ROOTS 13, no. 1 (2025): 48-73.
DOI: 10.24193/ROOTS.2025.1.3

The Divine Face as Theopoeia in the Psalter: Insights from the Orthodox Tradition

Abstract

Ever since the launch of the historical-critical approach, academic studies of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament have been dominated by its presupposition that, against the overwhelming witness of early and Orthodox Christian interpretive traditions (as well as early Jewish), in the Scriptures one is given narratives—stories, messages, descriptions, concepts, etc. Nevertheless, the Book of Psalms has consistently frustrated this interpretive instinct fundamental to academic studies. My paper—building on this frustration and drawing on recent proposals to discard historical criticism as a useful approach to the Old Testament—argues that the Psalter on its own is aligned with the aforementioned early and eastern Christian appropriations of it. More specifically, the Psalter puts forth the imagery of the "Face" of God in a de-narrativized fashion, neither as a concept, nor as a description (belonging to a past to be recalled or re-actualized in the act of reading), but as an open and ongoing divine embodiment to be had by the visionary and the hearer-speaker of the scriptural text at once.

Rev. **SILVIU BUNTA**
University of Dayton
fathersilviu@gmail.com

Keywords

Biblical Hermeneutics, Orthodox Hermeneutics, Biblical Conceptions of God, Divine Face, Psalms

I must open this study[1] with three methodological clarifications. First and foremost, when I refer to the Greek text of the Old Testament, I do not have in mind the text commonly published as "the Septuagint." This is because "the Septuagint" as we know it today is of scholarly provenance and relevance, meant to reconstruct the most probable original text. In contrast, the Greek Old Testament as it has been transmitted

in the Orthodox Church (henceforth LXX) is a text built through tradition or reception and not on any academic considerations. Therefore, the base text of my study is the one I translated into English under the title *The Orthodox Psalter* and it is expressed by three manuscripts: the one printed in 1700 in Snagov by Antim Ivireanul, the Greek manuscript 2132 of the Monastery of Sinai, and the renowned manuscript 43 of the Pantokrator monastery (Bunta 2022a)[2]. Although these come from different locations and times, they contain very few divergent readings, a fact that attests to the stability of their shared textual form and to its centrality in the Orthodox world in general.

The second methodological point is anticipated by the above remarks. Between the historical-critical exegesis and the hermeneutic expressed in the various texts central to Orthodoxy (such as, liturgy, hymnography, and patristic works) there is an unbridgeable chasm, as it has been evidenced in several recent studies (Legaspi 2011; Bunta 2025; Bunta 2022b)[3]. The former favors meanings, contexts, and methodological procedures—attitudes and interests that are fundamentally historical, of distance from the text—while the latter favors the participation and transformation of the reader, attitudes that abandon history. Furthermore, historical-critical exegesis cannot but close what happens in the text inside the text and its context. This is to say that the text remains always a closed space accessible to examination from without. Contrary to this approach, the biblical texts themselves exhibit features that integrate the hearer-speaker, that inscribe him within themselves. This integration takes place in one bidirectional motion: as I explained elsewhere, the Scriptures not only interpret themselves, interpretation that has already been aptly called "inner-biblical" exegesis[4], but also want to be interpreted in a certain manner, and for this phenomenon I proposed the mirror term of "outer-biblical" exegesis. As I already noted, the substance of this one bidirectional motion is the integration of the hearer-speaker [5] into the text and this is to say that the meaning of a text emerges in the manner in which the hearer-speaker is described and transformed by it.

Unequipped to perceive this hermeneutics that comes out of the Scriptures themselves and that frustrates analytical pursuits, the historical-critical mindset must be put aside for insights from early exegesis or from its forms enduring in living traditions[6]. Nevertheless, the argument of this study is still made possible by recent advancements made in historical criticism (including in a recent book of mine), specifically, by the position that the theology of early Judaism—biblical and para-biblical—conceives a divinity that is fluid and physical, both embodied and shared, in terms similar to the

pro-nicene Alexandrian theology (Bunta 2021)[7]. The principal point of my study is that the divine is also embodied and shared in the encounters with its face in the psalms. These two aspects of this theophanic space—embodiment and sharing—are discrete only from an etic perspective. From an emic position there is no such distinction. Just as in the pro-nicene Alexandrian theology the incarnation of God *is* his sharing (among other things, this is what it means to say that "what has not been assumed has not been healed"), so also in the theological space of the psalms the embodied divine face makes gods. This—I will emphasize as a secondary point—happens not only within the text, but also out of the text: the visionary within the text is deified in the encounter with the divine face just as is also deified the hearer-speaker of the text, whom the text integrates into the same deifying encounter.

My third methodological point is introduced by the fact that this is not only the hermeneutics of the Scriptures themselves, but also the hermeneutics of the Orthodox Tradition. Yet, in this study I will not so much look at how later Orthodox exegesis reads the Scriptures as much as *I will do what Orthodox exegesis does*. In other words, I will work on the Scriptures themselves in an Orthodox manner. In the terms of current study-field differentiations, this is not a study of reception history but a study of the Scriptures themselves. Later on, I will even draw the outlook of the "reception history" category into question[8].

For the naming of this God-space in which divinity is shared in text and through text, I decided to reclaim a term from theosophy—"theopoeia." As far as I can tell, it was coined in English in 1867[9] based on ancient Hermeticism in order to name the ancient art of endowing inanimate representations of the gods with living divinity[10]. Shortly after, it was popularized with this connotation by Helena P. Blavatsky. Yet, early Christian texts use this precise term—it is a Greek word, after all—to denote the very vision that I propose here for a psalmic theology. This ancient sense is the precise opposite of the sense that the term came to acquire in modern usage: it is not that the human being endows with divine life a representation of the divine, as something ultimately distinct from both God and people, but God transforms his own image—the human being—into himself. This early Christian usage of the concept is attested, for example, in the following text from Clement of Alexandria:

> Godliness (*θεοσέβεια*), which assimilates the human being to God as much as it is possible, marks God as a congruent teacher (*κατάλληλον διδάσκαλον*), the one who

> alone can model the human after God as much as it is worthy. The apostle who knows this teaching as truly divine says, "You, O Timothy, from a babe have known the sacerdotal letters (*ἱερὰ γράμματα*), which are able to make you wise unto salvation, through faith that is in Christ" (2 Tim 3:15). For truly holy are the letters that make one sacerdotal and divine (*ἱεροποιοῦντα καὶ θεοποιοῦντα*). (Clement of Alexandria, *Protreptikos* 9.86. 2-9.87.1-2)[11]

It is noteworthy that the Alexandrian theologian perceives the scriptural letters as deifying, a quality that he identifies as sacerdotal or liturgical.

The Face of God in the Text

In the masoretic text of the psalms (henceforth MT) the term "face" (*panim*) occurs 133 times[12]. In the Orthodox Greek text the word that usually translates it, *πρόσωπον*, is used 94 times (including four times in the superscriptions of psalms 3, 33, and 56). Not all of these uses are in reference to the divine face, but what is surprising and particularly significant for my argument about this usage is the fact that at times the divine face is desired and encountered in digestive terms. I will offer only the most significant examples. The translations are all mine and they sacrifice the aesthetic in order to retain the idiosyncrasies of the original text:

> You will fill me of gladness with your Face, delight(s) at your right to the end (*πληρώσεις με εὐφροσύνης μετὰ τοῦ προσώπου σου, τερπνότητες/τερπνότης ἐν τῇ δεξιᾷ σου εἰς τέλος*—Ps 15:11/12).[13]
>
> But I will appear to your Face in righteousness, I will fatten on the appearance of your Glory (*ἐγὼ δὲ ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ ὀφθήσομαι τῷ προσώπῳ σου, χορτασθήσομαι ἐν τῷ ὀφθῆναί μοι τὴν δόξαν σου*—Ps 16:16).
>
> For you will give him blessing to age of age, and will gladden him in delight with your Face (*ὅτι δώσεις αὐτῷ εὐλογίαν εἰς αἰῶνα αἰῶνος, εὐφρανεῖς αὐτὸν ἐν χαρᾷ μετὰ τοῦ προσώπου σου*—Ps 20:6).
>
> My soul thirsted for the God of strength who lives. When will I come and appear to the Face of God (*ἐδίψησεν ἡ ψυχή μου πρὸς τὸν θεὸν τὸν ἰσχυρὸν, τὸν ζῶντα· πότε ἥξω καὶ ὀφθήσομαι τῷ προσώπῳ τοῦ θεοῦ*—Ps 41:2)?

Ps 16:16 requires special attention. In general, modern translations of the Greek text—across languages—render *χορτασθήσομαι* as "I will be sated" or "I will be filled." It is possible this translation choice is made with an eye toward the masoretic text,

which has here שבע, "to be sated."[14] Yet, in only 14 out of its 119 appearances does שבע correspond to the LXX *χορτάζω*, including in Ps 16:16[15]. Its corresponding Greek verbs are usually *πίμπλημι* (for the transitive) and *πλήθω* (for the intransitive).

There is a good reason for this: *χορτάζω* is not a good translation of שבע. The latter denotes eating to the point of satiety. The Greek *χορτάζω* has a different connotation. Derived from the noun *χόρτος*, "animal fodder," it originally denoted the domestic feeding of animals, more or less forced. When it started being used for people—such as in Plato—it retained this initial sense and it was pejorative, with the sense of eating without any higher thoughts or leanings, like an animal[16]. In later usage, such as at the time of the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, it carries the sense of "to fatten." Therefore, although the Greek verb somewhat overlaps semantically with the Hebrew term, it nevertheless carries a unique aspect: it takes the image of satiety further, into fattening.

Of course, the Hebrew form of Ps 16:16 is also significant, with its parallelism between the beholding of the face and the satiety achieved on the divine form. It is possibly the earliest testimony to the widespread ancient Jewish and Christian tradition of feeding on the divine presence[17]. Yet, the Greek version adds the sense of enlargement to this imagery.

This sense of the verse becomes clearer in its contrast to the preceding verse, 16:15: "They have fattened with sons, and they left the remnants to their children (*ἐχορτάσθησαν υἱῶν*[18] *καὶ ἀφῆκαν τὰ κατάλοιπα τοῖς νηπίοις*[19] *αὐτῶν*)." In the two adjacent verses, the contrast is between the sinner who fattens on the flesh of his own children—a sort of transgenerational and familial cannibalism—and the righteous who fattens on the glory of God, which is the same thing as the divine face. It is shocking but clear that the action of the sinner and of the righteous are one and the same, of expansive feeding (expressed by the same verb *χορτάζω*). The only difference between them is the substance of this action.

Historical-critical approaches can only see in this imagery a metaphorical language, unreal, reduced to effect, the more so the more difficult it is to consider as real the consumption of the flesh of one's own children. As much as this historical-critical perspective resonates with our own (post-)modern sensibilities and as much as these resonances can obscure the presuppositions undergirding this position, assuming that this perspective is purely linguistic would be a fundamental error; rather, it is one of worldview. And herein lies the problem. Such interpretations of the scriptural vocabulary—built on the materialism and intellectualism of modernity—do

not simply solve a literal-metaphoric tension on the side of the metaphoric, but more fundamentally they themselves engender this tension or dichotomy and project it back on the Jewish antiquity in which it has no place (and, I would say, also the Christian antiquity). For the inhabitants of the historical-critical worldview, reality (including the biblical text) is situated on a flat, bidimensional plane, and is splintered among domains that are fundamentally discrete, of different ontologies, even though they may be adjacent and related. Furthermore, one crosses from one domain to another through methodological alternation[20]. In this worldview, the theophagy image in the psalms belongs to the immaterial and—more or less in consequence of this—the unreal, and the correct method leads naturally toward the conclusion that the reader faces poetic expressiveness.

In contrast, in the ancient Jewish (and Christian) perception reality is tridimensional, or rather it is essentially vertical, and the access to it is not methodological and alternative, but ascetical and progressive. The world does not consist of discrete ontologies, even if it is both material and immaterial (it is so at once, in all things). These are only dimensions of the one and same unsplintered life, not domains. The human being participates in these dimensions—or rather is part of them—in a natural and informal manner (even if it may do so with inquisition), and not from the position of a methodologist. As such, the literal and the nonliteral of this worldview do not overlap with the real-material and the unreal-immaterial of (post-)modernity, but are progressive appropriations of the same unsplintered reality. The nonliteral is the literal in hiddenness or depth and the literal is the nonliteral in sight or at surface.

Therefore, in that world so different from ours the human being *truly* fattens—or can fatten—on the face of God, just as it fattens *truly* on the flesh of other people. A breath of fresh air is coming today from the most recent advancements in psychological research, which finally are abandoning the Descartian dichotomizing partition between psyche and body that so defines modernity (even in modernity's complete turn to mechanical materialism and reduction of the psyche to physical activities). Against this background, when St. John Chrysostom uses this very image of cannibalism in reference to the psychosomatic reality of human evil, he cannot be reproached for not speaking of something real, or for not using language in a literal sense[21]. Along the same lines, when, after the discussion with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, the Lord Jesus is asked by disciples to eat and he speaks of having fed on the will of the Father (Jn 4:31-34), he still does not partake immediately afterwards of something physical

and the disciples no longer insist on material food. It is improper or anachronistic to wonder whether Christ remained *truly* hungry.

In all of the above there is ample evidence for drawing the very opposite conclusion from the one too commonly advanced by historical-criticism: that the "face of God" in the psalms is a schematic symbol for an immaterial divine presence and that the language of the encounter with it is figurative. The fleshliness of the divine face is especially obvious in the contrast between Ps 16:15 and 16:16. Therefore, when the same shocking Greek verb *χορτάζω* appears in the fourth New Testament beatitude (to which I will return shortly), "Happy are the ones who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be fattened (*χορτασθήσονται*)" (Mt 5:6), the conclusion should be that "Righteousness" was meant here as synonymous with an embodied and shared divinity.

Ancient exegesis—both Jewish and Christian—is finely attuned to these intricacies of the scriptural vocabulary and provide congruent interpretations about an embodied divinity shared in transformative and expansive deification[22]. For example, the ancient rabbis—who confront the difficult Hebrew version of Ps 16:16—speak nevertheless of a human transformation[23], even if only eschatological:

> What is the meaning of the words, I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness (Ps 16:16 MT)? R. Nahman b. Isaac said: This refers to the students of the Torah who banish sleep from their eyes in this world, and whom the Holy One, blessed be He, feasts with the resplendence of the Divine presence in the future world. (*Baba Bathra* 10a)[24]

On the Christian side, St. Gregory of Nyssa offers an exemplary interpretation. He even notes the parallelism between Ps 16:16 and Ps 41:2, and also mentions the fourth beatitude:

> The Lord offers himself to the appetite (*ὄρεξις*) of the ones who hear him, he who has become for us "wisdom from God, justification and sanctification and redemption" (l Cor 1:30), but also "bread coming down from heaven" (Jn 6:50) and "living water" (Jn 4:10), for whom David confesses desire in a psalmody, offering to God this most-blessed longing (*τὸ μακαριστὸν τοῦτο πάθος*) of the soul in what he says, "My soul thirsted for the God of strength, who lives. When will I come and appear to the Face of God?" (Ps 41:3). David, it seems to me, . . . also claims for himself the fulfillment of this desire. "But I," he says, "will appear to your Face in righteousness, I will fatten on the appearance

> of your Glory" (Ps 16:16). This [the Glory] then, as I understand it, the true Virtue, the Good unmixed with evil, … God the Word himself, the "Virtue" that, as Habakkuk explains, has covered the heavens (Hab 3:3), and the ones who hunger for this Justification of God were well called "blessed." For the one who tastes God, as the psalmody says (Ps 33:8), that is, the one who received God into himself (*ὁ ἐν ἑαυτῷ δεξάμενος τὸν Θεὸν*), becomes actually full of that for which he thirsted and hungered, according to the promise that says, "I and the Father will come and will dwell in him" (Jn 14:23), of course with the Holy Spirit dwelling there in advance. Thus it also seems to me that the great Paul, who tasted of those forbidden fruits of the paradise and is full of that which he tasted, is also hungry for ever (*ἀεὶ πεινῶν*). For he confesses that he became full of the one desired when he says, "Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20), and that he, as one hungry forever, reaches for those ahead of him (*τοῖς ἔμπροσθεν ἐπεκτείνεται*), when he says, "Not that I have already obtained, or that I have already been perfected, but I pursue so that I may also grab" (Phil 3:12). Let us be allowed to say hypothetically—as much as we are able—something that does not exist naturally. It is as if with material food; if nothing of those taken in as food is excreted, but everything is absorbed toward adding to the stature of the body, then the bodies would enlarge in stature ever more, as the daily food would increase their dimensions. In the same manner, this Justification [Christ] and all the virtue that accompanies it—as that which is eaten by a spiritual consumption is not excreted—makes the ones partaking of it ever greater to eternity, always enlarging their dimension by adding to it. (Gregory of Nyssa, *Homilies on the Beatitudes* 4.7)[25]

The image is of the human being becoming divine, becoming a temple that expands in perpetuity to the ever greater size of the containment of the uncontainable God. It should also be noted that Gregory of Nyssa offers a typical early Christian explanation that the "Face" and "Glory" in all the scriptural texts he quotes—including our psalms of reference—are titles of the incarnate Christ, chronology notwithstanding[26]. Furthermore, even though the text indicates the existential and critical character of the divine embodiment in the expanding saint and this character is an important dimension of the Gregorian concept of *epektasis*, it cannot be said that the imagery of human expansion through the filling with God is purely Gregorian. The image that St. Gregory bases on the Scriptures—including on our psalm verses—is also found in earlier authors, besides the aforementioned Scriptures themselves. Three examples should suffice. The first comes from half a century earlier and from a cultural context very different from the Cappadocia of St. Gregory—from Aphrahat of Persia:

660 23 Who has perceived the *place* of knowledge?
24 Who has attained to the roots of wisdom? And who
25 has insight into the *place* of understanding? …
661 6 Whoever has *opened* the *door* of his *heart*
7 finds it, and whoever unfolds the wings of his *intellect*
8 possesses it. It *dwells* in the man who is diligent,
9 and is *implanted* in the *heart* of the sage,
10 whose nerves are set firmly in their sources, and [so]
11 in it [i.e., the heart] he possesses a *hidden treasure*. His thought *flies*
12 to all the *heights*, and his pondering
13 descends to all the depths. …
15 All things created
16 are *enclosed* within his *thought*, and he
17 *becomes vast* so as to receive still more. He becomes
18 the *great temple* of his *Creator*. Indeed, *the King* of the Heights
19 *enters* and *dwells* in him … (Aphrahat the Persian, *Demonstration* 14.35)[27]

The other two authors to employ the same imagery can be cited together, since one of the them—Origen—cites and incorporates the second one, who has already been identified by Gregory of Nyssa—Paul the Apostle:

> "We suffer affliction but we are not in anguish" (2 Cor 4:8). ... Not only does that affliction of the saints contain no anguish (*angustiam*), but it has breadth (*latitudinem*). For this is what the righteous man declares, "You enlarged me in affliction" (Ps 4:1). The Apostle, being himself conscious of this breadth, writes as well to the Corinthians, "You are not anguished over me but you are anguished in your own affections." And he has added, "Enlarge yourselves as well" (2 Cor 6:12–13). This is also the reason why God says concerning his saints, whom he has known to be enlarged (*dilatari*) and who have spacious and broad rooms (*spatia longe lateque diffusa*) in the dwelling place of their hearts (*intra cordis sui domicilium*), "I shall dwell in them and I shall walk about [in them]" (2 Cor 6:16, which quotes Lev 26:12). … God not only dwells in this breadth of heart of his saints, he walks about in it. … That soul that complies with the truth is enlarged and spread out (dilatatur, atque diffunditur) like the heavens. And, illuminated by the rays of the "sun of righteousness" (Mal 3:20), it becomes a palace of Wisdom and Truth [that is, Christ]. (Origen, *Commentary on Romans* 2.6)[28]

A second aspect of theopoeia in the psalms must be mentioned now. Between the deified human face and the divine face there is even a certain mirroring and reciprocity, as Ps 26:11 suggests:

> To you my heart said, I will seek the Lord. *My face* sought you out; *your Face*, O Lord, I will seek (*σοὶ εἶπεν ἡ καρδία μου, Κύριον ζητήσω, ἐξεζήτησέ σε τὸ πρόσωπόν μου· τὸ πρόσωπόν σου, Κύριε, ζητήσω*).

This element gives the psalmic imagery the clearest reverberation with the Sinai narrative, which—among a few other themes—is dominated by the imagery of seeking the face of God. Furthermore, the insistent language of Ps 26:11 is drawn into the inverse parallelism between Sinai and the postlapsarian paradise, parallelism that hinges on more than the word "face": in paradise the first humans hide "from the *face* of the Lord God *in the midst* of the wood" (*ἀπὸ προσώπου κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ ξύλου*, Gn 3:8), on Sinai Moses seeks the face of God who—although he is unveiling his place and his back—hides his face "*from the midst* of the cloud" (*ἐκ μέσου τῆς νεφέλης*, Ex 24:16,18) or "*from the midst* of the fire" (*ἐκ μέσου τοῦ πυρός*, Dt 5:4). Yet, according to the Deuteronomist, Moses' desire does not remain unfulfilled and the prophet finds God "face-against-face" (*πρόσωπον κατὰ πρόσωπον*, Dt 5:4; 34:10)[29]. The preposition κατά only accentuates—with overtones of conflict—the reciprocity and interpenetration in the encounter between God's face and his holy person. And this interpenetration stands in sharp contrast to the failed—or rather refused—encounter in paradise. On Sinai and in the psalms the hearer-speaker encounters what in paradise remains unfulfilled: the making of the theopoetic space, in which gods are created and in which God and humans merge and share a common face. The promise of the serpent in Gn 3:5 further frames the paradise narrative in these counter-Sinai terms.

The Face of God through the Text

The second part of my argument is as follows: this theopoetic space—in which the sharing of divinity takes place—is created both within the text, in scriptural characters, and out of the text, in hearers-speakers of the text. This solicitation does not take place only through the co-text, the life that travels with the text, but also through the text itself, through certain irritating and shocking aspects, such as the ones already remarked in our analyzed psalms. Among these I listed elsewhere the following:

incomplete phrases or sentences (left to the new author to complete), peculiar turns of verbal tenses, unexpected uses of pronouns (especially the demonstrative pronoun of proximity), rough or inelegant language, bad or non-idiomatic Greek, ambiguities, and polyvalence (Bunta 2025, 85-103). All these features give the biblical text a function that far exceeds that of narration or idea transmission; they transform the biblical text into a speech in quest of speaker, they solicit a hearer-speaker who appropriates the text as his own. These textual features make the text detectable and meaningful only to the extent to which the hearer-speaker collapses the distance between himself and the text, even to the point of becoming a (new) author of the text.

For this hermeneutic that goes out of the biblical text itself—participative and appropriative, centered anew in each hearer-speaker—I launched the phrase "hermeneutic of death." The phrase is meant to underline the fact that the nature of this hermeneutic is not metaphysical, intellective, formal, and methodological, but rather physical, existential, ascetical, and non-procedural[30]. This hermeneutic is a non-procedure of the discarding of the self, of the abandonment of one's own life in order to take on the life of the King himself. And herein the conundrum of the historical-critical hermeneutics deepens just as its newest methods discard the archaeological and disengaged attitudes of its past: it approaches the scriptural texts not on their own terms that frustrate all methods and the very self of the reader, but quite the opposite—it approaches them with a heightened self, self-affirming and deeply psychological and undeified.

I will provide here as examples only two texts of such ascetical features, texts that I explored more fully in other places (Bunta 2025; Bunta 2022b; Bunta 2023). The first is from the Old Testament, the second from the New Testament. My first text of choice is Dt 5:3. Yet, the point I wish to make about it comes into the clearest focus in view of another text, 4 Kgs 23:3 (MT 2 Kgs 23:3). Here is the latter in my translation attentive to the peculiarities of both the Hebrew and Greek texts. The most relevant of these are in italics:

> The king stood by the pillar and cut *the* covenant before the Lord—to walk after the Lord and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his laws with all heart and all soul, to carry out the words of *this* covenant that were inscribed upon *this* scroll. And all the people stood in *the* covenant.

The most impressive feature of this early covenant text lies in the equivalent use of the definite article "the" and of the demonstrative pronoun "this" in the words of the "narrator," as it were. As Hindy Najman observed,

> Deuteronomic texts do not use such terms ["the" and "this"] from the point of view of a specified speaker—say, of Moses. Rather, they use such terms within anonymous third person descriptions of the speech and actions of Moses. That is to say, they use such terms *from the point of the view of the text's reader or listener*. This is of great importance, for it follows that the unity of Torah, in the special sense of the Deuteronomist, is secured through *the presence of tradition to those who read or hear the words of Torah* (Najman 2003, 31-32 – her emphasis).

I would take Najman's argument further by suggesting that this language makes the "covenant" a manner of life that, first, the scriptural author claims as his own and that, second, he also expects to be the life of his readers/hearers. Furthermore, such language serves the obvious function of a self-destruct safety feature. It is precisely this manner of writing that makes the whole text collapse, become nonsensical, in the hands of another life, including—to adopt our modern perspective—in the hands of a methodological, intellectual approach. In other words, the text is written in such ways that it can only be approached by sharing in its manner of living, or in such ways that, without sharing its life, one cannot reach its meanings.

In light of this, Moses' emphatic negative in Deut. 5:3—my focus text—is best understood not as a polemic against earlier covenants (such as the covenant with Abraham), as the current scholarship sees it, but more precisely as a warning against and prevention of any lifeless, static understandings of the covenant of the Lord with Israel. In my more literal translation, Moses shouts to Israel just before crossing the Jordan:

> It was not with *our* fathers that the Lord cut *this* covenant, but with *us*, *we these* here today, all of *us* living.

The first shocking thing about this shout of Moses is how historically untrue its point is. Dt 1:35-40 has already made it abundantly clear that the people whom Moses is addressing here were not at Sinai, but rather the people at Sinai *were* their fathers, who by now are all dead. The Hebrew text is even more striking than the Greek

because it uses the personal pronoun "we" three times (as opposed to only twice in Greek) and once even accompanied by the demonstrative pronoun "these," which is missing in Greek. Yet, in both versions this text exhibits a self-understanding in which the covenant does not even have a historical life. The only "real time" of the covenant, as it were, is in its appropriation in each generation, in the "living" ones, the ones who actually shout these words in their own reading of the text. The shout of Moses, with its striking use of personal and demonstrative pronouns, is supposed to make the hearer of the text realize that the truthfulness of the shout is relinquished by history—by the people who were at Sinai and who are dead by the time of this shout—to the writer and ultimately to the hearer of the text, the one who is actually always "living" and who speaks the shout fresh in every generation. In other words, the text always finds anew its real time in the living speaker/hearer[31].

My second text of choice is John 10:34–36:

> [34] Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law that I said, you are gods? [35] If those to whom the word (λόγος) of God came to be, he called (εἶπεν) 'gods'—and the Scripture is incapable of being loosened—[36] you tell the word whom (ὅν) the Father sanctified and sent into the world, You blaspheme, because I said I am son of God?

Before making my point, I must decry the fact that scriptural translations are still beholden to modern grammatical conventions that deeply impede an accurate transmission of the texts. In the case of John 10:34–36, the modern convention that damages the text is the quotation marks. In the original text, Jesus can be saying both "Is it not written in your law that, 'I have said, you are gods'?" and "Is it not written in your law that I have said, 'you are gods'?" If the latter, Jesus clearly presents the divine speech in the psalm as his own voice. One may be tempted to solve this ambiguity, but I argued in a recent publication that this ambiguity is essential to the meaning of this pericope: depending on the readiness of the hearer, at its deeper level the ambiguity reveals the "word" not only as the Scripture, but also as the voice *in* the Scriptures *and* the one whom the Father sent into the world. Furthermore, in the very first verse, in both possible readings, Jesus uses the plural personal pronoun "you" in such a way that there is no distinction between the people who hear his voice in the gospel moment ("Is it not written in *your* law") and the people who hear his voice in the psalm ("that I said, you are gods?"). This sameness is reinforced in the second and third verse, in the

equivalence between "those to whom" the word in the psalm came and "you" who call the word blasphemer. The absoluteness of the present tense in the clause "the Scripture is incapable of being loosened" further secures this reinforcement in complex ways that I can only leave unexplored here.

Therefore, in a deeper sense, Jesus is the one who speaks to the Jews in the pericope, the one who speaks the psalm, and the one who speaks in the psalm. The manner in which Christ references the psalm amounts to a collapse of any difference and distance between the voice *in* the psalm and the voice *to* the Jews. The inevitable conclusion is that the psalm is not pre-existing the gospel scene at all. Rather, it will be written in the past as merely the memory, or rather immortalization of the current gospel moment, which, as simultaneous with all time, undergirds eternity[32].

Furthermore, this particular eternal moment in John 10 extends to the hearers-speakers of the gospel itself, as an unveiling of Christ in all time, including in the time of the hearers of the new Scripture—the gospel text. As John words and frames the text, the existential confrontation with divinity ultimately belongs to humanity overall. The only way in which the words of the gospel-psalm moment will "ring true" and will reveal ever deeper meanings of their complexity, as the gospel itself wishes, is if its own hearers become participants in this moment.

Finally, for this new scriptural text, just as for the aforementioned Old Testament texts, the trip from what is perceived (text and history) to what simply is (which is invariably divinity) is not metaphysical, chronological, or deductive, but physical, internal, and experiential. The gospel-psalm moment and the beyond-the-Jordan moment are tantamount to an existential crisis and their truthfulness can be arrived at only through the surrender of the discrete and differentiating self. To put it differently and in a Christian frame, the entry point into the scriptural words is the Word crucified and resurrected. John's hearers within the gospel and the hearers through the gospel, just as Moses' hearers within and through Deuteronomy, will arrive at what divinity is saying (to avoid verbs of intellection) precisely to the extent to which they are crushed by its winning, or rather by its obliterating presence. As I already remarked, this is the essence of the Orthodox hermeneutics as witnessed in its traditional texts—hymnographical, liturgical, iconographical, patristic, etc.[33]

From the vantage point afforded by these texts—post-scriptural and scriptural—the life or transmission of the Scripture is not *actually* made up of original composition and subsequent appropriations, because such history or sequence exists only to the

extent to which such texts lower themselves *aesthetically* (I use this adverb in its etymological sense) away from what they mean to do toward superficial encounters. This can be presented as a dynamic: a speech that is scriptural pulls constantly toward the collapse of all distinctions between its initial composition and the moments when it is heard and spoken afresh by each living speaker-hearer.

To return to the specific focus of this study, the hermeneutic is the same in the following psalmic text about the divine face:

> This is the generation (*αὕτη ἡ γενεά*) of the ones who seek the Lord, of the ones who seek the Face of the God of Jacob.
>
> Lift up the gates, your rulers, and be lifted up, eternal gates, and the King of glory will enter.
>
> Who is this, the King of glory? The Lord ruling and powerful, the Lord powerful in battle. (Ps 23:6-8)

The text is remarkable in several ways. First, the dialogue in the final two verses—as well known as it is and as much as it has a long history in Christian liturgy to this day[34]—is strikingly unintroduced and contextless. There is no indication of the identity of the ones engaged in this dialogue, although the superscription places the entire psalm on the sabbath and, therefore, in liturgy. Second, if, by contrast, in these final two verses the Lord is introduced, and even with a sense of tension, in the first verse he is sought. Third, the first verse draws a clear equivalence between the "face" of the Lord and the Lord himself.

Yet, the most striking feature of the text is in the opening phrase: "this is the generation." First and foremost, the demonstrative pronoun of proximity calls on any hearer-speaker of the text to be present at the words of the psalmist. And second, to the extent to which the hearer-speaker holds this position of presentness, to the same extent his distinction from the psalmist collapses and turns into a sameness under the pressure of the entire phrase. This is because the demonstrative pronoun "this" in its predicative attachment to "generation" can only be valid or "true" as current, especially as the phrase lacks any historiographic or third-voice framing. In other words, the phrase cannot exist in the past but only in the present. It can only be true in its current hearer-speaker, who—upon its reception—becomes its one and real author. This situation is only strengthened by the final verses, which—as a dialogue—are an expression of the present time *par excellence* and whose speakers are left to receive an identity or

embodiment through appropriation. And, significantly, this identity that can only exist in the real time of the present is defined by its seeking and encountering the divine face. The liturgical uses of the dialogue—already set up by the superscription—seem to be engendered precisely by the dialogue's openness to and need for appropriation.

Final thoughts

The evidence presented in this study highlights a fundamental problem with the historical-critical approach: its methods will obscure what the language in front of them wishes to do precisely to the extent to which they will succeed. They fail at encountering the text as it wishes to be encountered—and cannot but fail—through their very success. Of course, these methods can clarify some aspects of the scriptural text, but these clarifications are not the purpose and the significance of the text, that which the text itself pursues.

Emblematic of this outer-biblical exegesis (exegesis that comes out of the Scriptures themselves) is what happens to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. The scene is hermeneutical not by the presentation of a metaphysical procedure (which is not there), but a physical transformation. Significantly, the text is given an initial, superficial interpretation in advance of this transformation, but the ultimate interpretation—in the form of the recognition of Christ as the one content of the Scriptures—does not truly happen until the eyes are opened and the heart is set alight, which is a theophanic language that presents the inside of the disciples as a divine space. This means—among other things—that the encounter with Christ is not a cognitive unlocking of the text, a sort of locating of Christ's life and teachings within the scriptural text (this thing in Christ or in his life is that phrase or verse), but as an opening of the hearer-speaker in a transformative participation in God. Even better, the encounter of Christ as the substance of the Scriptures is the making of a divine space in which God, words, writer, and hearer-speaker are all one divinity. Also, in my opinion, keeping in mind the topic of this study, it is significant that the unveiling of the divine is ultimately granted to the disciples in eating, in the act of feeding on God.

This shocking vocabulary cannot be attributed dismissively to a metaphoric language or a primitive culture. On the contrary, the more this language is explored in all openness, the more it unveils its depth and sophistication. It attests to the making of a human being who comes out of this scriptural molding with divine potentiality and as integrated into God himself, a human who feeds on the substance of eternity.

Notes

[1] In a first draft this study was presented at the conference "'Face' of God in the Old Testament" organized online by the Faculty of Orthodox Theology of the Babeș-Bolyai University (Cluj-Napoca, Romania), between November 27-29, 2024. I wish to thank the conveners of the conference for their invitation to the conference, especially the Rev. Prof. Ioan Chirilă and the Rev. Deacon Lecturer Stelian Pașca-Tușa.

[2] The Pantokrator manuscript is published in — 2004. The Greek Manuscript 2132 of St. Catherine's Monastery of Sinai was accessed through the "Library of Congress Collection of Manuscripts in St. Catherine's Monastery, Mt. Sinai" here: https://www.loc.gov/collections/manuscripts-in-st-catherines-monastery-mount-sinai/.

[3] In Orthodox hymnography one can repeatedly hear a point against inquisitive approaches. The following example should suffice:

> Your bodiless angels did not understand how you became incarnate, the soldiers guarding you did not perceive when you resurrected, for both have been sealed to those who would inquire (ἀμφότερα γὰρ ἐσφράγισται τοῖς ἐρευνῶσι), but the wonders have been revealed to those who worship the mystery in faith (τοῖς προσκυνοῦσιν ἐν πίστει τὸ μυστήριον). (Resurrectional sticheron, plagal 1, in my translation from — 1864, 103)

[4] For the initial meaning of this phrase, see especially Fishbane 1980; idem 1985; idem 1996. In several studies the terminology has received proposals for further sharpening and differentiation, such as in Eslinger 1980; Meek 2014.

[5] I prefer "hearer" to "reader" for two reasons. First, until recently listening has been the manner in which the vast majority of people approached the scriptural text, and certainly it was the ancient way in which the text expected to be received. Moreover, it remains the way inscribed in Orthodox liturgy. Second, the point can be made that "interpretation" or "reading" are not proper words to describe the way in which the Orthodox Tradition views and practices access to and contact with the Scriptures. See also Bunta 2023; Bunta 2025.

[6] For more on this mismatch between historical criticism and the hermeneutical expectations of the Scriptures themselves, and on the privileged position of early exegesis, see my observations in Bunta 2019, 135-138.

[7] For this emerging conclusion, see especially Sommer 2009; Wagner 2010; Knafl 2014; Smith 2016; Halton 2021; Wilson 2021.

[8] I already criticized elsewhere what I perceive as misdirections in current Orthodox attitudes toward the Scriptures (Bunta 2022b). It seems to me that the substance of these

is an inability to read the Scriptures on their own terms (not by themselves, but within themselves). First, in these, Scripture and Tradition serve the modern "theologian" for evidentiary and explanatory purposes and are turned into "sources of Orthodox doctrine," crutches of the contemporary need for confirmation and certainty. Second, a common warning would have Scripture handled only through "Tradition"—the underlying assumption being that Tradition is mostly (if not wholly) external to it. Even worse, when these attitudes are refuted, the alternative offered is an uncritical appropriation of historical criticism (the contradiction in this position is evident). For all practical purposes, such instincts in the contemporary Orthodox mindset place the Scriptures (especially the Old Testament) in an awkward inferiority to the "fathers of the Church" (and, even further, to current specializations). Ironically, this is precisely what the fathers of the Church do not do themselves and do not wish others to do. They look at the scriptural writers as their teachers, a sort of Fathers of the fathers, and nowhere—to my knowledge—do they imagine their teachers as being incomplete or inaccurate, as needing them. Therefore, for accuracy against the fathers themselves, it is essential that the Scripture be seen "on its own terms."

[9] — 1867, 279.

[10] Augustine gives the following example, before he quotes Hermes Trismegistus:

> To unite, therefore, these invisible spirits to visible objects of bodily substance by some strange technique, so that the result is something like animated bodies, idols dedicated and subject to these spirits, this, Hermes says, is "making gods" (*deos facere*), and this great and miraculous power, he adds, of making gods has been given to men" (*De Civitate Dei* 8.23, text and translation from Augustine 1968, 105-107).

[11] My translation of the original Greek from Clément d'Alexandrie 1949, 154. All translations in this study are my own, unless noted otherwise.

[12] On the divine face in post-biblical Judaism, see especially Orlov 2004; idem 2006; idem 2017; Bunta 2006.

[13] This and all ensuing translations of the Greek Psalter are taken from my translation in Bunta 2022a.

[14] The situation is not reciprocated by studies on the Hebrew texts: very few interpreters of the Hebrew text have paid attention to the Greek, although the former is difficult (here with all the masoretic diacritics):

אֲנִי בְּצֶדֶק אֶחֱזֶה פָּנֶיךָ אֶשְׂבְּעָה בְהָקִיץ תְּמוּנָתֶךָ׃
As for me, I will behold your face in righteousness;
I will be satisfied [with] your form in awaking.

As many have recognized, starting with the earliest interpreters, the text does not make much sense. The greatest difficulty is presented by the phrase "in awaking" בהקיץ, which has no contextual basis. Hans-Joachim Kraus and most interpreters, ancient and modern, are forced to pair it up with "in the evening" of verse 3 and to assume that it is a random reference to the conclusion of a vigil (Kraus 1988, 1:250).

Despite these difficulties, any attention to the Greek text is rare. Kraus makes no mention of it (Kraus 1988, 1:250). The variant is not addressed at all in the otherwise impressive study of Dominique Barthélemy (Barthélemy 2005). When attention is given, it is usually limited to the problem phrase בהקיץ. The common proposal is that behind the Greek *ἐν τῷ ὀφθῆναι* is בהציץ (the proposal is already launched in Van der Ploeg 1965, 289). Yet, if הקיץ is vocalized not as a hiphil, but a hophal (הקץ), it would translate well with *ἐν τῷ ὀφθῆναι*. קיץ does not only mean "to awake," but also "to show up," "to emerge," "to appear," "to reveal oneself." It is used in reference to God several times, sometimes synonymously with קום. For example, in Ps 44:24 (LXX 23) and 27 (LXX 26) God's arising is rendered by both קיץ and קום. The imagery has an indubitable war connotation. When God is called to arise he is usually summoned for defending Israel against the nations (e.g., Ps 9:19; 102:13) or the righteous against his oppressors (e.g., Ps 3:7). Yet, this is not always the case. Ps 68:1 (LXX 67:1) has a broader martial imagery and in relation to the divine face:

יָקוּם אֱלֹהִים יָפוּצוּ אוֹיְבָיו וְיָנֻסוּ מְשַׂנְאָיו מִפָּנָיו׃
Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered;
let those who hate him flee before his face!
Ἀναστήτω ὁ θεός, καὶ διασκορπισθήτωσαν οἱ ἐχθροὶ αὐτοῦ,
καὶ φυγέτωσαν οἱ μισοῦντες αὐτὸν ἀπὸ προσώπου αὐτοῦ.

The verse has a close parallel in Num 10:35 (LXX 10:34):

וַיְהִי בִּנְסֹעַ הָאָרֹן וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה קוּמָה יְהוָה וְיָפֻצוּ אֹיְבֶיךָ וְיָנֻסוּ מְשַׂנְאֶיךָ מִפָּנֶיךָ׃
Whenever the ark set out, Moses said, "Arise, O LORD, and let your enemies be scattered; and let them that hate you flee before your face."
ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ ἐξαίρειν τὴν κιβωτὸν καὶ εἶπεν Μωυσῆς Ἐξεγέρθητι, κύριε, διασκορπισθήτωσαν οἱ ἐχθροί σου, φυγέτωσαν πάντες οἱ μισοῦντές σε.

The parallelism also extends to Ps 132:9 (LXX 8) and 2 Chr 6:41. These calls to God have a ceremonial connotation. In this case פנים should be assumed to be more than a mere adverb, as unfortunately it is commonly translated into English ("from before you"). All these texts suggest that the language of the arising/appearing of God was used for cultic theophany.

Therefore, it is very possible the Greek translator of Ps 16:16 (LXX) drew on this usage to understand קִיץ to refer to the revelation of God in the temple. Moreover, the fact that תְּמוּנָתֶךָ lacks a preposition (even though being the complement of אֶשְׂבְּעָה would require it) presents it as a natural candidate for the genitive of the infinitive construct of קִיץ. Thus, these two considerations—the cultic-theophanic use of God's arising and the un-prepositional form of תְּמוּנָתֶךָ after the infinitive construct of an arising verb—make the rendering "in the appearance of your form/glory" a logical step.

The option of *ὀφθήσομαι τῷ προσώπῳ σου* for אֶחֱזֶה פָּנֶיךָ (I will behold your face) is another case of punctuation. If חָזָה is not vocalized as a qal (אֶחֱזֶה), but rather as a niphal, אֵחָזֶה, I will be seen/I will appear, it translates very well with *ὀφθήσομαι*.

[15] Unfortunately Tobit 12:9 is not attested at Qumran. In all the other 13 instances, the Qumranic Hebrew texts have עבש, just like the masoretic text.

[16] Cf. Plato, *Republic* 2.372b-d and 9.586a.

[17] On the imagery of consumption of the divine presence in ancient Jewish and Christian mysticism see Chernus 1982, 74-87; Fletcher-Louis 1997, 66-68; Goodman 1986; Golitzin 2009; Stuckenbruck 2007, 723-725.

[18] Pantokrator 43 has *ὑείων*.

[19] Snagov has *νιπίοις*.

[20] It should be noted that, as reality splinters ever more, the methodological alternation also increases in consequence of this and the historical-critical perspective cannot avoid an unending methodological splintering.

[21] Such as in *On the Statues* 3.12.

[22] It would be a fundamental mistake to even raise the issue of the authenticity of these claims, that the righteous enlarge in order to contain the uncontainable God. What has been pointed out about ancient apocalyptic writers is equally applicable to these early Christian voices: they do not (consciously) make up traditions. They rather see themselves operating within existing traditions with roots in the authoritative past (DeConick 2001, 52). For the religious sensibilities of the mystical experiencer it would have been highly sacrilegious to make unfounded claims about visions or revelations, just as much as it would have been sacrilegious to innovate or to claim authorship for a tradition—innovation and tradition authorship constituting one and the same reality by their standards (Najman 2003, 12-15). Therefore, the question that the student of early

Christian mysticism must ask is not whether the ancient voice (individual or collective) has the ability to construct false claims or make up complex belief systems, but rather what this voice would deem as improper ways of living, "reading," and expressing.

[23] On the physical transformation of the righteous into divinity in classical rabbinic literature, see Bunta 2021, 197-218. The study also makes the point that the luminosity of the divine in these texts is not immaterial.

[24] The passage has a close parallel:

> R. Judah, son of R. Hiyya said: Any disciple of the Sages who occupies himself with Torah in poverty will have his prayer heard; as it is stated: For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem; thou shalt weep no more; He will surely be gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when He shall hear, He will answer thee, and it continues, And the Lord will give you bread in adversity and water in affliction. R. Abbahu said: They also satisfy him from the lustre of the *Shechinah*, as it is stated: Thine eyes shall see thy Teacher. (*Sotah* 49a)

These translations of the Babylonian Talmud are from Epstein 1935-1952.

[25] My translation after Migne 1857-1866, 44:1245C-1248B. The reader of this passage must keep in mind that the Greek version of Hab 3:2-3 is very different from the Hebrew that we know. Here it is in my translation:

> Lord, I have heard a report of you, and was afraid. I considered your works, and was amazed: you will be known between the two living creatures. . . His virtue covered the heavens, and the earth is full of his praise.

[26] On the presence of the incarnate Christ in the Old Testament (and on the Augustinian turn from this traditional point of view) see especially Capes 1992; Fossum 1987; Gieschen 2003; Daniélou 1977, 147–163; Barnes 2003; Bucur 2008; Nellas 1987; Bucur 2018.

[27] Translation from Golitzin 2003, 397-398 (his emphasis).

[28] Translation from Origen 2001, 121–122; the Latin is from Origen 1990–1998.

[29] The phrase is not idiomatic Greek. The idiomatic phrase would be *πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον*. Outside of Deuteronomy the phrase *πρόσωπον κατὰ πρόσωπον* appears in only one other verse, Ezek 20:35, a text that alludes to Sinai.

[30] The current interest with "reception history," as much as it useful, may still miss this essential point: the essence of reception history itself, or that which reception history itself is made of, is not an intellectual appropriation of the scriptural text, driven by

questions of method and meanings, but it is rather fundamentally ascetical. And this is the very non-historical substance of the so-called field of "reception history," which, although belonging to this ancient hermeneutic, is constantly in danger of being read through the historical premises and methods of modern hermeneutics.

[31] The text acts only as an intermediary between, or rather a medium of different appropriations of the same live event, in the circular trajectory event-text-event. The text exists only in order to cease to exist. The Sinai tradition presents itself as always ultimately fulfilled in the present reader. Moreover, in this very act of giving life to the text in himself, the reader surrenders his own life. The one who writes, that which is written, the one who is talked about, and the one who reads, all these collapse into one identity, into one life; the reading is at once both the death of the text and the death of the reader, because it is precisely the end of selves.

[32] The elimination of the ambiguity through quotation marks as in the first possibility presented above—the possibility invariably chosen by modern English translations—"solves" the text by opting for its one superficial meaning.

[33] A similar understanding of exegesis is expressed by classical rabbinic sources. It has been noted before that the rabbis "imagined themselves . . . participating in Torah rather than operating on it at an analytic distance" (Burns 1992, 115) and did so in an "effort to reconstitute the original experience of revelation" (Wolfson 1997, 328). Elliot Wolfson points out that the early kabbalah conceives of exegesis similarly. In exegesis the reader "cleaves to God" (Zohar 3:36a; Wolfson 1997, 333, 372; see also Fishbane 1998, 105–122). The three-dimensional and experiential nature of the biblical text is stated explicitly in the following text:

> Whoever is engaged in Torah, it is as if he is engaged in the palace of the Holy One, Blessed be He, for the supernal palace of the Holy One, blessed be He, is the Torah. (*Zohar* 2:200a, from Wolfson 1997, 373)

In this palace, the reader becomes righteous:

> Come and see: When a person draws close to the Torah, which is called good, as it is written, "the teaching of your mouth (torat pikha) is good to me" (Ps 119:72), he draws close to the Holy One, blessed be He, who is called good, as it is written, "The Lord is good to all" (ibid. 145:9), and he then comes close to being righteous, as it says, "Happy is the just man for he is good" (Is 3:9). When he is righteous the Shekhinah rests upon him and teaches him the highest secrets of Torah, for the Shekhinah is joined only to one who is good, for the Righteous [masculine

> Saddiq] and Righteousness [feminine Seddeq] go together as one. (*Zohar Hadash* 29a, from Wolfson 1997, 373)

An actual exegetical transformation is depicted as follows:

> R. Isaac said: One day I went with [R. Simeon] on the road and he opened his mouth in [explication of the] Torah. I saw a pillar of cloud fixed from above to below and one splendor shone within that pillar. (*Zohar* 2:149a; Wolfson 1997, 372)

The text leaves it to the imagination of the reader to see R. Simeon inseparable from the Torah, as that splendor.

[34] On this history see among others Daniélou 1977, 259-260; Bertonière 1972, 201 and 241-276; Karalis 2020.

References

—*Ψαλτήριον τοῦ προφήτου καὶ βασιλέως Δανίδ*. Snagov, 1700.

—*Ὀκτώηχος τοῦ ἐν ἁγίοις πάτρος ἡμῶν Ἰωάννου τοῦ Δαμασκηνοῦ*. Venice, 1864.

—"Relations of Heathenism and Judaism with Christianity." *The North British Review* 47/8 (1867): 257-301.

—*Τό Ἱερόν Ψαλτήριον μετά τροπαρίων καί εὐχῶν, ἤτοι τύπος κελλιωτικῆς Ἀγρυπνίας*. Ἅγιον Ὄρος: Ἱερᾶς Μονῆς Παντοκράτορος, 2004.

Augustine. *City of God, Volume III: Books 8-11*. Translated by David S. Wiesen. Loeb Classical Library 413. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968.

Barnes, Michel René. "The Visible Christ and the Invisible Trinity: Mt. 5:8 in Augustine's Trinitarian Theology of 400." *Modern Theology* 19/3 (2003): 329-355.

Barthélemy, Dominique. *Critique textuelle de l'Ancien Testament. Tome 4. Psaumes*. Fribourg: Academic Press/Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005.

Bertonière, Gabriel. *The Historical Development of the Easter Vigil and Related Services in the Greek Church*. Orientalia Christiana Analecta 193. Rome: Pontifical Institute of Oriental Studies, 1972.

Bucur, Bogdan G. "Theophanies and Vision of God in Augustine's *De Trinitate*: An Eastern Orthodox Perspective." *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 52/1 (2008): 67-93.

Bucur, Bogdan G. *Scripture Re-envisioned: Christophanic Exegesis and the Making of a Christian Bible*. Leiden: Brill, 2018.

Bunta, Silviu N. "The Likeness of the Image: Adamic Motifs and tselem Anthropology in Rabbinic Traditions About Jacob's Image Enthroned in Heaven." *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 37 (2006): 55-84.

Bunta, Silviu N. "Reversing Genesis 3,6-7: Adamic Traditions in the Cursing of the Fig Tree (Mk 11,12-14.20-25; Mt 21,18-22)." In *Sfânta Scriptură* în *Istorie* și *Tradiție. Volum Omagial Păr. Prof. Vasile Mihoc* (*Sacred Scripture in History and Tradition. Festschrift Pr. Prof. Vasile Mihoc*), 111-144. Colectia Theologia Universitaria. Sibiu: Editura Andreiana, 2019.

Bunta, Silviu N. *The Lord God of Gods. Divinity and Deification in Early Judaism*. Perspectives on Hebrew Scripture and Its Contexts 35. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2021.

Bunta, Silviu N. *The Orthodox Psalter. Introduction, Translation, and Notes*. McAllen: Cherubim Press, 2022 a.

Bunta, Silviu N."Tradition: Generated by Scripture or Generating Scripture?" In *The Oxford Handbook of the Bible in Orthodox Christianity*. Edited by Eugen Pentiuc, 229-243. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2022 b.

Bunta, Silviu N. "For a Hermeneutics of Referent: On the Sinai Tradition and a Reinterpretation of 'Covenant'." In *Watering the Garden. Studies in Honor of Deirdre Dempsey*. Edited by Andrei A. Orlov, 23-46. Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2023.

Bunta, Silviu N. *'The Life of Our Fathers': An Introduction to the Bible in the Orthodox Church*. Yonkers: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2025.

Burns, Gerald L. *Hermeneutics Ancient and Modern*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.

Capes, David B. *Old Testament Yahweh Texts in Paul's Christology*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992.

Chernus, Ira. *Mysticism in Rabbinic Judaism: Studies in the History of Midrash*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1982.

Clément D'Alexandrie. *Le protreptique, 2nd edn.* Translation C. Mondésert. Sources chrétiennes 2. Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1949.

Daniélou, Jean. *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*. Trans. and ed. John A. Baker. London: Darton, Longman & Todd; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977.

Deconick, April. *Voices of the Mystics*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001.

Epstein, Isidore, ed. *The Babylonian Talmud*. 35 vols. London: Soncino, 1935-1952.

Eslinger, Lyle. "Hosea 12:5a and Genesis 32:29: A Study in Inner Biblical Exegesis." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 18 (1980): 91–9.

Fishbane, Michael. "Revelation and Tradition: Aspects of Inner-Biblical Exegesis." *The Journal of Biblical Literature* 99.3 (1980): 343–61.

Fishbane, Michael. *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985.

Fishbane, Michael. "Inner-Biblical Exegesis." In *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. The History of Its Interpretation. Vol. 1 From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages*. Ed. Magne Sæbø, 33-48. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996.

Fishbane, Michael. *The Exegetical Imagination: On Jewish Thought and Theology.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998.

Fletcher-Louis, Crispin. *Luke-Acts: Angels, Christology and Soteriology*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997.

Fossum, Jarl. "Kyrios Jesus as the Angel of the Lord in Jude 5–7," *New Testament Studies* 33 (1987): 226–243.

Gieschen, Charles. "The Divine Name in Ante-Nicene Christology." *Vigiliae Christianae* 57 (2003): 115–158.

Golitzin, Alexander. "The Place of the Presence of God: Aphrahat of Persia's Portrait of the Christian Holy Man." In ΣΥΝΑΞΙΣ ΕΥΧΑΡΙΣΤΙΑΣ*: Studies in Honor of Archimandrite Aimilianos of Simonos Petras, Mount Athos*, 391-447. Athens: Indiktos, 2003.

Golitzin, Alexander. "The Demons Suggest an Illusion of God's Glory in a Form: Controversy over the Divine Body and Vision of Glory in Some Late Fourth, Early Fifth Century Monastic Literature." In *The Theophaneia School: Jewish Roots of Eastern Christian Mysticism*. ed. Basil Lurie and Andrei Orlov, 49-82. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2009.

Goodman, David. "Do Angels Eat?" *Journal of Jewish Studies* 37 (1986): 160-175.

Halton, Charles. *A Human-Shaped God: Theology of an Embodied God*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2021.

Karalis, Ilias. "Ἄρατε πύλας (psalm 23[24], 7-10). The Iconography of Christ opening Hades' Doors." In *Patterns-Models-Drawings*. Ed. E. Moutafov and M. Kuyumdzhieva, Sofia 2020.

Knafl, Anne K. *Forming God: Divine Anthropomorphism in the Pentateuch*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014.

Kraus, Hans-Joachim. *Psalms. A Commentary*. 2 vols. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988, 1989.

Legaspi, Michael. *The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Meek, Russell L. "Intertextuality, Inner-Biblical Exegesis, and Inner-Biblical Allusion: The Ethics of a Methodology." *Biblica* 95.2 (2014): 280–91.

Migne, J.-P. *Patrologiae cursus completus (series Graeca)*. Paris: Migne, 1857-1866.

Najman, Hindy, *Seconding Sinai: The Development of Mosaic Discourse in Second Temple Judaism*. Leiden: Brill, 2003.

Nellas, Panagiotis. *Deification in Christ: Orthodox Perspectives on the Nature of the Human Person*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1987.

Origen. *Origenes, Der Römerbriefkommentar des Origenes: Kritische Ausgabe der* Übersetzung *Rufins*. Ed. C. P. Hammond Bammel. 3 vols. Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1990–1998.

Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Books 1–5*. Trans. Thomas P. Scheck. Washington: CUA Press, 2001.

Orlov, Andrei A. "The Face as the Heavenly Counterpart of the Visionary in the Slavonic Ladder of Jacob." In *Of Scribes and Sages: Early Jewish Interpretation and Transmission of Scripture*. 2 vols. Studies in Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity 9. Ed. C. A. Evans, 2.59–76. London: T&T Clark, 2004.

Orlov, Andrei A. *From Apocalypticism to Merkabah Mysticism: Studies in the Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*. Leiden: Brill, 2006.

Orlov, Andrei A. "Unveiling the Face: The Heavenly Counterpart Traditions in Joseph and Aseneth." In *The Embroidered Bible: Studies in Biblical Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha in Honour of Michael E. Stone*. Eds. L. DiTommaso, M. Henze and W. Adler, 771-808. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2018.

Orlov, Andrei A. The Greatest Mirror: Heavenly Counterparts in the Jewish Pseudepigrapha. Albany: SUNY, 2017.

Smith, Mark S. *Where the Gods Are: Spatial Dimensions of Anthropomorphism in the Biblical World*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016.

Sommer, Benjamin D. *The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Stuckenbruck, Loren T. *1 Enoch 91-108: A Commentary*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007.

Van der Ploeg, L. "Le Psaume XVII et ses problèmes." *Oudtestamentische Studiën* 14 (1965): 273-295.

Wagner, Andreas. *Gottes Körper. Zur alttestamentlichen Vorstellung des Menschengestaltigkeit Gottes*. Gütersloh: Gütersloher, 2010.

Wilson, Brittany E. *The Embodied God: Seeing the Divine in Luke-Acts and the Early Church*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021.

Wolfson, Elliot R. *Through a Speculum that Shines. Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism*. 2nd ed.; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.