this is either a gloss or an idea that Qoheleth wants to refute. Instead, Ellul says that this is a remarkable declaration of faith. Even though so much of life "under the sun" is seen as הבל in Qoheleth's eyes, he will nevertheless trust God to work things out for the "good" for those who fear God. According to Ellul, Eccl 8:12b, 13 "involves a kind of declaration or confession of faith: 'But *myself*, I know …,' begins Qoheleth. Again he calls himself into question, and in an act typical of faith, he proclaims the opposite of what the evidence seems to show. Our experience indicates that the unjust person reigns and lives on, and that the good person fails to be recognized. Faith rears up in the face of this evidence and declares: 'True, that is how things are, but *I know* …,' making its appeal to another dimension—something qualitative and not observable. As I have often emphasized, faith like this, that stands in the face of all the evidence to the contrary, is the very essence of hope."

[446] Fox, 2004, 59. See Eccl 2:14; 3:12, 14; 7:25; 8:12.

[447] Fox, 1977, 59.

In fact, there are many "expressions of faith" in Ecclesiastes—so there is no reason to strain the text in order to make Qoheleth appear gloomier than he really is: it should be recalled that Ecclesiastes is Holy Scripture. This means that there is something in the book which upholds the foundational truths that God is, human beings are his creation, and that God has their best interests in mind. The alternating dark shadows and sudden flashes of light can be partially explained by the persona of Solomon which is clearly present at the book's beginning and (although perhaps in somewhat attenuated form) is discernable here and there throughout the rest of the book. This gives readers a valuable hermeneutical tool: Solomon was an extremely gifted and deep thinker (1 Kings 4:29-34) who provoked the truth into being revealed through extremely unusual means (1 Kings 3:16-28). The biblical history also shows that as time went along, he struggled with his faith and struggled with the world (1 Kings 11). With Solomon understood a being the mask of Qoheleth (or Qoheleth himself), then the zigzag course which he sails comes not as a surprise.[448] But the wonderful thing about Qoheleth is that he does ever move—if however erratically—toward the safe port of God. As much as he complains about the distressing state of things in the world, his faith in God and his trust that every deed will eventually be properly judged remains intact.[449] In fact, Qoheleth is more orthodox and positive than many give him credit for; there are many expressions in Ecclesiastes that reflect the generous providence of God.[450] Finally, one other item should be mentioned: it

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[448] The first extant Jewish comments on Ecclesiastes (Mishna, Talmud, Targum, etc.) demonstrate that Solomonic authorship was assumed. See Christianson, 2007, 89, 92.

[449] I very much appreciate Ellul's identification of Qoheleth's faith that he sees in this and other passages. But Ellul's existentialist perspective perhaps centers reality a bit too much in Qoheleth's awareness and minimizes the ideal that God intends for the reader to understand through Qoheleth's words. "We must interpret [Eccl 8:12b, 13]," Ellul, 1990, 182, 183, writes, "as a confession of faith; otherwise we will make the mistake of identifying Qohelet's words with traditional doctrine. Nothing in the text indicates that God will intervene to reestablish justice in this life, on this earth …."

In any case, Qohelet deals in this passage with the possibility of living. He affirms that his faith in God's justice, presence, and care, and in his relationship with him, enables him to go on living in spite of everything, in a universe of wickedness and cruelty. But he always reminds us of the fragility of this possibility. Yes, life remains possible, but the whole pyramid rests on this tiny point: 'I know ….'"

[450] For example, see 2:10b (heart is delighted as a reward for work), 2:13 (wisdom better than folly), 2:14 (wise see better than fools), 2:24-26 (eating and drinking and satisfaction are gifts of God), 2:25 (God-pleasing man has happiness and sinners store up wealth for others), 3:12, 13 (eating and drinking gifts of God), 3:17 (God brings everyone to justice), 3:22 (enjoyment of work is man's "lot"), 5:18 (eating and satisfaction man's "lot"), 5:19 (enjoyment and wealth gifts of God), 5:20 (God gives "gladness of heart"), 7:11, 12 (wisdom is good and adds life), 7:19 (wisdom is good), 7:26b (man who pleases God will escape the evil woman), 7:29 (God made man upright), 8:1b (wisdom brightens the face), 8:8b (wicked get trapped by evil), 8:12v, 13 (things go better for God fearers), 8:15 (God gives days to eat and be joyful), 9:4 (the living have

is not necessarily the case that v. 12a and v. 14 teach a universal refutation of the retribution principle. Actually, they both appear to be speaking about exceptions to the rule. If this is the case, then what Qoheleth says in vv. 12b, 13 is not so out of place.[451]

But one wonders if the text can really support the interpretation that Qoheleth is here saying something that he really does not believe. A closer look at Eccl 8:12, 13 might be worthwhile at this point:

| אֲשֶׁר חֹטֶא עֹשֶׂה רָע מְאַת וּמַאֲרִיךְ לּוֹ כִּי גַּם־יוֹדֵעַ אָנִי אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה־טּוֹב לְיִרְאֵי הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר יִירְאוּ מִלְּפָנָיו: | For: A sinner can do evil a hundred times and afterward live long. Of course I recall the saying: Those who fear God will prosper, because they fear before him (Lohfink translation).[452] |

Lohfink's suggested translation is a paraphrase of what he believes was in the mind of the author. Nevertheless it is appropriate to ask if the text itself can justify it. The likelihood that כי in the first line above can signal such an abstract notion as "of course I recall" is unlikely. The particle כי simply expresses basic relationships between clauses (as though, as, because that, but, certainly, except, for, surely, since, that, then, when, etc.—TWOT). The various current Bible versions mostly—based upon Qoheleth's shift in perspective between 12a and 12b—translate with some sort of adversative conjunction (e.g., NASB "still," NJB "but," NKJV "yet," NRSV "yet"). Some give the adversative force to אשר at the beginning of the verse (e.g. NIV: "*although* a wicked man … I know that it will go better with God fearing men …."). The result is a seeming contradiction between 12a and 12b; but as long as 12a is understood as an (albeit regular) *exception* to the retribution principle, 12b can then be understood as what *typically* is the case—and no contradiction is created.

The other fear-of-God texts in Ecclesiastes also lead the exegete to understand that the fear-of-God mentions in 8:12b, 13 refer to something that is—in the eyes of Qoheleth—desired by God and that will bring about something "good" in the long run: fear-of-God is the *purpose* of God's revealing of himself and his ways to human beings

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hope), 9:7-9 (God gives days for a man to enjoy eating and drinking and his wife), 9:17, 18 (wisdom and wise words better than fools and war weapons), 10:10 (skill brings success), 11:9 (God will judge), 12:7b (spirit returns to God), 12:10 (Qoheleth's words "upright" and "true"), 12:14 (God will judge all people for all deeds).

[451] Krüger, 2004, 159, sees this. He writes, "Verse 12a also does not necessarily have to be understood as a basic disagreement with the postulate of a "deed-result connection" in view of the reality of experience. It can also be interpreted in the sense that the rule of the "deed-result connection" allows *exceptions*: not *every*, but *many a* 'sinner does evil a hundred times and still lives a long time.'" Verse 14, says Krüger, "relates again to vv. 10-12a and states that a 'deed-result connection' is valid in experiential reality—if at all—only as a rule with exceptions" (161).

[452] Lohfink, 2003, 105, 107.

(3:14); fear-of-God protects one from God's anger and also helps one avoid being a fool (5:7 [6]); fear-of-God gives one the best chance to avoid destruction and early death due to religious arrogance (7:18); and, if the exegete is willing to consider the epilogue, fear-of-God pleases God because this is naturally what all human beings should do and because it is the state of heart and mind that best befits the judgment (12:13).[453] In view of this fear-of-God contextual evidence, the rather orthodox view expressed by Qoheleth in 8:12b, 13—that things will go "good" for God fearers—should not come as a surprise.

Qoheleth more than likely really believed that there are advantages for those who fear God: things will go טוב ("good") for God fearers and they could very well end up with longer lives. But what do the three uses of ירא in vv. 12, 13 exactly mean? All three are virtue cases—although מלפני ("from before") makes two of them sound very much like the several event cases which employ this preposition.[454] The first fear-of-God mention is identical in form to the many fear-of-God instances in the Psalms that employ the plural participle of ירא in construct with YHWH (Qoheleth throughout his work uses "Elohim"). Becker claims that this form denotes loyalty to the Jerusalem cult (see "Becker's Psalms Literary Form" section in my chapter one). That might be the case here; the translation "it will go better with cult devotees that fear God" is certainly a possibility; if so, then this could be a critique against "God-fearers": they are only righteous in the eyes of God if they really do fear before God. There is the chance also that the יראי האלהים ("fearers of God") in v. 12b are the counter-pole to the "wicked" in v. 12a and v. 13. If this is the case, then the "fearers of God" are "righteous ones." The redundancy of ירא in 12b does seem odd, and would perhaps indicate that "fearers of God" does have a more abstract meaning. Another possibility to consider is this: in v. 12a, the חֹטֵא ("sinner"—m/s Qal participle) and what he does—רָע ("evil")—are semantically very close; so perhaps יִרְאֵי הָאֱלֹהִים ("fearers of God"—m/p Qal Participle) and what they do—יִירְאוּ מִלְּפָנָיו ("they fear before him")—are also semantically very close. If so, the meaning would mainly be driven by the presence of מלפני: that is, "fearers of God" *are* those who "fear before God."

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[453] This last verse Delitzsch, 1968, 438, calls the "kernel and the star of the whole book, the highest moral demand which mitigates its pessimism and hallows its eudaemonism."

[454] See 1 Sam 18:12; Esther 7:6; Ps 97:5; 114:7; Jonah 1:10. The two uses of מלפני in Eccl 8:12, 13 could be taken to indicate that fearing "from before" the presence of God—i.e., being driven away from God by fear—is the virtue that Qoheleth intends to signify (like Jonah fled "from before" the LORD—Jonah 1:3). But it is quite unlikely that this is the case. Comparisons with 1 Sam 18:12 and Esther 7:6 show that while there might be an *impulse* to flee, movement away from the feared object may or may not occur. One could make the case, however, that any movement towards the ground in fear—even with a righteous person (see, e.g., Dan 8:17)—is a movement (at least initially) away from God (see also my comments FN 410).

Previously, I have argued that the linguistic/grammatic peculiarity of the plural participle of ירא in construct with YHWH or Elohim is no basis for a semantic shift in ירא away from the core fear emotion/feeling meaning—and I will hold to that opinion here. Only context should lead one to justify a more "developed" and abstract meaning. The only context presented here (other than the possibilities pondered just above), however, keeps the meaning quite close to the fear emotion/feeling; the subject matter involves life and death, wickedness and fear "before" God—and God's judgment always reverberates menacingly in the background. Qoheleth is deadly serious. Yes, sinners may "do evil a hundred times"; but it is also true, according to Qoheleth, that "God will bring [all deeds] into judgment" (11:9b). Whatever יראי האלהים might mean, one thing is quite sure: fearing מלפני ("before") God is the central virtue in this text that brings "good" as well as longer life (the latter implied: if the days of the one who does not fear before God will "not extend," then it follows that the days of the one who does fear before God will extend). The use of מלפני (as discussed with 3:14) moves the object of fear much closer so that the fearfulness of the object is accentuated and the resultant fear made more acute.[455]

It is interesting that Qoheleth never relativizes the value of fear-of-God. While the "righteous" might or might not have the life that common wisdom would say that they should have (and even the notion of being righteous at all is put into question by Qoheleth—see section above on Eccl 7:18), the virtue of fear-of-God, on the other hand, is never presented in any kind of bad light. There is no question about its attainability or its value. This holds true in all the fear-of-God texts in Ecclesiastes (and in all of Scripture for that matter). In Eccl 8:12, 13, to "fear before God" is a virtue that causes life to go well when God-fearers have it and to cause life to not go well when wicked people do not have it. Qoheleth speaks here in the most general terms. "God-fearers" might refer to Israelite cult worshippers (I think, at most, only in an implied way), but the value of the virtue of fearing "before God" is assumed in this text; Qoheleth speaks here in terms that are very much in keeping with the recurring biblical truth that a lack of fear-of-God is *never* good for any people at any time.

Eccl 12:13: Fear God because Death and Judgement Are Inevitable

So far, Qoheleth has said that fear-of-God is appropriate in view of several realities: God's sovereignty and human contingency (3:14), the propensity of worshippers to not conduct themselves with proper decorum before God and to not keep their vows (5:7 [6]), the universality of human sin (7:18), and the fact that life will not go well—and, indeed,

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[455] Because of this, Becker, 1965, 254, understands in Eccl 8:12, 13 some element of the "numinous" See my FNs 410 and 499.

will be shorter—for those who do not fear God. These texts relate loosely to several areas of Christian doctrine: 3:14—theology and anthropology; 5:7 [6]—theology, anthropology, and ecclesiology; 7:18—hamartiology; and 8:12, 13—soteriology. Now we come to the last fear-of-God text in the book: Eccl 12:13. Here at book's end, the subject matter will presage the Christian doctrine of soteriology and (appropriately) eschatology. Qoheleth will now once again uphold the value of fear-of-God (he will *command* it) in view of the inevitable death and judgment that will fall upon all people.[456] I should say before going any further that what Qoheleth writes in this last chapter—as well as in 8:12, 13—only *potentially* relate to the Christian doctrines of soteriology and eschatology. The only soteriological information that one might glean from 8:12, 13 is the possible Holy Spirit-led implication that days that "extend" is a euphemism for eternal life, and the only soteriological and eschatological information that one might glean from chapter twelve is the possible Holy Spirit-led implication that "judgment" is an event that occurs after life "under the sun" is complete, and fear-of-God has something to do with having the best chance for a good outcome in that judgment. But having said that, I do believe that there are some good reasons to understand that Qoheleth at least (intentionally, or through the leading of the Holy Spirit) creates an awareness of the possibility of eschatological judgment.

The exegete must first make sure to consider 12:13 in view of the graphic portrayal of slow death in 12:1-7. Qoheleth wants the reader to look at death פנים אל פנים.

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[456] Throughout this section I assume that Qoheleth wrote the epilogue. Many commentators believe that the parts of Ecclesiastes that speak about Qoheleth in the third person (1:1, 2; 7:27; 12:8-14) were written by someone other than Qoheleth. This may be the case—although it does not have to be. He could have been his own "host" in order to comment upon his own work; but he did not want his audience to know that he could stand outside himself, as it were, and analyze all that he observed and believed to be the case. This is admittedly speculative, but not beyond the pale of possibility (Krüger, 2004, 208-215, seriously considers the possibility of the "editor" and Qoheleth being the same person—but for quite different reasons than my own). As I have said before, the whole book appears to be a big riddle—and it seems that the *source* of the contents is a part of that riddle: the beginning of the book alludes to Solomon; but why is he called "Qoheleth?" Are they really the same? If not, then who is he (or she! [see 7:27a])? Who narrates the book? And are Qoheleth's thoughts the thoughts of Solomon, Qoheleth, the narrator, the "shepherd," or someone else? I tend to see Qoheleth's hand in the "hosted" sections (and he continues the Solomon persona here too): he "winks" (7:27a—use of the feminine verb) at his characterization of women in 7:28; he would be the most qualified to know that his words had been inspired by the "one shepherd" (v. 11); and—in very Solomonic fashion—he admonishes his "son" to refrain from adding to his words (v. 12—also see Prov 1-9). Also, Qoheleth was quite likely in the best position to judge the purpose of his words ("fear God and keep his commandments"—v. 13), and the means by which this purpose would be accomplished (through being a "goad"—v. 11). For these reasons, in this section that concerns the epilogue of Ecclesiastes, I will assume that Qoheleth is the author—but this, of course, does not have to be the case.

Although he delivers this by using a series of metaphors (operating euphemistically), the details of death and dying are all still there such that the attentive reader will find himself or herself distressed and maybe even frightened:[457] vision degrades and suffering comes more frequently (v. 2); one cannot straighten one's back, stop trembling, or see right, and the teeth have fallen out (v. 3); hearing goes away yet one is awakened by any sound (v. 4); one grows increasingly fearful of the things in the world that he or she cannot control, and sexual desire and function dries up and disappears (v. 5); in the end, life is tragically and irrevocably smashed—like a clay "pitcher is shattered at the spring, or the wheel broken at the well, and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it" (vv. 6b, 7 NIV). Why is Qoheleth so desirous that the reader—here and throughout his work—be so often and so harshly hammered with the reality of death?[458] If his main message is to enjoy life, then it would seem that just the mention of the fact of death would be sufficient to convince readers that they had best take advantage of their days now to eat, drink, and be merry. I believe that Qoheleth's concentration on death has the much more important purpose of manifesting the question in the reader, "what happens after death?" And this question is inexorably linked with the subject of judgment. To fully appreciate this, however, one should first see how incongruous Qoheleth's death obsession would be if the inculcation of the spirit of *carpe diem* in his readers were his main goal.

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[457] Because Qoheleth uses euphemisms, the interpretation of them, of course, is not always clear. Here I follow how many commentators view them, but there can be other interpretations. That the pericope is in general an allegory of human decay and death has always been widely accepted. Fox, 2004, 76, 77, sees apocalyptic overtones of "cosmic disaster" in the poem and cites remarkably similar subject matter in Isa 3:18-4:1; 13:9b-10; Ezek 30:3; Hosea 1:4-5; 5:9; Joel 2:2a, 6, 10b; Amos 5:18, 20; 8:3, 9; Zeph 1:15. His explanation of the poem is worth quoting at length: "In Koheleth's telling, the two events—the end of a world and the end of a person—resonate in each other. The poem is intended to be mysterious and ambiguous, and the process of interpreting it may be as important as the particular solution one arrives at. Koheleth sets us in a dark and broken landscape through which we must find our way with few guideposts. In a fundamental sense, however, the obscurity of the details does not prevent us from understanding the poem; in fact, it is hard to fail. The gist of the poem is clear: Enjoy life before you grow old and die.

Clear too is the poetic power of the passage. The scene is weird and unsettling, evocative of diminution, quaking, darkening, silence, and fear. The poem depicts the inevitable aging and death of the youth who is addressed in 11:9 and who merges with the 'you' of the reader in 12:1-7. We can never fully penetrate the fog of the scene, but when we peer through the murk of the images, metaphors, and symbols, we realize with a shudder that we are descrying our own obliteration" (77).

[458] Death is one way or another in view in Eccl 1:4, 11; 2:16, 18, 21; 3:2, 19-22; 4:2, 3; 5:14-16, 18; 6:3-6, 12; 7:1-4, 15-17, 26; 8:8, 10, 12, 13; 9:2-10; 11:8; 12:1-7.

Carpe diem (Eccl 2:24; 3:12, 13; 22; 5:18; 8:15; 9:7-9; 11:8-10) and final judgment (Eccl 3:17; 8:6; 11:9; 12:14) are both significant subjects in Ecclesiastes. Qoheleth does indeed mention the value of eating and drinking, work and marriage, but these all come under the rubric of הבל that he deemed everything already to be.[459] Besides, Qoheleth—as the king—had experienced every possible pleasure that a man could have on earth; but he found it all to be הבל and a "chasing after the wind" (2:11). And despite his (I believe, concessionary) calls to enjoy life, they are all relativized by the *Klage* nature of the whole book in which he in essence cries out, "there must be something more!" With such an overpowering sense of inadequacy of life-as-it-is, how can he *seriously* promote in life "under the sun" the "virtue" of *carpe diem*? Does the idea of final judgment (and the fear-of-God that would be manifested in consideration of it) fit better with Qoheleth's big picture? I think it does, and there are good reasons why: first of all, the *Klage* nature of so much of what he says pleads for something more than life as it is "under the sun." Inherent in this constant *Klage* is the acute desire for justice—justice for all that is full and complete justice. Final justice also fits better with the sovereignty of Qoheleth's God; the themes that are of interest to King Qoheleth are macro-themes that are of interest to God. In other words, it is characteristic of both God and (good) kings to care much more about proper justice than how well their subjects "seize the day." *Carpe diem* is trivial compared to the obligations that men and women have due to their absolutely dependent and morally accountable status vis-à-vis the eternal and omnipotent God. Because of the macro-scale issues that are involved with Qoheleth's complaints—especially the issues of justice and death—I am convinced that a concern about and a desire for final justice and life-after-death are tacitly indicated. Qoheleth does not *teach* that there is life after death or that there is a judgment after death; but he does imply that these phenomena could—and ought to—be.[460] And just the possibility of them relativizes down to הבל the value of

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[459] See Eccl 1:2, 14, 17; 2:1, 11, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 26; 3:19; 4:4, 7, 8, 16; 5:7, 10; 6:2, 9, 11, 12; 7:6, 15; 8:10, 14; 9:9; 11:8, 10; 12:8.

[460] I realize that my view here runs against the grain of many modern interpretations of what Qoheleth means by "judgment." Earlier opinions tended to interpret Ecclesiastes through the lens of orthodox faith and understand that when Qoheleth spoke of "judgment," he must have been referring to an event that necessarily had to come after the injustice of the present world. Delitzsch, 1968, 400, 401, for example, writes regarding Eccl 11:9: "in view of the facts of experience, that God's righteous requital is in this life too frequently escaped, viii. 14, the author, here and at iii. 17, xii. 14, postulates a final judgment, which removes the contradiction of this present time, and which must thus be in the future; he has no clear idea of the time and manner of this final judgment, but his faith in God places the certainty of it beyond all doubt." Hengstenberg, 2001, 268, understands that "judgment" in Eccl 12:14—and as generally depicted in the book—is principally a future one. "Still," he writes, "there is no reason for confining our thoughts entirely to the future judgment: we should rather think of judgment in its widest compass, as it is begun in time and perfected in eternity.… Even Luther saw how comprehensive

carpe diem.[461] This is where the spectre of death is used effectively by Qoheleth: death forces the reader to get his or her priorities straight. *Carpe diem* may bring some pleasure in life (that is, if God grants it), but it will not prepare one for death or for any possible judgment after death.[462] On the other hand, if one puts a much higher emphasis on preparing for death and for any possible judgment after death, then one will fear God and have done all one can do to bring about the best outcome should there really be a final judgment. If a man or a woman wants to discover the answer of what is more important in Ecclesiastes—*carpe diem* or judgment—he or she must simply ask "which has the greatest potential to affect my life for for the worse?" (i.e., which is the bigger threat?). This is somewhat like Pascal's wager: on what big-picture life option should one bet one's life? The wise answer is that one should put one's money (bet his or her life) on the option that gives the greatest potential good return. While some have argued that Qoheleth makes *carpe diem* out to be a virtue by which God will judge men and women, I do not see how this could really be the understanding of Qoheleth.[463] He allows *carpe*

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was the application of the expression: he remarks, 'the author does not speak here only of the judgment at the last day, but, according to Scripture usage, of judgment in general. There is a judgment and an hour for everything with God, and no one can escape. Wherefore Arius and all heretics are already judged. But at the last day it will be made still clearer in the presence of all creatures, angels and men, that even now in the day of visitation, God the Lord has laid bare their sin and disgrace, that in a word, there is no more concealment.'"

[461] While Loader, 1986, 130, would not agree that Qoheleth relativizes *carpe diem* down to triviality, he does understand in Qoheleth's *order*—of encouraging *carpe diem* for the last time (11:9) followed by the allegory of dying and death (12:1-7)—that Qoheleth does in the end hold the subject of death to be more important. Up till this passage, Qoheleth's negative sentiments were followed by calls to enjoy life (Loader lists 3:12, 13, 22; 8:15; 9:7-10), but in 11:9-12:7, this is different. "That which logically should have come first," writes Loader, "now comes last. This is very striking and indicates that the poem was specially composed to serve as the book's finale. By ending with the dark notes of death the Preacher shows that for him the negative tone of the book is intentionally dominant. For that reason the book's first word and its last are identical, and the closing formula (v. 8) is the same as the opening formula (1:2): Vanity!"

[462] The "young man" is encouraged by Qoheleth (11:9) to "follow the ways of [his] heart"; but this is mocked a moment later (and properly identified as trivial) when Qoheleth warns, "but know that for all these things God will bring you to judgment."

[463] Ogden, 2007, 210, 211, understands that the criteria of the "judgment" will be how well a person followed Qoheleth's advice to live life to the fullest. The judgment in view in Eccl 11:9 is, according to Krüger, 2004, 197, humanity's condemnation to "transitoriness." Failing to "seize the day" would also be part of this judgment because a man's or a woman's meaningless life would be even more degraded. It seems to me that the text fairly clearly means that the "young man" is to be judged for any sins that arise as a by-product of following his "heart" and "eyes." "All these" of ודע כי על כל אלה simply refers to the actions of the "young man"—in thought and deed—that flow out of the desires of his "heart" and "eyes." Qoheleth then says: יביאך האלהים במשפט (lit. "God will bring you to justice"). The text of 12:14 is quite similar (lit. "God will bring every deed to justice"). Many commentators understand these warnings of judgment as too orthodox for Qoheleth—and so insist that they were later "pious" additions. When these verses

diem repeatedly *as a concession*, but his *Klage* indicates concerns that are infinitely greater and of infinitely greater consequence.

These "concerns" are what Qoheleth is trying to generate in the reader when he goes through the death march of 12:1-7. The mind is turned away from any pleasure found in earthly life to dealing with the dreadful facts of inevitable death and the possible judgment of "all deeds" that follows. These are "goad" and "nails" (12:11 NIV) that drive one into the heart/mind state that best corresponds to and prepares one for death and judgment—i.e., fear-of-God. In the end, Qoheleth does not say that the "end" (12:13 [LXX: *telos*]) of the matter is "sieze the day"; but he says what one would expect to be the *telos* that he has mentioned (and alluded to) many times before and which best fits with the titanic themes of life and death, sin and judgment that burst forth from his many complaints about life "under the sun": "fear God" orders Qoheleth, and "keep his commandments, for this is man's all" (v. 13 NKJV).[464] The MT and NRSV of Eccl 12:13, 14 are as follows:

סוֹף דָּבָר הַכֹּל נִשְׁמָע אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים יְרָא וְאֶת־מִצְוֺתָיו שְׁמוֹר כִּי־זֶה כָּל־הָאָדָם׃	The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God, and keep his commandments; for that is the whole duty of everyone.
כִּי אֶת־כָּל־מַעֲשֶׂה הָאֱלֹהִים יָבֵא בְמִשְׁפָּט עַל כָּל־נֶעְלָם אִם־טוֹב וְאִם־רָע׃	For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.

This command might have been the addition of a "pious" glossarist; if so, he certainly did not diverge from Qoheleth's trajectory of thought about what is good and right for human

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are read in light of 3:16, 17, however, there is no need to deem them "pious" glosses or to understand them as referring to a judgment of how one kept the *carpe diem* principle. For in 3:16, 17, Qoheleth says "in [his] heart" (i.e., what he affirms to be the case) that there is a time for God to judge every deed. The components are essentially the same as those in 11:9 and 12:14: God will judge (bring to justice) all deeds. But 3:16, 17 plainly makes this an orthodox judgment of the "righteous" and the "wicked" which will solve the problem of "wickedness" in the places of "justice" and "righteousness." In other words, the criteria of judgment is not based upon *carpe diem*-keeping, but based upon God's moral law (as reflected in the Mosaic Law). The main problem that distressed Qoheleth was the existence of wickedness in high places, not the failure of men and women to "seize the day." This verse could also be a "pious" gloss, but Qoheleth's first-person appeal here makes that unlikely. And how much are commentators willing to fragment the canonical text anyways in order to keep Qoheleth as pessimistically consistent as possible? But even if these three judgment texts were to be eliminated, there would still be much in Ecclesiastes that indicates that the book flows out of an orthodox Israelite worldview (see FN 450).

[464] The command here to fear God is what Delitzsch calls "the kernel and the star of the whole book" (Delitzsch, 1968, 438).

beings to do.[465] As the other fear-of-God passages in Ecclesiastes demonstrate, fear-of-God is obviously important to Qoheleth and is, in his understanding, at the heart of a right—and good behavior-producing—relationship with God. The imperative יְרָא ("fear!") in 12:13 merely summarizes what he has already said in various places. Qoheleth's themes of obedience to and humility before God, and his concern about the many injustices he saw in the world and his heartfelt belief that God would make an "appropriate time" (3:17) to righteously judge all deeds, do not conflict with what is written in 12:13, 14. And just like in 3:17 and 11:9, the time and means of the judgment are not specified—although one can make the case that a judgment that will account for "every deed" necessarily must occur after one dies.[466]

The general context of Scripture—in both NT and OT—as well as the hope of something more than death and הבל that is implicit in Qoheleth's *Klage* lead me to understand that Qoheleth (or at least the Holy Spirit working through him) did in fact think of the judgment as occurring after death. The scholarly idea that death was in fact the final judgment that Qoheleth had in mind does not, in my mind, fit with the overall direction of the book. It offers no solution and leaves life and death and justice and God's administering of "final justice" all under Qoheleth's rubric of הבל. But the warning tone that is often heard in Ecclesiastes—if it is meant to goad readers on to more god-pleasing works—sounds *absurd* if there is no advantage at all in behaving one way or another. If all end up with the same sentence—that is, death—then why live one's life with the thought in mind that one will get righteous justice in the end? One could say that

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[465] Garrett, 2001, 345, gives several reasons for his view that 12:9-14 is not the work of a "pious epilogist": "The use of first level (vv. 9-10) and second level (vv. 11-14) discourse has many parallels throughout the book; and the language, style, and sentiments are not unlike those found earlier in the book. More than that, treating the conclusion as a secondary epilogue, either as a pious gloss or as part of an emerging canon consciousness, decapitates the entire work. Everything Ecclesiastes has affirmed up to this point—the sovereign freedom of God, the limits of human wisdom, thoughts on the use and abuse of wealth and power, and the brevity and absolute contingency of human life—all lead to the command to fear God. To excise the conclusion is to throw away that which binds together all the separate strands of the Teacher's thought. It arises from a failure to think like the Teacher, so to speak."

[466] A glossarist—especially if he were writing at a relatively late date in which eschatological awareness was growing—could have easily said that the final judgment would occur after death and would determine one's destination in the afterlife. But the warning in 12:14 remains as ambiguous as those in 3:17 and 11:9 in regards to these questions. But there is an interesting feature of 3:17 that perhaps points towards the future: 3:17b clearly looks back to the poem in 3:1-8 and even perhaps completes it. Both 3:1 and 3:17 have עת לכל חפץ ("[there is] a time for every matter"). The "matter" of birth at the beginning—a one time event—is complemented by the one-time "matter" of judgment which occurs at the end. From an eschatological perspective, it is interesting that "war" and "peace" (3:8) and "judgment" (3:17) are mentioned towards the end of the poem.

"judgment" in Qoheleth's view is administered by God throughout a person's life and the judging process ceases at death; but this is just what Qoheleth observed not to be the case (i.e., he observed that injustice was rampant)—and he complained bitterly as a result. If god-fearing men and women do not get justice (that is, some really meaningful יוֹתֵר for their faith in God and their righteous deeds) in this life, then—in view of the justice that Qoheleth guarantees in 3:17, 11:9, and 12:14—they must get it after they die.[467]

So for many different reasons, I believe that the Holy Spirit works through the words of Qoheleth to instill in the reader a deep concern about immortality and a deep desire for *final* judgment.[468] At the very least, the first readers of Ecclesiastes would have been moved by Qoheleth's words to be distressed by the lack of clarity in their day about immortality and final judgment—and, as a result, to want something more. But whether one is a Christian today looking back from the perspective of faith in Christ, or was a post-exilic Jew reading Ecclesiastes from the perspective of faith in YHWH, the call to "fear God" is equally valid. And this virtue has something to do with bringing about a "good" outcome in the judgment—whatever or whenever it might be. The text here is straightforward: אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים יְרָא ("fear God!"). The direct object marker leaves no doubt about the object of the imperative, and putting Elohim before the imperative verb further accentuates the fact that God is the object of the fear. Beyond this, the linguistic form of the verb and the syntax do not inform the reader about the action beyond the root meaning of ירא. The immediate context, as elsewhere in Ecclesiastes but here especially so, gives reason for one to fear: God's judgment of every "hidden" thing has the potential to be a catastrophic experience. But Qoheleth says that fearing God *and* keeping his commandments is "man's all" (NKJV). And here a question is raised: can the fear emotion/feeling alone be the *telos* that justifies men and women in the judgment? The answer depends upon a wider understanding of Scripture. The emotion/feeling of fear-of-God is indeed a virtue. Belief in God is also a virtue. They are both foundational to a proper relationship with God; but, as the Scripture says, "even the demons believe—and tremble" (James 2:19 NKJV). James argues that belief alone is insufficient to save—for "faith without works is dead" (James 2:26 NKJV). Similarly, it can be argued that if someone believes in God and "trembles" (i.e., experiences the fear emotion/feeling) before God—but has no "fruit" (i.e., does not keep God's commandments)—then that

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[467] BDB lexical meaning for יוֹתֵר is "superiority, advantage, excess." See Eccl 2:15; 6:8, 11; 7:11.

[468] See the thoughts of J. Lochman in chapter one. Having suffered under communist injustice, he recognizes the acute need for God's final judgment to rid the world of the monstrous acts of evil men and women. He laments the fact that many think of the final judgment as something to avoid; but Lochman argues that it is something to eagerly desire—for only then will we be free.

person is not justified in the eyes of God. It is interesting (in Eccl 12:13) that the Τέλος λόγου (LXX—lit. "end of the word") and the πᾶς ὁ ἄνθρωπος (LXX—lit. "all the man") are to "fear God" *and* to "keep his commandments." One without the other is not the "end" of Qoheleth's teaching or the "all" of human beings. As mentioned before, Qoheleth was an Israelite whose worldview foundation was the Torah. This foundation (parts of which he questions from time to time) is quite evident here at book's end; the "commandments" to which Qoheleth refers to are the laws prescribed by Moses— although there might be a universalizing of its moral components that would apply to all human beings. Arguably, the book was designed to be read by both Israelites and gentiles. If so, it is improbable that Qoheleth would have ordered the latter to follow the Mosaic Law. Be that as it may, the "heart" of the Mosaic Law is universally valid: "Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (Deut 6:4, 5). Also in the Law are the commands to honor (Lev 10:3) and to worship (Deut 26:10) God. While there may be echoes of these in the command in Eccl 12:13 to "fear God!" the fact that the Law's commands to honor and worship God are assumed in 12:13's "keep his commandments" means that "fear God!" must not contain these ideas for the entire verse to fit within Christian orthodoxy.[469]

One might argue that the two commands here are in synonymous parallelism; but this certainly must not be.[470] In Ecclesiastes, fear-of-God is mainly presented as a fearful emotion/feeling before God. Qoheleth's understanding of fear-of-God is quite in keeping with how it is employed in the Proverbs; there is something in fear-of-God that is foundational to wise and righteous conduct. It is not the conduct itself, but states of the heart and mind that plow the ground, so to speak, and allow the seeds to be planted that eventually spring up into good works. The pertinent question here is this: is experiencing the fear emotion/feeling before God a virtue apart from following the law? An affirmative answer is indicated by fear-of-God passages such as Isa 66:2b: "But this is the one to whom I will look, to the humble and contrite in spirit, who trembles at my word." Ezra 9:4 and Ps 119:120 are similar: fear-of-God is presented as something that is different than the Law (God's "word" [God's "judgments" in Ps 119:120]) and is a reaction to it (or, at least, a reaction to the *giver* of the Law). The emotion/feeling of fear exibited

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[469] Actually, commands to fear God abound in the Torah—and, therefore, could also be subsumed under Eccl 12:13's "keep his commandments."

[470] Becker, 1965, sees synonymous parallelism in many fear-of-God texts—including Eccl 12:13: „Gottesfurcht werde hier als Beobachtung der Gebote beschrieben und mit dem Glauben an das göttliche Gericht über Gut und Böse in Verbindung gebracht" (254). As I have mentioned before, if Becker is right, then fear-of-God (and ירא) has a range of meaning that makes it semantically unusable (see my pp. 80-84, 90).

before God and his "word" is a virtue in and of itself. But while it is not the Law itself (other than those parts of the Mosaic Law which command fear of God), fear-of-God does "goad" one—out of the fear of God proper, fear of God's punishment, and fear of losing relationship—towards obedience to the Law.[471]

Qoheleth's directive to "fear God, and keep his commandments" has authority in the church today—but with the caveat that Christians are now under grace, not law. The ritualistic laws of the Torah have been transcended by the new covenant actualized by Christ's work on the cross. Debts for (unintentional) sins are no longer paid for by the "blood of goats and calves" (Heb 9:12); instead, the sins of believers are paid for by Jesus Christ (Heb 9:14, 15). The moral principles that are behind the parts of the Mosaic Law that are concerned with personal ethics (especially as reflected in the Ten Commandments), however, do have power today—unless any of them are relativized by any higher standard that Christ might have taught (see especially Matt 5, 6). In view of Christ's call for Christians to be "perfect" (Matt 5:48), the inevitableness of Christians to fail to reach this standard (Rom 3:23), the "price" by which Christians were "bought" (1 Cor 6:20), and the many warnings not to fall away, Christians are wise to heed the NT's advice to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil 2:12). It is good that they regularly consider the "kindness" of God (Rom 11:22); but they are warned to dwell upon the "sternness" of God as well (Rom 11:22). Christians will "inherit the earth" (Matt 5:5; Rom 4:13); but this was only made possible because of God's love for human beings, his hatred of sin and evil, and his willingness to send his only begotten Son to bear the consequences of their disobedience. "Therefore," as the author of the book of Hebrews says, "since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God *is* a consuming fire" (Heb 12:28, 29 NKJV).

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[471] Clines, 2003, 64, understands that while fear-of-God might *connote* a number of different realities, it nearly always *denotes* the fear emotion/feeling: "My own view is suspicious of the alleged 'semantic development' from fear as an emotion to fear as 'religion' or 'moral behaviour' and indeed of the common assertion that the 'fear of god' can mean something other than the emotion of fear. I believe that the whole edifice of a moral, ethical and cultic meaning for the phrase 'fear of God' is built on a confusion of sense and reference, which is to say, of denotation and connotation. My conclusion is that the ירא word group always signifies the emotion of fear (which is its sense or denotation), but that sometimes that emotion leads to actions (or avoidance of actions) of an ethical or cultic kind (which are then its reference or connotation). In brief, when people do not lie, for example, because of the 'fear of God', it does not mean that they do not lie because they behave ethically but because they are afraid of God and of the consequences he may exact of them for lying."

CHAPTER THREE

DOES FEAR-OF-GOD CHANGE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT?

The work done so far has sought to demonstrate that the fear-of-God concept in the OT has not evolved, as many mainly critical-age scholars have claimed, but has in fact remained quite close to its fear emotion/feeling semantic roots. The scholarly efforts (especially of J. Becker) which claim that fear-of-God evolved cannot by their methods and evidences overcome two important facts: first, the fact that the OT never *teaches* that fear-of-God changes, and, second, the fact that the local and wider contexts of the many virtue fear-of-God OT texts seldom if ever give indicators that fear-of-God has to any significant degree moved off its fear emotion/feeling foundation. But my study as presented thus far is myopic in that the NT—which explains, clarifies, and fulfills the OT—has not in any meaningful way been used to shed light on OT fear-of-God. As was said in the introduction, the NT must be used (by any reader, but especially by theologians seeking to find God's truth for the Church) to understand in the deepest and truest way what God purposed in providing his revelations to the Jewish/Israelite people in the time before the coming of the Messiah. And this can potentially provide strong interpretational force on the OT fear-of-God topic. *If* Jesus, for example, had said in one of the gospels, "Moses taught you to fear me by trembling, the prophets taught you to fear me by serving me, but I say to you that you should fear me by loving me", then this would be a good indicator that the idea of fear-of-God was indeed changing in the centuries preceding Christ. On the other hand, if the NT indicates that the same OT reasons for the emotion/feeling of fear before God still remain, and the NT possesses semantic, syntactic, and contextual factors that do not give strong reason for moving fear-of-God off its fear emotion/feeling base, then this would further support the understanding that OT fear-of-God mainly denotes real fear.

Before proceeding, a few remarks about φοβέομαι are in order. This verb will be the center of attention because it is most often found in the LXX where יָרֵא is found in the MT and is the most general word for fear in the NT as well. Likewise, when the Hebrew nouns יִרְאָה or מוֹרָא occur in the MT, the noun φόβος usually occurs in the LXX.[472] Like the Hebrew, these Greek forms can indicate real fear (from being "alarmed" to "terror") as well as "respect," reverence," or "worship" (DBLSD). The root meaning of φοβέομαι (as indicated by its use in Homeric epics) is "to flee" or "to be startled" (TDNT). Balz mentions the interesting (and useful for our fear-of-God theme) fact that the Greeks and Spartans used to worship φόβος (TDNT). Homer (ca. 8th cent. BC) and Hesiodus (ca. 6th

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[472] TDNT. φοβέομαι and φόβος are also used for the Hebrew פָּחַד (verb "to quake") and פַּחַד (noun "quaking," "horror").

cent. BC) indicate that φόβος was one of the deities in the Greek pantheon, and a fifth century BC votive inscription names φόβος just under Zeus and above all the other gods. The Spartans, according to Plutarch, even had a temple to φόβος.[473] This particular practice of the ancient Greeks is mentioned only to show that the emotion of fear—at least for the Greeks—was an important component of their religion and religious experience. The appreciation for fear (to the point of *worship*) was based upon what the Greeks saw as its usefulness and wisdom-provoking quality. Fear informed a person in a harsh way of the reality of power and authority. Fear was, as Balz says, a "reaction to man's encounter with force." In the process of seeking relief from this force-caused fear, fear would go from "spontaneous terror and anxiety to honour and respect." This made fear in the Greek mind the basis for respect. The unpleasant feeling of fear made submission and respect good in that they were states of mind that could lessen or eliminate the fear; thus, "the absence of fear [was] … an objective worth seeking" (TDNT, Sec. A, 4).

THE NT HAS THE SAME THEOLOGY/ANTHROPOLOGY

That the NT shows that Christ is Lord and will preside as judge of all humanity is clear. The God who is described by Isaiah as "the consuming fire" (33:14), is the same God who's "axe is already at the root of the trees" (Matt 3:10), has authority to divide the sheep from the goats (Matt 25:31-46) and to cast both soul and body into hell (Matt 10:28). The incommunicable attributes of God (e.g., his independence, immutability, eternity, omnipresence) seen in the OT are the attributes of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the NT.[474] Humans, on the other hand, though made in his image, are *creatures*

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[473] According to Balz (TDNT) these mentions of φόβος as object of worship comes from Homer's *Illiad* (ed. G. Monro and T. W. Allen, 1908, 13, 298-300.) Hesiodus's *Theogonia* (ed. A Rzach, 1913, 933-936.) and Plutarch's *De Cleomene* (*Vitae*, ed. T. Doehner and F. Dübner, 1877, 8f, 808b-e.). Also see Loader, 2001.

[474] The Biblical depiction of God and humans leave no doubt as to where the highest ontological reality resides. Although humans are created to perceive God, and the ultimate reality could seem to a person to reside in his or her awareness of God—and not in God himself—the Bible presents God as a substance that has infinitely more being-ness that whatever of him is perceived in the mind. God is God, and not, as Tillich, 1967, believes, a subjective "answer to the question implied in man's finitude" (211). Tillich's idea of God is not far away from Otto's. The subjective "ultimate concern" that persons find in themselves "does not mean that first there is a being called God and then the demand that man should be ultimately concerned about him. It means that whatever concerns a man ultimately becomes god for him, and, conversely, it means that a man can be concerned ultimately only about that which is god for him" (211). Tillich dilutes the power of the biblical God to generate fear by, first, placing too much of the reality of God in the subject, but he also dilutes God's ability to evoke certain emotions—like fear—by minimizing his particular biblical attributes in favor of an idea that understands God as "being-itself." With being-itself, one cannot say that it is the most perfect, or most powerful, or most

made by the creator. They are dependent, mutable, and limited in time and space. Therefore, as the writer of Hebrews says in full agreement with Isaiah, one should "worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our 'God is a consuming fire'" (Heb 12:28b).

This essential difference between God and humanity means that men and women are dependant and accountable to God. This moral accountability is reflected in the Bible by the fact that God judges all men and women. Lochman, who argues that the *"jüngsten Gericht"* is for our good, writes that the theme of judgment is strong throughout both testaments:

> Dass menschliches Leben, und zwar sowohl das persönliche Leben des Einzelnen wie das der Völker, ja des Menschengeschlechts insgesamt, unter dem Gericht Gottes steh, sich unwiderstehlich auf den letzten Richter hin bewegt, gehört integral zur Botschaft des Alten und des Neuen Testamentes. Allerdings handelt es sich dabei um keine allgemeinen kosmischen Gesetze oder namenlose Fatalitäten. Hier schalten und walten keine gnadenlosen Fatalitäten. Die Bibel kennt und nennt den Richter. Er ist dein anderer als Jahwe, der Gott Israels in der hebräischen Bibel; im Neuen Testament der mit ihm identische „Vater Jesu Christi.“[475]

Or as Balz says in reference to fear in the NT, "the menacing seriousness of God's judgment is decisive." The epiphanies of God and the "mighty works of Jesus" in the NT, display plainly his power and authority and, according to Balz, naturally result in fear (TDNT, sec. D2a).

God's omnipotence and human powerlessness are seen in the many displays of Christ's power and authority that result in fear. The following examples are representative: in Mark 4:35-41 (parallels Matt 8:2; Luke 8:25) the account of the disciples "great fear" is strongly reminiscent of the "great fear" of the sailors who had thrown Jonah overboard (Jonah 1:15, 16). In fact, the Greek texts from each account of the fear that is generated after the waters are calmed are almost identical; both the disciples and the sailors "feared a great fear" (ἐφοβήθησαν [aorist passive verb] + φόβ— [noun] + μεγ—[adjective]). In addition, the fear (explicitly in the Jonah text, implicitly in the Mark text) has as its object, respectively, YHWH and Jesus. Of great interest for the fear-of-God theme is the fact that the greatest level of fear is depicted to have come *not*

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loving—for that just makes God out to be the most superlative among other beings. Any theology that does not understand this, says Tillich, "relapses into monarchic monotheism, for if God is not being-itself, he is subordinate to it, just as Zeus is subordinate to fate in Greek religion" (236) While Tillich rightly does not subordinate God to being, to strip away God's "monarchic monotheism" in what in Tillich's mind rationally follows from this, is to strip away the attributes that cause humans to love or fear him, and to eliminate the particulars about God that give believers assurance that he has the intention and ability to save their souls.

[475] Lochman, 1993, 83, 84. He lists the following NT judgment texts: Matt 6:4ff.; 7:22; 13:36-43; 25:31-46; Luke 13:25-27; Rom 2:3ff.; 14:10; 1 Cor 4:4f.; 5:13; 11:32; 2 Cor 5:10; 1 Thess 4:6; 2 Thess 1:5.)

during the storm, *but after*. The object of the "great fear," then, could not have been the storm; rather, the focus of the fear was upon the great power and authority before which the waters and wind obeyed. The "great fear" is clearly not reverence here, but *results in* reverence: after the storm was stilled, the sailors "offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows," and the disciples said to each other, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" Also clear (once again, explicit in Jonah, and implicit in Mark) is the awareness YHWH's/Jesus' authority over the sailors'/disciples' lives (especially clear in the Jonah story is the moral component of Jonah's sin of evasion of responsibility and the sailors' perceived *possible* sin of throwing Jonah overboard). Plain to see here is the powerlessness, dependence, and accountability that the sailors/disciples feel vis à vis God's power.

Another example of epiphany that reveals the power of God and the powerlessness of men is the transfiguration of Jesus. Matt 17:1-8 (parallels Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36) indicates by Jesus' face shining "like the sun" and his clothes becoming "dazzling white" that Jesus showed Peter, James, and John some measure of his glorified divinity. The feature of Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus only adds to the perception that God was involved. When the voice of God came from the cloud, any doubt of God's involvement disappeared: the three amazed disciples "fell upon their face[s] and feared *exceedingly*" (TM). Matthew uses the aorist verb plus adjective σφόδρα ("exceedingly"—DBLSD). Mark employs ἐγένοντο ("they became") plus the adjective ἔκφοβος ("terrified"— DBLSD). Clear in this account is the disciples' realization that all was beyond their control. The divinity of Christ was being plainly revealed to them for the first time, and the natural reaction was to fear (see p. 221 below, and especially FN 487).

Jesus' divinity and the people's fearful reaction to it are also seen in Luke 8:26-39 (parallels Matt 8:28-9:1; Mark 5:1-20) where Jesus commands the "legion" demonic spirits out of a man. The demons at once acknowledge Jesus' identity as the "son of the most high God" and are bound by Jesus' authority. They beg not to be cast back into "the abyss" and instead request permission to go from the man into a nearby herd of swine. This they do, but only with Jesus' permission. The pig herders fled to the nearby town with the news, and when the townspeople came out to see for themselves what had happened, they saw the demoniac—who they were apparently familiar with—in his right mind, and "they were afraid" (ἐφοβήθησαν). Within a short period of time, the news of the exorcism became generally known, and the reaction—curiously enough—was not one of joy; instead, "they experienced great fear" (TM of φόβῳ μεγάλῳ συνείχοντο). Like in the case of the calming of the storm, it is interesting to see how the "great fear" came long after the danger had passed: the waters were calmed and the demons were cast out and gone; yet, the response was fear—and the texts strongly suggest it was more fear than that

213

experienced when the danger of storm or demons was still present. This last text, however, is unique (compared to the accounts of the storm and transfiguration) in that the response of fear does not result in the Gadarenes accepting and revering Jesus. They apparently recognized something extremely powerful in him, but they did not want anything to do with him. They were perhaps more concerned about the loss of swine. Thus, we see how fear-of-God can push people toward him or push them away. Yet, the feeling is a necessary step that informs a person of the reality of what is going on. Jesus had confronted the Gadarenes and the resultant fear forced them to make a choice. There is little doubt, however, that their "great fear" was focused on Jesus. This brings us to a significant truth: fear is *given* as an emotional gift by God. It comes (at least in these cases) *involuntarily*. Humans rarely if ever choose to fear. As unpleasant as it is, fear—like pain—is ultimately *information* (i.e., its purpose is to inform). To the disciples in the boat, Peter, James, and John on the mountain, and the Gadarenes, fear came upon them to inform them that they were in the presence of a great—and, potentially dangerous—power. The intensity of the fear was evidence of this truth. The information delivered by the fear also made plain their vulnerability and served as a sign that God alone is omnipotent and that humans are completely subject to him.

Throughout the NT, Christ is presented as the necessary being who has "all authority" (Matt 28:18) to determine the times and seasons of their habitations and to judge their actions. This is evident from John the Baptist's call to repentance at the beginning of the NT to the great white throne judgment at the end; everything in between presents Christ as the Word who became flesh who, in the beginning, was with God and "was God" (John 1:1), is the "son of God" (John 1:49) and the great "I am" (John 8:58), created all things (Col 1:16), is the alpha and omega (Rev 22:13)—and only he will judge the living and the dead at the end of history. But—as Lochman rightly laments—the idea of God as sovereign and judge has been largely disregarded in our relatively comfortable western society. But Lochman, who lived and suffered under Czechoslovakian communism, points out a fact that should be obvious to modern men and women: justice is for our good, not for our harm. Having lived under the show trials that made a mockery out of justice (in his words, "a particularly monstrous phenomenon" and "hellish justice"), many people who suffered terribly had awakened in them the „Sehnsucht nach einem Gericht, das Gerectigkeit schafft, die Willdür stillegt und durchkreuzt, die Sehnsucht nach dem gerechteren, letztgültig befreienden ‚Appellationsgericht.'" Because Lochman and his fellow citizens experienced the need for true justice, they understood that the final judgment was not „ein Mythologumenon, dessen man sich als aufgeklärter Mensch schämen müsste, sondern, rechtverstanden, ein menschenfreundliches, ein

befreiendes Motiv."[476] Lochman's concerns are mentioned here because of the intimate relationship between judgment and fear-of-God. Lochman reacts against (rightly in my opinion) a general dilution of the reality of a final judgment in modern theology. When the prospect of a final judgment is diluted, then there appears to be in God less to be feared.

But this dilution runs very much against the grain of the biblical testimony, both OT and NT. In a text in which Paul may have been drawing upon Eccl 12:13, 14, he writes: "For all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil" (2 Cor 5:10). He follows this with: "Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we try to persuade others" (5:11a). Biblically speaking, the knowledge of God's sovereignty and, hence, his moral authority, begets the understanding of human dependence and moral culpability. The result from this should be some amount of fear. Balz writes (in regards to the relationship between faith and fear), "Trembling and fear bring out the radical and total dependence of the believer on the saving work of God."(TDNT, sec. D, 4) So if there is not an accurate enough understanding of God's omnipotence and humankind's impotence, then "trembling and fear" will not occur, and neither will the "total dependence" that is a necessary component of saving faith.

THE NT HAS THE SAME TENSION BETWEEN BELIEVER ASSURANCE AND NON-ASSURANCE

The NT displays a tension between believer assurance ("perseverance of the saints") of always remaining "in Christ" and therefore having no reason to fear, and the possibility that a believer can fall away—and, therefore, has some reason to fear. In this section, I will try to illuminate this tension and explain how this tension begets some fear before God.

Not a few biblical texts plainly point in the direction of assurance. In John 10:28, 29 Jesus says that he gives his sheep eternal life and no one can snatch them out of his hand or his father's hand. Paul in Eph 1:4 writes that believers have been chosen in Christ "before the foundation of the world." His idea of God's sovereign election is developed in Rom 8:28; 9 where he writes the encouraging truth—of which he is convinced—that nothing "will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (NIV). The writer of Hebrews applies to Christian believers the unconditional promise made by God on oath to Abraham: in Heb 6:13-20, the Christian "heirs of the promise" who have "taken refuge" in Christ have "a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul." The

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[476] Ibid., 82.

Holy Spirit, writes Paul in 2 Cor 5:1-5, is a "guarantee" of the "heavenly dwelling" to come when the mortal body will be "swallowed up by life." Echoing Deut 31:6, 8, and Ps 118:6, the writer of Hebrews once more encourages his readers with God's promise, "I will never leave you or forsake you." One can then "say with confidence, 'the Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me'" (see Heb 13:5-6). The list of these encouraging passages could go on. Elwell gives the following list of passages that give evidence that the saints will persevere:

> John 5:24; 6:37, 39–40; 6:68–69; 10:27–30; 16:27, 29–33; 17:8, 11; Acts 1:3; Rom 4:9, 20–22; 5:1–5; 8:15–17, 28–30, 33–35, 37–39; 11:29; 1 Cor 1:8–9; 2 Cor 1:21–22; Gal 4:6; Eph 1:4–5; 4:30; Phil 1:6; 2:12–13; Col 2:2; 1 Thess 5:23–24; 2 Tim 1:12; 4:18; Heb 6:11; 7:24–25; 10:14, 22–23; 11:1; 1 Pet 1:3–5; 5:10; 1 John 2:1–2; 3:9, 14, 18–20; 4:13; 5:10–11, 13, 18; Jude 1, 24.[477]

On the other hand, there are many pleas in the Bible for the saints to persevere, and even some passages that indicate that people walked away (or would/could walk away) from the faith. For example, after Jesus spoke the hard saying about his flesh and blood being true food and drink (John 6:53-58), a number of his disciples stopped following him (6:66—although see v. 64 which indicates that they did not believe in the first place). Paul wrote about those who in "later times" would "renounce the faith" (1 Tim 4:1), about Hymenaeus and Alexander who had "shipwrecked" their faith (1 Tim 1:19, 20), and about those who, through "the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge … [had] wandered from the faith" (1 Tim 6:20, 21 NIV). Paul also gave the Corinthians this stern warning regarding the susceptibility to sin: "So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall" (1 Cor 10:12). "Salvation," according to Paul, is to be worked out "with fear and trembling" (Phil 2:12).

Jesus' parable of the soils (Matt 13:1-9, 18-23; Mark 4:1-9, 13-20; Luke 8:4-8, 11-15) is also a sober warning. The second sown seeds that "sprang up quickly," but were "scorched" by the sun because they had "no root," give the reader some cause for alarm—especially when Jesus says in clarification of the parable:

> As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. (Matt 13:20, 21)

Some commentators would say these "seeds" never believed; but Jesus in telling the parable or explaining it does not comment on whether there was true belief or not. It would seem that if one receives the Gospel "with joy," he or she would at least for a short time believe. If the parable is not meant to be heard or read by people who believe at least to some small measure and have some joy based upon that belief, then the parable would

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[477] Elwell and Buckwalter, 1991 (under Salvation/Perseverance/The Assurance of Eternal Security).

appear to be pointless. In any case, this parable indicates that there is some amount of mystery at that point between unbelief and belief, between non-faith and faith. It is easy to say "For by grace you have been saved through faith," but it is harder to explain exactly what faith is, and what quantity and quality of it is sufficient to be the kind of faith possessed by those people who represent the fourth type of seeds in the parable of the sower (who understand the word and produces a great harvest of "fruit").

The possibility of losing one's faith is perhaps suggested most powerfully by Paul in his metaphor of the Olive tree branches in Rom 11. Here, after Paul gives his gentile readers the good news that—through the unbelief of the Jews—salvation has come to them, he gives them this warning:

> 11:17 If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, 11:18 do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. 11:19 You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." 11:20 Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. 11:21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. 11:22 Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off.

The text speaks for itself; there is a danger of sliding from belief to unbelief.[478] Paul tells his readers what the proper Christian response is in view of this fact: μὴ ὑψηλὰ φρόνει ἀλλὰ φοβοῦ ("do not have a proud attitude, rather fear!" TM). The imperative "fear!" is likely a blend of the servile and filial varieties of fear—with the emphasis being on the former. Paul appears to be primarily giving a warning about God's wrath (God's "sternness") and God's punishment (God's breaking off of the branches). His teaching can be taken as distressing in that one can choose to leave the faith, or as encouraging in that one can choose the faith. This text reflects that these two options are always open, and one should not be completely certain that one will at all times choose the right way. The failure of the Christian to appreciate this precariousness, according to Barth, results

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[478] Moo, 1996, 706, 707, writes, "But Paul's main purpose in this verse appears at its end: to repeat his warning to the Gentile believer who may (like the Jew; cf. 2:4-5) presume on God's goodness. For the goodness of God is not simply a past act or automatic benefit on which the believer can rest secure; it is also a continuing relationship in which the believer must remain. 'Otherwise'—that is, if the believer does not continue in the goodness of God—the believer will, like the Jew, be 'cut off'—severed forever from the people of God and eternally condemned. In issuing this warning, Paul echoes a consistent NT theme: ultimate salvation is dependent on continuing faith; therefore, the person who ceases to believe forfeits any hope of salvation (cf. also Rom. 8:13; Col. 1:23; Heb. 3:6, 14)." In a footnote, he goes on to say, "Does this then mean that a genuine Christian can lose his faith and thus be eternally condemned? Certainly it is possible to infer this from Paul's warning. But it is no necessary inference."

in anti-Semitism. In view of Jewish unbelievers being broken off, the Christian should not take special pride or a sense of superiority for being grafted in. "If the Gentiles were to be 'highminded in their thoughts' about the eternal Jew, they themselves would at once be subject to the same fate."[479] Humility, then, is humbly admitting that as Jews fell and were broken off, so to can grafted-in believers fall and be broken off. This is the idea of Murray:

> It is noteworthy that the attitude compatible with and promotive of faith is not only lowliness of mind but one of fear (v. 20). Christian piety is constantly aware of the perils to faith, of the danger of coming short, and is characterized by the fear and trembling which the high demands of God's calling constrain (cf. 1 Cor 2:3; Phil 2:12; Heb 4:1; 1 Pet 1:17). "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor 10:12).[480]

With Paul, human freewill must be held in tension with God's sovereignty. This reality that Paul so carefully explains brings its own set of questions that bear upon the fear-of-God theme: for example, if men and women are truly pre-destined for "destruction" (Rom 9:22) or "mercy" (v. 22), how can one really be certain that he or she has chosen according to the sovereign will of God? Can one have absolute assurance that their faith is really the will of God and that it will endure till death? It seems whether one leans toward the bondage of the will or toward the freedom of the will, there is in any case some room to have some fear about the *possibilities*.[481] But this mention of the election/freewill issue brings up questions that are beyond the scope of the current work; it is sufficient here to simply point out that the Bible in addition to comforting words of assurance contains not a few texts that indicate that believers have the potential of falling

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[479] Michielin, 2007, 89. After considering the Olive branches metaphor, Barth says: "What follows from this? What is therefore demanded of the Gentiles? That they abide by the kindness of God which is revealed to them. That is their faith. How can they in this faith and from this faith draw the conclusion that God must have cast off and dropped his people? They must have lost the faith. If that is their opinion they must themselves have been broken off again. Anti-Semitism is a sin against the Holy Ghost, Paul in fact says in 11.19-20. The obedient must watch so that they do not become guilty of this most potent form of disobedience" (89).

[480] Murray, 1965, 87, 88.

[481] Even a solid Calvinist like Charles Hodge acknowledges the danger highlighted in this text: "The effect which the consideration of these dispensations of God should produce, is gratitude and fear. Gratitude, in view of the favour which we Gentiles have received, and fear lest we should be cut off; for our security does not depend upon our now enjoying the blessings of the church of God, but is dependent on our *continuing in the divine goodness or favour*, (Rom. ii. 4; Titus iii. 4,) that is, on our doing nothing to forfeit that favour; its continuance being suspended on the condition of our fidelity" (Hodge, 1993, 369). He does go on to say that "There is nothing in this language inconsistent with the doctrine of the final perseverance of believers …." In Hodge's view, Paul is speaking "*hypothetically*" (370). In response I would only say that the many warnings against apostasy in the OT and NT always appear to be given in a context that makes the apostasy potential seem very real. Why would the warnings issued be made so earnestly if there were in reality no threat at all?

away. Biblical texts that, in one way or another, display the virtue of persevering in the faith are (according to Elwell):

> Matt 10:22; Mark 4:3–8; Luke 22:31–32; John 8:31–32; 15:4–10, 14; Acts 11:23; 13:43; 14:21–22; Rom 2:6–8; 1 Cor 10:12–13; 15:1–2, 58; 16:13; 2 Cor 13:5; Gal 5:1–4; 6:9; Eph 6:13, 16, 18; Phil 1:27; 3:12–15; 4:1; Col 1:22–23; 2:5–6; 1 Thess 5:21; 2 Thess 2:15–17; 1 Tim 6:11–12; 2 Tim 2:12; 3:14; 4:7–8; Heb 2:1; 3:14; 4:14; 6:4–6, 11–12; 10:23, 35–36; 11:27; 12:1–13; James 1:2–4, 12; 5:10–11; 1 Pet 1:5–7; 2 Pet 1:10–11; 3:17; Jude 21; Rev 2:10, 17; 3:5, 11–12, 21; 14:12; 16:15; 21:7; 22:11.[482]

The NT Indicates that People Will Not Be Perfect in This Life

Some fear is reasonably to be expected when one is confronted with God's omnipotence, the threat of judgment, and when one wonders—in view of the many biblical calls to *persevere*—if the "race" can really be run all the way to the end. But these reasons to fear could be a moot point if one could completely conquer the sin which separates people from God in the first place. Human beings are commanded in the Bible to be perfect (e.g., Matt 5:48; 2 Cor 13:11). When the goal is achieved—that is when one has reached, as the apostle John puts it, "perfection in love"—then men and women will have no reason to fear (1 John 4:18). This key verse gives great hope that (servile) fear of God and of his judgment can decrease and eventually be eliminated. Love will replace it when Christians love each other and the love of God is then perfected in them (v. 12). With this perfected love, Christians "may have boldness on the day of judgment" (v. 17).[483]

But can one really in this life love perfectly? Can one even know what it exactly means to love perfectly? How can one expect to achieve this when—as John says earlier in his letter—"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" (1:8 NIV). John, of course, only echoes the OT and NT acknowledgment that humankind is hopelessly sold over to sin. Qoheleth, for example, said "Surely there is no one on earth so righteous as to do good without ever sinning" (Eccl 7:20), and the apostle

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[482] Elwell and Buckwalter, 1991 (under Salvation/Perseverance/Exhortations to Persevere). I would add 1 Tim 6:21; Heb 3:6, 12; 4:11; 10:26-31; 12:25.

[483] Augustine indicates that fear-of-punishment is not something that is all or nothing; its intensity is inversely proportional to the quantity of love one has. He writes: "Fear, so to say, prepares a place for charity. But when once charity has begun to inhabit, the fear which prepared the place for it is cast out. For in proportion as this increases, that decreases: and the more this comes to be within, is the fear cast out. Greater charity, less fear; less charity, greater fear. But if no fear, there is no way for charity to come in" (Schaff, 1956, "Homily Nine on the First Epistle of John," sec. 4).

Paul professed that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23).[484] Assuming that being "perfected in love" cannot occur in a person who is still in sin, then it follows—given the universality of sin just mentioned—that perfection in love is impossible to achieve in life "under the sun." Consequently, fear will remain.

The fear spoken of in First John is servile fear-of-God. This is clear from John's remarks about "boldness on the day of judgment (4:17) and that "fear has to do with punishment" (v. 18). John indicates that this fear diminishes as charity increases—until perfection is reached, at which point this servile fear is altogether cast out. Thomas (whose "servile" category of fear we use at the moment) understands this also:

> Servile fear, as to its substance, remains indeed, with charity, its servility being cast aside; whereas its act remains with imperfect charity in the man who is moved to perform good actions not only through love of justice, but also through fear of punishment, though this same act ceases in the man who has perfect charity, which casteth out fear, according to 1 Jo. iv. 18.[485]

This shows that servile fear and charity are inversely proportional; when the latter increases, the former decreases. [486] It follows that a man or woman exercising near-perfect love will still experience a small element of fear. And this servile fear is real fear. Thomas (in explicating it) and John (in presenting how it can be eliminated) are both clearly dealing with the unpleasant feeling of fear, and not, for example, with reverence or honor.

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[484] See also Ps 14:3; 1 Kings 8:46; Prov 20:9. Seow, 2001, 246, agrees that wisdom has something to do with fear in an environment where sin is inevitable. He writes: "People cannot expect to have only the good, namely, righteousness-wisdom, and escape the hold of the bad (wickedness-folly), 'for there is no one on earth so righteous, who does only good and does not err' (Eccl 7:20). So Qoheleth urges recognition of human limitation and the inevitability of the hold that wickedness-folly has on mortals, since 'the one who fears God goes forth with both of them' (7:18). Indeed, to Qoheleth, this recognition of the inevitability of wickedness is the very opposite of the hubris that believes in the possibility of being so righteous that one can avert death (7:15).

Such is the reality of a world where righteousness and wisdom are ultimately beyond grasp, and Qoheleth dares to state the case theologically—in terms of the all-important category: the fear of God. That view of human inability to grasp righteousness and wisdom would later be developed more fully by the apostle Paul. The apostle observes that there are people who have no 'fear of God' in them (Rom 3:18), and he concurs with the judgment of Qoheleth that 'there is no one righteous, not even one' (Rom 3:10), 'for all have erred and come short of the glory of God' (Rom 3:23). Indeed, Paul takes the argument of Qoheleth to a christological conclusion, but the seeds of the gospel, as it were, have already been sown in 'the Preacher's' proclamation of humanity's place before the sovereign and mysterious God, whose world is ungraspable by mortals."

[485] Aquinas, 1981, ("Question 19: of the Gift of Fear," 8th article.)

[486] Aquinas (Ibid., 11th article) would say that as charity (love) increases, filial fear increases, and persists into the eternal state.

In this section on NT fear, my aim has not been to argue for or against the doctrine of believer security. I have only tried to point out that, in consideration of the human propensity to do evil, and in view of the warnings (both to believers and unbelievers) that permeate the NT (and OT), there is good justification while still here "under the sun" not to feel anxiety-free before God. It is certainly true that Jesus said many times "do not be afraid!" But he never said "do not be afraid *of me*!"[487] There are many calls to "fear God!" (again, both to believers and unbelievers, often in contexts of the threat of judgment) in the NT, but no biblical author writes "*do not* fear God!"[488] This is extremely significant in view of my thesis. When one looks at the biblical data and considers, as Paul puts it, the "kindness" and the "sternness" of God, can one say—in all honesty and humility—that he or she is sufficiently sanctified such that the biblical calls to "fear God!" no longer apply? The feeling of fear is, after all, simply a gift from God that warns of danger. In this way, it is no different that the feeling of pain.[489] Just as human beings are alerted to danger by pain, they are also alerted to danger by fear. If there is even the remotest chance of threat to the body and/or soul from God, then to completely disregard

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[487] See Matt 14:22-33 (parallels Mark 6:45-52; John 6:14-21); Matt 17:1-13; 28:1-10; Luke 24:33-43. In each of these cases the object of the fear is something/someone other than Jesus: in Matt 14:22-33 (and parallels) the disciples' feared what they thought was a ghost; Matt 17:6 shows the disciples falling on their faces in fear in reaction to the voice (of God) that came from the cloud; in Matt 28:8, 9 the object of the women's fear is unspecified; but it appears to be fear of simply the momentousness of seeing the empty tomb and seeing and being spoken to by the angel; the object of fear in Luke 24:37 is (what the disciples perceived as) a "spirit." The fear of John (so bad that he "fell at [Jesus'] feet as though dead") in Rev 1:17 is not so much before Jesus *per se*, but before the overwhelming awesomeness of the epiphany (John never had this falling "as though dead" reaction in the gospels). Note that even here, Jesus did not say "do not be afraid *of me*!" or rebuked him for his fear. Especially in view of Rev 19:10 and 12:9 where John is rebuked for worshipping the angel, one would expect a similar rebuke given to John for displaying the extreme fear emotion if it were wholly inappropriate. But there is no rebuke (in Rev 1:17)—only the formulaic "do not be afraid." In fact, nowhere in the OT or NT is someone *rebuked* (i.e., admonished *not* to fear) for manifesting the fear-feeling before God/Christ. One might also note the case of the woman with the issue of blood (Mark 5:25-34) who—after being healed by touching Jesus' cloak—came "in fear and trembling" before him. She was not rebuked for her fear, but told that her faith had healed her.

[488] The NT (and OT) never depicts the *non*-fearer of God positively (see, e.g., Luke 18:2; 23:40; Rom 3:18) nor the one fearing God negatively (see, e.g., Matt 9:8; Luke 1:50; Acts 9:31; 10:2, 22; 13:16; 2 Cor 7:1; Col 3:22; Rev 11:18; 15:3; 19:5. One could take the fearful "wicked servant" in the parables of the talents/minas [Matt 25:14-30/Luke 19:11-27] as an exception—for he feared the master, did not multiply what was given him, and was condemned for it. The servant, however, is not condemned for the fear *per se*, but for the failure to make a return on what had been entrusted into his care.). The negative call "do not fear God!" does not exist in either testament. The positive call "fear God!" appears often in the OT and in several places in the NT (e.g., Matt 10:28 [parallel Luke 12:5]; Rom 11:20; 1 Pet 2:17; Rev 14:7).

[489] Actually, one could argue that fear is a species of pain.

fear-of-God's value and utility would be folly—for one then disregards the God-given warning signal that alerts a person to situations in which he or she is coming under God's "sternness."[490]

A Key Text: Matt 10:28

Matt 10:28 (and its parallel in Luke 12:4, 5) is a teaching of Jesus to his disciples that contains all the main points discussed above: first, orthodox theology and anthropology is reflected by the fact that only God has dominion over the soul; second, because the logion serves as a warning to the disciples who were being sent out into unfriendly and dangerous territory, assumed is the possibility of losing faith in Christ; third, this possibility of losing faith would be driven by the sin of fearing humans more than God. This "worldly fear" (which Thomas deemed in every case to be evil) would be sinful in that it would perhaps prompt the disciples to conform to the will of their persecutors and not to the will of God.

Matt 10:28 καὶ μὴ φοβεῖσθε ἀπὸ τῶν ἀποκτεννόντων τὸ σῶμα, τὴν δὲ ψυχὴν μὴ δυναμένων ἀποκτεῖναι· φοβεῖσθε δὲ μᾶλλον τὸν δυνάμενον καὶ ψυχὴν καὶ σῶμα ἀπολέσαι ἐν γεέννῃ.	Matt 10:28 Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

In this text is seen the tension between "do not be afraid!" and "fear!" If one takes the many cases in both testaments where God/Christ says "do not be afraid" to mean "do not be afraid *of me*," then all the other biblical calls to "fear God!" (especially when said to believers) would appear to be contradictory. But this interpretation that posits God as the *absolute* object of the "do not be afraid" commands is unlikely for the reasons I have already mentioned in the section above.[491] In reality, the psychology of the fearers in each biblical case is different and needs to be evaluated on a case by case basis. When one fears before an epiphany of God, the fear that one feels is based upon one's circumstances and mental makeup as well as—and perhaps most importantly—one's relationship with God at that moment. The idolatrous Israelites cringing and trembling before God at the base of Mount Sinai (Exod 20:18-20) manifested a very different emotional response than, for example, the joyful and fearful women who beheld the empty tomb and then encountered the risen Christ (Matt 28:8, 9). Both groups were told "do not be afraid!" but the "of what" question is answered differently for each: for the Israelites, the admonition (by Moses on behalf of God) meant, first, that their fear response was excessive and a

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[490] Rom 11:22.

[491] Therefore, I do not understand the tension—as Marshall seems to see it—as being purely "paradoxical" (see my closing quote of his at the end of this section). Marshall, 1970, 280.

misunderstanding of who God is and what he planned to do (that is, they still did not understand that he is a God of love, not *only* justice); second, they had no reason to fear God's punishment *if* they would be obedient to his commands. For the women meeting Jesus, the Lord's gentle command was based upon their unreasonable fear of, first, the angel who had given them the good news and, second, the fear and confusion that arose within the experiential matrix of seeing Jesus crucified, seeing the empty tomb, and suddenly seeing a dead man alive again. In these texts, as well as all the others in which God appears and commands "do not be afraid!," God could in some cases be partly or wholly referring to the fear that has himself as object; but based upon the context of these passages as well as the already mentioned fact that God/Christ never says "do not be afraid *of me*," the admonition is not one that is commanding *all* fear-of-God away, but only the inappropriate *quantity* of the fear (based upon the fearer's sinfulness at the moment).

The testimony of Matt 10:28 should prompt Bible interpreters to think twice before interpreting the fear emotion/feeling out of other fear-of-God passages. The text itself, as well as the "do not be afraid of them" *inclusio* in which it rests, gives credibility to the idea that the main reality that humans are *not* to fear is not the reality of God, but the reality of the things of this world. Verses 26 and 31 as well as 28a indicate that people who follow Christ have no reason to be afraid of those who persecute them. In other words, Christians should not succumb to "worldly" fear. On the other hand, Christians should practice appropriate fear towards God because he has authority and power over both body *and* soul. Based upon this authority and power—and the right to judge that flows from them—the fear referred to here is mainly fear of punishment (that is, "servile" fear).

There should be no doubt that v. 28a (and 26a; 31a) is speaking of real fear—even to the point of dread and terror; for the "them" (v. 26a) that is the object of the fear are those who can "kill the body" (v. 28a). Even though Jesus says believers should not manifest this worldly fear, the context (especially as described by Matthew) within which he sets this command appears to provoke that fear: Jesus says that his disciples will be flogged (10:7), betrayed (v. 21), rebelled against (v. 21), called "Beelzebub" (v. 25), and put to death (vv. 21, 28). The fact that the Pharisees accused Jesus of being possessed by "Beelzebub" (i.e., Satan—see Matt 12:24; Mark 3:22) gives good reason to believe that Jesus was deadly serious when he spoke to his disciples about who to fear and who not to fear.[492] One would naturally be expected to have great fear before a person who threatened one's life. And yet, disciples of Christ are not to fear anything that humans can do to them—for they, τὴν … ψυχὴν μὴ δυναμένων ἀποκτεῖναι ("who are not able to

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[492] Davies and Allison, 1994, 203.

kill the soul" [TM]), are of no ultimate threat.[493] Therefore, as Hill says, "The fear of men and of persecution ought not to menace the apostles' work."[494] After all, why fear someone who can only "carry off our clothing."[495] The first part of v. 28, writes Marshall, is in fact encouragement to the disciples, for even if one is killed in his or her mission to tell the world about Jesus' love, "God will uphold the stand which he took. His position will be vindicated. Men will have done all that they can do, and that was merely physical. The moral and spiritual issues lie in the hands of someone else …."[496]

This "someone else" implied by v. 28b is God.[497] Only God is τὸν δυνάμενον ("the one who is able" TM) to determine the destiny of the soul. What follows from this is well stated by Hagner: "The persecutors may kill the body, but only God has power over the soul and thus the whole person. It is thus God, the final judge of all, and not human beings, who alone is to be feared …."[498] A mild decrease in the intensity of this fear might be implied by the dropping of the ἀπό (used in v. 28a) from the imperative command to fear God (φοβεῖσθε). In both the OT and NT, fearing ἀπό ("from" or "before") something or someone is generally taken to heighten the element of awe and/or fear based on the presence of the fear object. It is rarely used when God is the object of the fear.[499] But whatever might be diminished by the syntax of this logion is regained in

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[493] One is reminded here of how Satan was allowed power over Job's body, not his soul (Job 1, 2). Hagner, 1993, 287, is right here that judgment and "life after death" are assumed in this verse. Luz, 2001, 101, goes too far in understanding that the soul in "*Gehenna*" is annihilated (see my comments below). Matt 28:10 does not explicitly comment on immortality or soul annihilation—all that is in view is a body-soul dichotomy and that the soul survives the killing of the body (for how long or in what way is not said).

[494] Hill, 1996, 192.

[495] Ambrose (*De Isaac* 8.79). Quote obtained from Davies and Allison, 1994, 206.

[496] Marshall, 1970, 279.

[497] Jesus is referring here to God and not the Devil. As Luz, 2001, 102, points out, "There is no reference to the devil in the entire text. Already Justin (Apol. 1.19) and Irenaeus (Haer. 3.18.5) interpret it in reference to God." Marshall, 1970, 278, writes, "Nowhere in the New Testament are Christians told to fear the devil. They are told to resist him (James 4:17; 1 Peter 5:9). It is inconceivable that full authority over the lives of men should be attributed to the devil by Jesus; he has power over death (Heb 2:14), but not over Gehenna."

[498] Hagner, 1993, 286, goes on to describe this fear as being obedience and trust. This mixes what the fear goads the disciple toward (obedience and trust) with the fear itself.

[499] While there are many cases of ירא/φοβέω (φοβέομαι) plus מן/ἀπό (or מפני or מלפני/ἀπό προσώπου) in the MT/LXX that signify fear before persons or things (e.g., Deut 1:29; 5:5; Josh 9:24; 1 Sam 18:29; 28:20; Jer 42:11), the formula is rarely employed with God as the object—a simple object in the accusative case is by far preferred. When the MT does use מלפני/מפני/מן + ירא + God (Exod 9:30; Lev 19:14, 32; 25:17, 36, 43; Ps 33:8; 119:120 [object: God's judgments]; Eccl 3:14; 8:12, 13; Mic 7:17 [object: 2nd per. pronoun]; Hag 1:12) the LXX, however, usually omits ἀπό (or ἀπό προσώπου) and simply has the object in the accusative case. Only in Ps 119:120; Eccl 3:14; 8:12, 13; Mic 7:17; and Hag 1:12 does the LXX stay with the MT (likewise in 1 Chron 16:30 and Ps 96:9 where all on the earth "tremble" before the LORD). Although BDB

view of the fact that the fear's object, God, is a much more powerful and deadly threat than any human being who can only "kill the body." Whatever terror one might experience before a human executioner should pale in comparison to the terror experienced by someone who has been found guilty by the God who can "destroy" his or her soul "in *Gehenna*." But the imperative of φοβέομαι plus the accusative is not constrained to a lower level of fear; for not a few instances of this plainly denote intense fear (e.g., 1 Sam 12:18; 2 Sam 6:9 [parallel 1 Chron 13:12]; Jer 5:22; Jonah 1:16).

In fact, the fears mentioned in the two clauses of v. 28 are approximately synonymous. The context of the logion clearly demonstrates this: the disciples are warned about making a mistake by fearing human persecutors more than God. Fear is clearly in play here, not reverence or honor.[500] This fact is further made evident by the reason Jesus gives to fear God: he can "destroy" not only the body, but also the soul; if there is something to fear from people, there is much more to fear from God. Furthermore, the use of the comparative adverb μᾶλλον tells the reader that the distinction intended is not one of action, but of object of the action. The fear that one manifests toward the inappropriate human-object should instead be manifested toward the God-object. That is not to say that fear before humans and fear before God cannot be or should not be ultimately different; but this text does not comment upon that. Whatever other feelings might comprise a healthy and mature Christian "fear" of God, this text makes it clear that *servile* fear is fear-of-God's most elementary characteristic. Jesus' warning is given *lest* the disciples

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and BAGD do not mention an escalation of the intensity of fear with this formula (BDB: "be afraid of" vs. "fear, be afraid" for the accusative [for Lev 19:14, 32; 25:17, 36, 43, BDB has "stand in awe"]; BAGD: "be afraid of someone" vs. "fear someone or something" for the accusative), the OT texts that use it do appear to depict a quite high level of fear. Because the formula accentuates the "presence" of the feared object (Ogden, 2007, 61), it shows a "greater emphasis upon the action of fearing" (Murphy, 1992, 35). The two NT cases in Matt 10:28a and the parallel Luke 12:4 are insufficient to demonstrate a trend; but they both do imply intense fear. In any case, one should not see a *significant* change in the fear type or intensity when the ἀπό formula is used then dropped in favor of a simple accusative—for the simple accusative in both OT and NT can also denote great fear (e.g., the intense blend of servile and filial fears manifested by the sailors on the ship as well as the thief on the cross [resp. Jonah 1:16 and Luke 23:40]). BDB assigns most instances of ירא + accusative person/thing/God to the "fear, reverence, honor" category (vs. "fear, be afraid"); this, however, is a product of the over-reliance upon the evolutionary paradigm already discussed in the sections on Otto and Becker.

[500] Luz, 2001, 102, sees "love," "obedience," "knowledge of God," "[good] behavior," "trust and relationship with God," and "fear of God as fear of the epiphany" in the fear-of-God text of Matt 28:10b. The last in the list is perhaps correct; but the others do not at all fit the fearful context. On the other hand, Luz is correct when he says that fear here "suggests the punishing, judging God who has unlimited power" and that "the idea of the fear of God is connected with the sovereignty of God."

apostatize through succumbing to the threats of men.[501] The warning is meant to instill the simple servile fear of God's punishment in the disciples. This fear has something intimately to do with the disciples' right—and, therefore, saving—relationship with God. Therefore, it is dangerous to give "fear" here some other meaning than what is intended.

Whether "destroy" (ἀπολέσαι) in this passage implies soul annihilation or an ongoing destruction is not made clear.[502] The concept of "Gehenna" set within the wider context of Matthew, however, gives the reader good justification for understanding that Jesus here was referring to the latter.[503] Plus, if the threat here were simply soul (and body) annihilation, then the mention of the *place* where it occurs would be somewhat pointless.[504]

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ABOUT FEAR-OF-GOD IN THE NT

This section on the NT began by asking if there is a paradigm shift in the fear-of-God concept in the NT. My answer is no. The God who created humankind and began a process through Abraham and the Israelites to bless "all the families of the earth" is the same God—through his son, Jesus Christ—who brings that process to fulfillment in the

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[501] Marshall, 1970, 278, writes, "In the gospel of Matthew, the saying is placed in the context of mission and persecution. Matthew, therefore, regarded the saying as being concerned with apostasy. It warns the disciples against apostasy. Those who fear men and consequently do not hold fast to their faith are reminded of the power of God to act in judgment over them."

[502] Marshall, Ibid., 279, agrees: "Whether annihilation or eternal punishment is meant can hardly be determined on the basis of this saying." But he goes on to say (correctly I believe): "It must suffice to comment that the whole biblical emphasis on the crucial importance of the choice which men must make in this life regarding their ultimate destiny is rendered empty if a real choice between Heaven and hell is not involved."

[503] See Matt 13:42; 22:13; 25:30; and especially, 25:41; 25:46, where reference is made to the "eternal fire."

[504] "Gehenna" is a transliteration from the Hebrew גֵּיא ("valley") plus הִנֹּם ("hinnom"). The "Hinnom Valley" (Neh 11:30 [several times called the "valley of the Sons of Hinnom"—Josh 15:8; 18:16) which wrapped along the southwestern and southern sides of Jerusalem developed a bad reputation from the idol worship and human sacrifice (2 Chron 28:3; 33:6; Jer 7:30-34, 19; 32:35) that occurred there during the divided monarchy. The Hinnom Valley was the location of the high place "Topheth" which was defiled by King Josiah (2 Kings 23:10). Its connection with evil and pronouncements of judgment prompted people to use it as a place of burning refuse and to associate the valley metaphorically with the developing consciousness of a future ongoing punishment. Waltke writes, "As for Isaiah 66:24, Isaiah's depiction of the eschatological worshipers coming out of the temple and gazing on the dead bodies of the rebellious being eaten by worms that never die and burning in fire that is never quenched refers to Gehenna, not the netherworld. Gehenna is Jerusalem's garbage dump in the Valley of Hinnom. Here the refuse burns endlessly and the maggots feast on the endless supply of dead animal carcasses and so never die. In the New Testament this depiction became symbolic of perpetual punishment and anguish" (Waltke, 2007, 967).

NT. But the NT reveals much more about God, the specifics of his salvation plan, and the after-death future for humans. The "kindness" and the "sternness" of God are brought into much shaper focus. In one way fear-of-God is decreased because of the assurance gained through Christ's promises; but in another way, fear is increased based upon the knowledge that there is punishment after death, and that it lasts into eternity. When this knowledge is combined with the many warnings in the NT against sinning and falling away, then even a believer should fear—for although the true believer walks with the Lord on one side, there is still a terrifying burning bottomless canyon on the other side. *Lest* a person fall, he or she will maintain a death grip on his or her savior. But can the Christian really disregard the possibility of hell and say with supreme confidence, "I will never deny my God"? In this question we encounter the paradox of fear and faith: fear-of-God bespeaks *humility* and drives one towards God; but supreme faith—to the point of no longer considering the *possibility* of losing faith—is indicative of pride and not true faith, but self-righteousness.[505] This paradox is seen throughout the Bible and because of it, Paul can say, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor 10:12 KJV).[506] There is something about fear-of-God that functions as a check against totally disregarding God on the one hand, and completely seeing one's self as having perfect faith on the other. Qoheleth perhaps expresses it most creatively (and perhaps hyperbolically) when he says,

> Do not be overrighteous, neither be overwise— why destroy yourself? Do not be overwicked, and do not be a fool— why die before your time? It is good to grasp the one and not let go of the other. The man who fears God will avoid all extremes (Eccl 7:16-18).

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[505] Marshall, 1970, 280, also notices (in Matt 10:28) this paradox: "Here is sufficient evidence that fear is part of the Christian attitude to God and that the New Testament holds together in paradox the commands not to be afraid before God and yet to fear Him. To abandon either part of the paradox is to become sub-Christian. Our God, as He has revealed Himself to us in His Son Jesus Christ, is gracious and loving, and He invites our faith and love. But His love is a holy love which judges and condemns sin, and therefore His people will fear His judgment upon their sin and tremble lest they succumb to temptation. Yet at the same time they know He is faithful and just to forgive all those who confess their sins to Him, and in this lies their comfort and their strength. Because they fear Him more than they fear any man or the devil himself, they flee from sin and apostasy. Because they love Him and trust Him, their chief desire is to enter into that close fellowship with Him in which perfect love casts out fear."

[506] Thus, Calvin says: "God assigns repentance as the goal towards which they must keep running during the whole course of their lives" (Calvin, 1972, book 3, chap. 3, sec. 9).

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the foregoing work was to find out if any fear remains in OT fear-of-God. I do not consider it to be simply another voice among many other just-as-valid voices in "conversation" in our modern/post-modern world; instead, I consider the results of the dissertation to really reflect (or, at least, to closely reflect) *the truth*—because they are grounded in the truth of God's Word. One might say that my method is ultimately circular; in response, I can only reply like Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68 NIV). The view that God is holy, humankind is sinful, and that evildoers will be condemned in the final judgment, used to be considered a necessary starting point in Christian theological studies. But this view has not been held for a long time by the main bulk of the theological academy. Much has changed in the last century or so, such that the academic results of those who still hold to this starting point (i.e., who are "conservative") are considered to be—as James Barr put it—"increasingly untenable in the modern world."[507] Therefore, as Barr explains, "far from the conservative case making an impact on scholarship, the world of scholarship has no respect for the dogmatic and supernaturalistic kind of conservative apologetic and rightly ignores it."[508] Here, Barr reveals the bottom-line difference between the conservative and liberal theological academic worlds: supernaturalism is assumed by one, rejected by the other. Barr does not overstate the case; in fact, it could be no other way. "Conservative apologetic" is ignored because supernatural causation is ignored. This difference can easily be traced back to the epistemological assumptions that each of the worlds embrace. There is no middle ground; if one rejects supernaturalism in one's scholarly quest to get at the truth, then one—by definition—can only consider *naturalistic* explanations for anything that is contained within the Bible. If supernatural explanations are disallowed, then only natural ones will do. J. Becker and many of the critical-era scholars operated from this anti-supernatural position; but the main problem with this—as I have mentioned in various parts of this work—is the inability to discern what an Israelite's mental/emotional state would have been when confronted with a *real* epiphany and the *real* prospect of inevitable judgment. In other words, because of their anti-supernaturalistic assumption, scholars who have written upon the fear-of-God topic have the following limitation: if there really is a God who broke into time and space in order to raise up a people (the Israelites) in order that the Christ would one day appear, then there is no way for them to correctly discern the emotions and feelings that those people would have experienced before God. This is because the emotions and feelings evoked by the supernatural are different from those evoked by the natural. Insofar as the Bible records

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[507] Barr, 1982, 23.
[508] Ibid., 127.

human reactions to natural events, theological studies undertaken as *science* have at least a chance to get at the truth of things; but insofar as the Bible tells us about God and the works of God that really occurred in history, theological studies undertaken as science can only be silent or try to account for them through naturalistic explanations.

Assumed in my stance is the reliability of the Bible. This is a reflection of God's love for his creation; he cared enough to provide human beings with a clear message so that men and women could read it, apprehend it, and order their lives according to it. This stance is not based on blind faith, but built upon the witness of the God who so loved me that he gave up his only son so that I might have life; it is built upon the witness of those Apostles who knew Christ and were willing to give up their lives so that the world might know him too; my stance is also justified by the amazing history of the church that— despite its many shortcomings (many warned against in the Bible)—has brought great light to the world in proportion to her obedience to preach and live out the true Gospel. The Bible answers all of humankind's greatest questions in a way that is marvelous. Such love, beauty and grace could not have come out of the natural events of primitive men and women fearing before thunderstorms and volcanoes—men and women who then went on to create fictional stories about God in order to drive the cult center to Jerusalem so that religious and political power might be focused there. The main thrust of thought behind the critical reconstruction of Israel's history (that Becker—following Gunkel— relied upon) is that Israel largely created the religious history and theology that is contained within her Scriptures; but how could such love, beauty, grace, and calls to always tell the truth (for the Lord *is* truth) flow out of—if the critics are right—the most stupendous, complicated, long-lived, and most effective fabrication that has ever been foisted by human beings upon their fellow human beings? Can one small people group whose holy book commands "you shall not bear false witness" be so accused? Could the world's greatest lie beget the world's greatest love? I do not think that this is humanly possible—to this titanic scale, at least—nor would God allow it. So I am compelled by conscience to make the assumption of God's reality and God's goodness to be a starting point in both my private *and* academic lives—for the two cannot ultimately be separated.

I believe in the reliability of the Bible because of my understanding that God— being love—would deliver instructions to his earthly children so that they, being made in the image of God, would choose to love God and thereby find eternal life in him. What he would say in his Word about a proper relationship between God and human beings would be especially important because this relationship relates directly to the subject of salvation. Therefore, the phenomenon of fear-of-God in the Bible would be a critical subject because fear is one of the ingredients of a proper relationship with God. Because fear-of-God had come to mean so many different things to scholars in the last century or

so, I perceived that the fear emotion/feeling element of fear-of-God had been excessively downplayed. This perception is what motivated the initiation of this dissertation and its thesis that the fear emotion/feeling does in fact largely remain in OT fear-of-God.

To substantiate this thesis, I thought that it would be important to first look at a number of fear-of-God commentators from the pre-critical and critical eras. As it turns out, real fear was by and large assumed to exist in fear-of-God by the pre-critical commentators based upon their biblical understanding of God as the author, sustainer, and judge of all life. Fear could be generated in the hearts of men and women not only because of the fear of God's punishment, but because of the fear of losing fellowship with God. In the 2nd century AD, Tertullian asked, "Has [the soul] no fear of him whose favour it is so desirous to possess, and whose anger it is so anxious to avoid"?[509] These two fears are highlighted by Augustine in his analogy of the unfaithful and faithful wives: "The one says, I fear my husband, lest he should come: the other says, I fear my husband, lest he depart from me."[510] In a relationship with God, as the fear of losing God's favor grows (which grows with love), then the less excellent—but, nevertheless, legitimate and useful—fear of punishment diminishes. But as Augustine and Thomas taught, they both remain in the believer—because of universal imperfection—till he or she goes to be with the Lord. Thomas claimed, however, that the fear of losing God's fellowship (filial fear) would remain in the eternal state. All the pre-critical era commentators surveyed were unanimous in their understanding that God would one day bring about a final judgment, and that this judgment and God were worthy of one's fear.

But the assumptions and the emphases change in the critical era. To a large extent, theological study was undertaken with the assumption that the history of the Israelites could be accounted for by naturalistic explanations. As a result, the emphasis fell away from the right emotions/feelings that Israel's God insisted that men and women should exhibit before him (and that should also be exhibited today) to an emphasis upon how fear-of-God developed from fear of physical phenomena (volcanoes, thunderstorms, etc.) to the more refined and abstract "fears" (worship, reverence, loyalty, etc.) that appeared as the Israelites/Jews created and refined their cult. This development replaced the fear of the unknown with worship of and obedience to the more predictable God of the cult who could be satiated (and, therefore, less feared) through compliance with the rules of the cult. The supernatural work of God which the pre-critical commentators assumed to result in a legitimate fear emotion/feeling in men and women was largely replaced by a human (natural) work in which humans sought to explain the unknown and thereby reduce the

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[509] Tertullian, 1989, chapter two.
[510] Schaff, 1956, sec. 6.

level of fear.[511] The skeptical epistemology flowing out of the late-eighteenth century that drove OT studies into a more history-of-religions direction was supplemented by the intellectual movements of idealism and romanticism which put an emphasis on personal experience. Between the reconstruction of Israel's history, which resulted in questions about her Scripture's claims to supernatural events, and the turn to the self to find the deepest truths about God, the authority of the Bible diminished and the authority of the individual person increased. As a result, the notion that one should fear the biblical God appeared increasingly irrelevant.

Both of these streams combine in the critical-era work that was the object of major scrutiny in this dissertation, J. Becker's *Gottesfurcht im Alten Testament*. Because so many after him built upon his results and assumed that they were true, I thought it would be worthwhile to see if his results were based upon convincing evidence. It should be pointed out first that Becker is spring-loaded in the non-fear (emotion/feeling) direction; unless a fear-of-God text depicts an "event" that clearly portrays people being in a state of fear (or terror or dread) before God, or unless a "virtue" fear-of-God case (that is, a case that is not a historical event, but is fear-of-God mentioned as a virtue [e.g., "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge"—Prov 1:7]) has *overwhelming* contextual indications that real fear is in view, Becker will normally translate fear-of-God as a more abstract idea—e.g., loyalty, worship, obedience, etc. When he does deem a text to reflect the emotion/feeling of fear, he calls this "numinous" fear—that is, fear of the numinous. But, as I argued in the section on R. Otto, this term (which was invented by Otto) denotes an understanding of God that makes the difference between God and the person who perceives God indistinct. When Otto speaks about the numinous, one is not really certain if he is talking about the biblical God or a God that is completely subjective and does not correspond to objective reality. There is confusion as to whether the numinous is the thing feared or the fear itself. This subjectivity then dovetails with Becker's form-critical assumption that the Israelite religion began as emotional responses to threatening natural phenomena that were first experienced long before the nation came to be. Therefore Becker can call the "numinous" a "recognized history-of-religion and psychology-of-religion terminus" and use it to denote the fear that generally appeared early in the formation of the religion.[512] But, to the best of my knowledge, neither Otto or Becker use

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[511] As Gunkel, 1928, 18, 19, said (upon whose ideas Becker builds his own): "To Old Testament Science the Bible is in the first instance a book produced by human means in human ways. Science has brought it down from heaven and set it up in the midst of the earth." The Committee for the Scientific Examination of Religion concurs: "The historical school of criticism, which began in Germany in the early nineteenth century (but with strong eighteenth-century antecedents) regarded the Bible as a 'human' work—a work of the religious imagination." (CSER colloquium. Threat to enlightenment: The challenges to the historical-critical method, 2006, 17)

[512] Becker, 1965, 19.

the term "numinous" to designate the biblical God, or, for that matter, to designate the emotion/feeling experienced before the biblical God. Somehow the notion of God and the emotion/feeling of God get blended together. But this is nothing like the God of the Bible and actually goes against the most basic truth presented in the Bible that God is radically distinct from the creation and existed long before the creation (including human emotions and feelings) ever came to be.

For the virtue fear-of-God cases whose contexts do not so much illumine what is meant by "fear," Becker usually assigns these abstract meanings that are more or less in accord with the form-critical expectation for the literary form they are in. It should be recalled that Becker's study is not an investigation into the meaning of OT fear-of-God *per se*; rather, it is an investigation that seeks to add support to the discipline of form criticism by showing that the fear-of-God concept did evolve and was used in particular ways in large sections of the OT that were written by certain people at certain times during the development of the cult.[513] As a result, Becker designates most virtue fear-of-God cases found in the Deuteronomistic literature as denoting loyalty to the covenant God; in the Psalms, he designates most as indicating belongingness to the cult community; the literary form of wisdom literature generally uses fear-of-God to denote those who live morally and who are upright. Perhaps the main evidence that he gives that this is true is the fact that each literary form tends to have its own unique fear-of-God linguistic form (usually using various forms of ירא): the Deuteronomistic literary form prefers the plain verb, the Psalms group employs the plural verbal-adjective plus YHWH, and the wisdom group uses the noun. This is in keeping with Gunkel's idea that each literary layer of the OT would have its own linguistic fingerprint. Becker also appeals in many cases to synonymous parallels that always drive the meaning of "fear" toward the meaning of the parallel. For example, "fear" in "now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness" (Josh 24:14 NIV) means that one should serve God. The semantic force never goes the other way (i.e., "serve" means "fear").

But all this is insufficient reason to bring fear-of-God so far off its semantic base of the fear emotion/feeling. There are several reasons why this is so: first, the *linguistic forms* can be easily accounted for by the function of the material in which they are found (that is, there are many verbs in Deut-2 Kings because it is mainly narrative; there are many plural participles in the Psalms because the Psalms refer to groups of people *who* do this and *who* do that; there is a preponderance of nouns in the wisdom literature because fear-of-God is a topic in its own right.). Second, the conclusions that he draws from the

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[513] Becker, in his foreword, acknowledges that his work builds upon and seeks to confirm the form-critical theories of H. Gunkel. Gunkel's anti-supernatural bias is evident when he calls the OT a "roguish piece of [Hebrew] folk-lore" (Gunkel, 1928, 16, 17).

many cases of parallelism involving virtue fear-of-God are most likely not accurate—for even if a virtue fear-of-God text is in synonymous parallel with, for example, "serve," the main element that drives the meaning of the parallel may not be "serve," but "fear" (but Becker always has it such that the parallel to fear-of-God always drives the meaning); the parallelism could also be something other than synonymous, or the two components of the parallel could simply mean what each of them literally says. In addition, it should also be said that it is unlikely that the alleged synonymous parallels could drive fear-of-God to signify as many meanings as Becker suggests (i.e., it is unlikely that ירא could semantically be so elastic). Third, there are few contextual clues that support Becker. In his foreword, Becker says that he will let the "prevailing context" provide evidence that certain linguistic forms do indeed correspond to certain fear-of-God meanings; but, at least with most of the virtue fear-of-God instances, the "prevailing context" does not give any indication that would support Becker's interpretations. The only context that might (and in my view probably does) provide any interpretational weight to many of the virtue fear-of-God passages is the general threatening mood that surrounds them. With many, the clouds of judgment for sin can be seen on the horizon—but that is all. The "local" (that is, within a verse or two) context usually contributes nothing to what "fear" might mean in most virtue fear-of-God OT texts. But Becker still gives meanings that correspond to form-critical expectations, and in this way it strongly appears that his results do not in the end support form-critical assertions, but repeats them.

After the interaction with the various fear-of-God commentators, I then presented the results from an investigation of all the OT fear texts that employ ירא (chapter two [and I looked at a number of passages employing other words for fear as well]). As mentioned already, most of the "event" cases (total of 216) have contexts that clearly indicate the fear emotion/feeling. The "virtue" fear-of-God cases (total of 181) by their nature mostly do not have any immediate contextual clues that would inform the reader of what "fear" means. These virtue fear-of-God texts are thus vulnerable to misinterpretation. The statistics generated show that virtue fear-of-God is seen in early and late sections of the OT, and although there are—as Becker pointed out—clusters of linguistic forms in certain literary forms, these literary forms by no means consist exclusively of these linguistic forms. This shows that, while there may be a trend of linguistic form use in a given literary form, it is certainly not law-like. Finally, I could not find anything in the OT that *teaches* that the idea of fear-of-God has semantically shifted. I could also find no text that *condemns* the emotion/feeling of fear exhibited before God;[514] on the other hand, every passage that mentions any lack of the fear

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[514] There are, of course, a number of epiphany passages in which the fearers are told not to be afraid; but these passages never indicate a *condemnation* of the fear or in any way indicate that

emotion/feeling before God always in some way presents that lack of fear in a bad light (see, e.g., Ps 36:1[2] and Eccl 8:13).

But perhaps Becker was correct, and the fear-of-God concept really did significantly evolve. If this were so, it would not be surprising to find fully-evolved uses of fear-of-God in the NT. But after studying many NT fear-of-God texts, I concluded (see chapter three) that NT fear-of-God still remains very close to its fear roots—although it can at times connote more abstract meanings. The threat of God's judgment remains in the NT; but because the solution to evil and death has been identified, it could be said that there is no more need to fear God. This is a good point; but it must as well be pointed out that, while death is overcome, the NT reveals that the everlasting life that will be given to unbelievers will be one of unspeakable suffering—and this therefore justifies fear before God (see, e.g., Luke 23:40). It was not my aim in chapter three to argue for or against the doctrine of eternal security (perseverance of the saints). While I tend to agree with this comforting doctrine, at the same time I am compelled to point out the many warning texts—given to both believers and unbelievers—in the NT that seem to be a check against believers falling into pharisaical behavior and/or falling away from faith. The admonishments to persist in one's faith and the warnings to not fall away are so prevalent in the NT that the following fact cannot be avoided: from the perspective of human beings on earth (who cannot completely know the eternal mind of the God who predestines the eternal direction of human beings) the option of walking away from God is always open (otherwise, there would—for believers at least—be no need for such urgent warnings). In other words, during life "under the sun," human beings are *in danger*.[515] While there are NT passages that indicate that fear is no longer necessary because of the assurance that believers have in Christ, these must be held in tension with many others that discourage a completely relaxed (i.e., fear-free) attitude when it comes to a believer's relationship with God and his or her understanding of his or her own salvation. For example, Paul says in Rom 8:15 that believers "did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear," but have instead received the "spirit of adoption." But later in the book, Paul warns the grafted-in Church to "consider … the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off" (Rom 11:22 NIV). Once again, my intention is not to argue this question along the lines of one doctrine or another, but only to point out that the NT has many warnings—many given to believers—and not a few

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it is evil. The OT commands to not be afraid are meant to calm the fearers' *inappropriate level* of fear—but to lose it completely would be unwise and be in violation of the many more commands to fear God.

[515] Heb 10:19-39 is one of the most extended and earnest warnings against falling away from faith.

calls to fear God. These combine to give the strong impression that believers should not be completely fear-free before God and take their salvation for granted.

That fear-of-God can connote a more refined aspect of a person's relationship with God is perhaps best attested in Jesus' quote of Deut 6:13 in Matt 4:10 (parallel Luke 4:8). When Jesus responded to Satan's desire to be worshipped, he said: "Away with you, Satan! for it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'" Jesus' use here of "worship" (προσκυνέω) is different from Deut 6:13 where the MT employs ירא (and the LXX uses φοβέω). This is noteworthy and demonstrates at least that virtue fear-of-God can *connote* more abstract concepts, and, at most, can actually *denote* them.[516] It should be pointed out that προσκυνέω has its roots in the idea of prostrating one's self (before a king, god, etc.—see TDNT); falling prostrate before a mighty authority and fearing were in those days often understood to go together—so the fear emotion/feeling in Jesus' quote might not be altogether out of view. It might also be mentioned that Jesus' reply was driven somewhat by Satan's offer to be *worshipped* in exchange for all the world's kingdoms. I do not want to say that Jesus changed the Deuteronomy text in order to fit the occasion, but only that he perhaps emphasized a secondary meaning instead of a primary one. Whatever the case, this passage should be considered in view of Rom 3:18 in which Paul quotes Ps 36:1 (2). The source text strongly suggests that wicked people should fear God because of the danger that they are in. Paul's highlight of universal sin indicates that he uses this fear-of-God text in the same way: wicked people have "no fear of God before their eyes"—but they ought to. These OT quotes by Jesus and Paul indicate that worship (at least in the sense of bowing down) and the emotion/feeling of fear are both NT components of fear-of-God. Many of the remaining NT fear-of-God texts, however, tend to emphasize the latter—and perhaps Matt 10:28 (parallel Luke 12:5) is the bluntest; for there Jesus clearly taught that one ought to exhibit the fear emotion/feeling before the God who alone has the authority and power to "destroy both body and soul in hell."

Between how Jesus quoted Deut 6:13 and how Qoheleth speaks of the fear-of-God being the "whole duty" of human beings (Eccl 12:13), it seems clear that virtue fear-of-God can be much more than fear, yet never devoid of fear. The idea of "worship" is perhaps not far away from what Qoheleth (or the epilogist) intended for the reader to apprehend; for the fear emotion/feeling alone cannot be—from either an OT or a NT perspective—the state of the human heart that justifies a man or a woman before God. The "whole duty" that will best prepare a man or a woman for the judgment of God that Qoheleth mentions can certainly begin in being afraid of God's punishment, but must

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[516] See my extended discussion of this text in FN 233. I owe the idea of and the use of the terms "denote" and "connote" to Clines, 2003 (see my FN 471).

transform into faith before it can be credited to him or her as righteousness. Yet, if one's faith—if it were possible—were to develop such that no fear of God remained, then this would put a person back under the condemnation of Rom 3:18 (Ps 36:1 [2])—because *all* men and women are sinful. That person would also be in violation of Jesus' command (Matt 10:28) to fear God.[517] But with Eccl 12:12, it still might be the case that Qoheleth did intend "fear God!" to denote real fear, and knew that the commandments of the Mosaic Law referred to in "keep his commandments" would include the relational components—especially the component of love (see Deut 6:5)—that justify a man or a woman before God.

An important fact should not be forgotten: even in those virtue fear-of-God passages that could connote something other than the fear emotion/feeling, the fact still remains that "fear" is the biblical word of choice. As per my understanding of the inspired nature of Scripture that I mentioned in the introduction, I must view this as an intentional choice by the Lord. If he chose to frequently define a desirable relationship with him with the word "fear," then translators and interpreters should be hesitant to do otherwise. In most of the OT (and NT) cases in which translators interpret virtue fear-of-God into something other than fear, the translators—as best as I can tell in view of the foregoing study—simply do not have enough information to make their translations sure and accurate. In most virtue fear-of-God texts, one of any number of abstract ideas could fit; there are simply few if any contextual clues that would show which translation is best. This is the reason why virtue fear-of-God texts in the OT are translated in so many ways. God could have very easily used words for "to honor" or "to revere" or "to be obedient," for example, if he had wanted readers to do these things (and, in fact he does in the many "virtue" cases that use these words). But with 181 OT cases, God chose to let ירא ("fear") define a desirable relationship with him. If translators take out this word—which God chose to use—then the fear emotion/feeling that God might well have intended to denote will be lost. There are also tacit (intentional or unintentional) ramifications for theology and anthropology: to reduce God's fearfulness is to reduce the attributes of God that evoke fear in human beings—i.e., his omnipotence, omniscience, absolute authority, and, most important, his absolute holiness. To reduce the fear that he is due (see Ps 90:11) is to not fully appreciate what these attributes are, what they mean, or how a sinful man or woman would react when confronted with the holy God who in both testaments (Deut 4:24; Heb 12:29) is said to be a "consuming fire." Anthropology is also affected—but in an ironic way: by downplaying the idea that men and women should manifest the fear emotion/feeling before God, this at first seems to make men and women closer to God; but the effect could be the opposite. Men and women are made in God's image, which

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[517] It is interesting to note that this command was given to his disciples.

means each has a mind and a moral nature by which a man or a woman—just like Adam and Eve in the garden—can choose the right or the wrong and exercise the greatest love or hate in the process. Human beings are "fearfully and wonderfully made" and—for those who are in Christ—will one day be the bride of the Son of God. Christians are being conformed into the image of Christ (who was made "a little lower than God" [Ps 8:5]) *through their consent*. If people do not want anything to do with Christ—at least from our earthly perspective—it appears that God will not bring them into a relationship with him against their will (and there are enough warning passages in Scripture to strongly suspect that this is indeed the case). When theologians are pressured to take away human *consent* in order to achieve, for example, eternal security for believers, then these theologians would predictably understand less reason for believers to fear God; but the price they pay is the degradation of the essential *imago dei* of humankind.

In view of the results from this study, I conclude that the fear emotion/feeling remains at the heart of OT fear-of-God. We in the West should not think badly about fear—for it is in the end simply a pain-like sign that God graciously gives to men and women to alert them of danger. In the OT, reporting about the good blessings of God is balanced by the reporting about the curses of God. This balance was apparently designed to bring about the right kind and the right level of fear-of-God that would give the best chances for a proper relationship with God. In preaching and teaching we should strive for a similar balance—that is, between love and fear, God's grace and God's judgment, and heaven and hell; for eternal destinies of men and women are at stake, and God will hold preachers and teachers to a stricter judgment (James 3:1) because they present themselves—and people perceive them—as *shepherds*. Finally, when teaching or preaching about fear-of-God, the flock should be reminded that it is in the end all about God's love; for God is "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet 3:9 NKJV). He takes "no pleasure in the death of the wicked" (Ezek 33:11); nevertheless, the Bible clearly teaches that most men and women have refused, are refusing, and will refuse to accept Jesus Christ as Lord—for "the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it" (Matt 7:13). The future for them, according to the writer of Hebrews (Heb 10:27), is the "fearful prospect of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries." The "fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov 9:10) because it is a foundational part of God's loving providence that gives men and women the ability to sense that they are in danger, and provides for them the motivation to seek the God who can save them from that danger.

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253

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Pilot with American Airlines; various ministry responsibilities at First Church of Kew Gardens, Queens, New York.

<u>1984-1992</u>

US Navy pilot with Training Squadron 19, Meridian, Mississippi; Attack Squadron 27, Lemoore, California (when at sea, aboard the USS Carl Vinson); Strike-Fighter Squadron 127, Fallon, Nevada; committed my life to Jesus Christ, February, 1990.

<u>1982-1984</u>

US Navy student pilot at Naval Air Station (NAS) Pensacola, Florida; NAS Corpus Christi, Texas; NAS Meridian, Mississippi; NAS Kingsville, Texas.

<u>1978-1982</u>

Student at the Citadel, Charleston, South Carolina (B.A. Math 1982).

<u>1977-1978</u>

Salesman with Contacts Influential Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

<u>1976-1977</u>

Student at Clark Community College, Vancouver, Washington.

<u>1972-1976</u>

Student at Washougal High School, Washougal, Washington.

Date of Birth: June 28, 1958. Raised mainly near Washougal, Washington (USA) by my father and mother, Christian († 1995) and Nancy Engleman.